

The second time around is even sweeter...with cherries on top.

Blue Jeans and Hard Hats, Book 1

Buck doesn't do personal projects. Until he runs into a woman wandering the aisles of the local home-improvement store, looking lost and confused. Just the way this fantasy looks at him nearly buckles his knees. In a hot second, the successful owner of a contracting company becomes a simple handyman, ready and willing to get as personal as the lady will allow.

Since her less-than-golden marriage to the local golden boy ended, Caroline's declaration of independence includes her own business, road trips...and nipple piercings. Now it's time to cut the last tie to her old life, but the house needs some work before she can unload it and move to her dream cabin in the mountains. Hard as it is to admit, she needs a little help.

Over the next few months, he shows her his toys, like hammers and drills, and she shows him hers—like floggers and paddles. And their attraction is the tinder that could send Caroline's plans for an independent life up in flames...

Warning: In this book, there are sightings of glass dildos, leather belt bindings, nipple rings, wicked clamps, cherry cheesecake and a hot, yummy handyman-type guy who's really good with his hands...

**eBooks are *not* transferable.
They cannot be sold, shared or given away as it is an infringement on the copyright of this work.**

This book is a work of fiction. The names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the writer's imagination or have been used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, actual events, locale or organizations is entirely coincidental.

Samhain Publishing, Ltd.
577 Mulberry Street, Suite 1520
Macon GA 31201

Sweet Caroline
Copyright © 2010 by Lissa Matthews
ISBN: 978-1-60928-029-1
Edited by Bethany Morgan
Cover by Angela Waters

All Rights Are Reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

First Samhain Publishing, Ltd. electronic publication: April 2010
www.samhainpublishing.com

Sweet Caroline

Lissa Matthews

Dedication

An episode of Glee was the inspiration for this book. It's a mash-up in and of itself. A special thanks to my editor, Bethany for her support and no-nonsense tough love talks.

Chapter One

“I’d have never guessed you’d be interested in clamps.”

“Oh!”

Caroline, the object of his affection, his lust, his raging out of control hunger jumped and dropped the items in question on the ground. She bent to pick them up and when she stood straight again, looked at him. She usually avoided direct eye contact with him, but not now, not here. In this place, the small hole in the wall adult toy store and lingerie shop, she seemed different, more sure and certain of herself. It seemed odd because most women he knew or had known, wouldn’t admit to being in a place like this, much less admit to liking any of the store’s contents. Not all, but most.

“There are a lot of things I’m interested in that I’m sure you wouldn’t have guessed at.”

Buck’s dick did just that. Bucked. Of all things he thought she might say, that was definitely not it, but since it was out there... “Really? Then by all means, Caroline, enlighten me. Show me.”

For a second he thought she would decline and walk out, but she tilted her head slightly and regarded him. A blush stole through her cheeks, but she kept her head held high and nodded.

“These. I’m interested in these.”

She handed him the clamps. They looked like miniature clothespins, but he imagined they’d hurt like a bitch. They were heavy for being so small. “What else?”

She looked down and pulled another package from the rack. “These.”

Japanese clover clamps. His favorite. Not always the favorite of others. He used them on some of his more adventurous lovers. Loved the look of them hanging from a pair of breasts, the chain being its own instrument of torture when tugged and pulled. Caroline said she was interested in them, but had she tried them? Did she know what kind of pain and pleasure she was looking at? The clamps looked harmless enough sitting in their plastic bubble packs, but taken out, put on naked, tender nipples and they became anything but. “Have you used these before? Either of these?”

The blush deepened, and that damn little tongue of hers came out to swipe at her lips.

“Yes. A long time ago. My... Derek used them on me. Before everything went south with us, we used to play with toys a lot. He liked clamps.”

Derek was her ex-husband. Divorced for four months or so, he knew Derek had remarried this past Christmas to the younger-than-should-be-legal-for-a-fifty-year-old man-to-marry girl he’d left Caroline for. Buck couldn’t begin to know how Caroline had felt or what had been going through the other man’s mind

to leave her, but Derek's dumbassness and loss was Buck's gain. He wasn't about to squander the gift fate had dumped in his path.

"And you?"

She looked him straight in the eye again. Since it was something she rarely did with him, he liked it and hoped she would do it more often. "I grew to love them and find I miss them."

Holy... He held on tight to both sets of clamps. "What else?"

Caroline looked around and walked over to the back wall. Floggers, whips and crops hung on hooks at various heights. She took her time looking from one end of the wall to the other, from floor to ceiling. As he watched her take them all in, he noticed the blush was gone.

"These, but none of these. These are toys, novelties, play things. Derek knew a guy who made them, and he taught me to appreciate the handmade craftsmanship, the sting that came with something being made to specifics. He spent a lot of money on toys and instruments, but always felt it was well worth it."

Buck nodded. He used to make his own floggers and had tried his hand at making a crop, but that wasn't his forte. He knew some guys that made amazing crops and some of the most beautiful whips.

He hadn't made anything in a long time, not since Derek's last order, but he didn't think Caroline knew he was the guy Derek knew. Buck hadn't had anyone personal to make anything for in recent months. Maybe he would now. "In general, which of these instruments do you like?"

"In general, the crop."

Fuck. How in the hell he was going to form any further thoughts, words and sentences? She was flaying him open at every turn. Outside she was this pretty but plain woman he'd never imagined would have a river of molten lava running through her veins. There'd been rumors of course, about Derek and her. Heck, Derek had even invited him to join in, but the last few months, all rumors and whispers were about Caroline being a block of ice, cold and untouchable. Buck hadn't seen it. To him, she was warm and sweet. If she really was the Ice Queen Derek made her out to be, she wouldn't be in here, in this store. "Anything else?"

She turned and walked to the counter, standing on the opposite side from the clerk. Inside the glass case were glass dildos. Behind her, Buck hung his head and closed his eyes. He was hard before, but with clamps and crops he was in jaw clenching pain. There was more though. There was Caroline, looking at glass cocks that would be, could be, should fucking be used inside her.

"I like these. No, that's wrong. I *love* these." She pointed to one with a red and purple swirl pattern that was about the same length and width as him at his hardest. He swallowed, and it was hard to do past the lump in his throat. "This is my favorite. I don't know why, but... It's the most realistic looking, and it's how I imagine passion to be if it were in color."

He had no idea what to say. Pretty much knew words wouldn't come out. Instead of even trying, he placed his hand on the curve of her waist where it flared out to her hip. He squeezed lightly, and she leaned

back into his body. It wasn't what he'd been expecting, but hell, nothing about her was what he'd been expecting, not from the first moment he'd met her and definitely not today. He knew she could feel his erection. There was no hiding it. No denying he was harder than a hammer. She didn't rub her ass against him. Didn't press into his dick for which he was very thankful.

Then, oh fuck, then she pointed to a butt plug, and he had to count backward from a million or he was going to come in his jeans. It was a brilliant sapphire blue glass with three graduated balls that looked to be at one-inch intervals.

"I miss having a plug inside me sometimes."

Her voice was soft, but he heard her and again, instead of being able to speak, he simply squeezed her hip.

The clerk jingled his keys in his hand. "You want to look at one? I'll open the case for you. You'd be surprised at how smooth they are, and if you hold them for a bit in your hand, the glass warms. My customers that buy them rarely ever go back to the silicone ones."

Buck looked at the man whose gaze was trained on Caroline's face. She shook her head and murmured a "no thank you" then slipped away, leaving them both staring after her. She was looking through the lingerie now. The woman was going to give him a damn heart attack there in the adult store.

"I like corsets, but, not these. I like the ones handmade for me. I don't usually buy lingerie in stores, only online lately for things other than the corsets and bustiers." She gave him a small smile that just tilted the corners of her lips. "Do you want to see what else I like?"

He couldn't handle seeing anything else, he really couldn't. "Yes."

She kissed him. With her pretty smiling mouth, she kissed him. Over the rack of corsets she didn't like because they weren't made for the curves of *her* body, she touched her soft lips to his and kissed him.

It was short and tender. Over way too soon. She pulled away and was smiling, though the blush was back. She looked directly at him, into his eyes again and he didn't dare blink.

"I like the way you look at me. That you're aroused and that you want me."

Buck nodded. Mute. It was all he could do. He was so smooth, so in control, so sure of himself that he couldn't utter one fucking word in response. All he could do was stare in awe and nod.

"I need to get home. Are you still coming back to the house?"

He nodded again and watched her turn and leave the store. The little bell jingled over the door and then it was quiet, and he was left wondering what to do next. She'd shocked the crap out of him.

"She's rare, you know?" The clerk spoke from the counter, and Buck looked over. "I don't know many women that know what they like or are confident enough to say so. She comes in here once in a while and just looks, never buys, but always seems a little sad or something."

When was the last time she had a lover? When was the last time she'd had someone touch her, want her, use her body for pleasure? He realized he still held the packages of clamps. Dumbfounded, he raised

his hand and looked at them, seeing her topless in his mind with her nipples pinched between the little metal fingers.

“She your girlfriend?”

“No.” In a daze he made purchases, his mind in a state of he wasn’t sure what, but part of it wanted to know what the hell had just happened, and the other part was making plans. He put the bag in the hidden compartment under his seat in the truck and got in, lunch forgotten. He needed to get a few things from Lowe’s, but then, it would be back to Caroline’s house. Hopefully by then, he’d have his voice and his composure back. He was still painfully hard, and he’d bet his balls were a deep, almost purple shade of blue.

He definitely should have stopped on the side of the road earlier and jacked off because now it was way beyond uncomfortable and walking through other stores was going to be a real treat. Shit.

When she left her house earlier and was at the end of the driveway, she’d hesitated when he stepped into her line of vision. Part of him had hoped she would turn around and come back and the rest of him hoped she didn’t come back for the rest of the day. When she turned out of the drive, he breathed a sigh of relief, of frustration.

He wanted her. He wanted her way too fucking much and if she’d backed up the driveway instead of turning and leaving, he wasn’t sure what would have happened. He might have met her at the door of her car and taken her back against the seat, or he might have waited for her to come to him at the shed, where he’d have considered taking her on the worktable or over the sawhorse. Either would be fine with him, especially with their recent encounter. He’d love to bend her over the sawhorse, tie her ankles to the legs, clamp her nipples and bind her wrists to one of the hooks in the wall. Whatever way he took her, he just knew he wouldn’t be able to keep his hands to himself for much longer.

He was still fascinated by the lust that ripped through him each time he thought about her, saw her, got in his truck and drove to her house, and he’d always had a thing for older women. Something about their maturity and most being very sure of what they liked and enjoyed. They were more adventurous and knew what they wanted in a man and that, turned him on in ways women his own age never had. There was roughly five years or so between he and Caroline. He was thirty-five and wouldn’t guess her to be too much more than forty. When he’d seen her in Lowe’s staring at the aisle signs, he’d been a goner. She’d had little to no make-up on, her straight dark chocolate hair pulled back in a short ponytail, her full ass in jeans with her full chest encased in a V-neck cream colored sweater, and confusion written all over her face. Even though he didn’t work there and never solicited business like that, he asked if he could help her and when she turned those whiskey colored eyes on him, his knees nearly buckled and his dick threatened him within an inch of his life if he so much as thought to walk away from her.

He couldn’t remember ever having a reaction like that to a woman. She talked to him, told him in the sultriest, most beautiful southern accent she needed some work done on her house to sell it. He’d jumped

into gear and offered to do the work for her. He was a general contractor, having grown up in his father's construction firm and knew everything there was to know about the field. And, if by chance he didn't know something, he could find someone that did without any trouble.

Shaking his head, he put his truck in gear and started to pull out of the parking lot only to make a sharp turn and head back to the corner restaurant, his reason for stopping in at the little e strip mall in the first place. The barbeque place in the back had the best all-you-can-eat pulled pork with beans and their signature barbeque potato salad. He didn't have time to sit inside though and talk with the other construction workers, electricians, or contractors, so he pulled up to the take-out window for a sandwich and tea.

Caroline had no idea she was only paying cost for his work, but as he understood it, Derek was the one actually paying to have the work done. It was something they had worked out when the house went up for sale. Derek would pay for the inspections and the repairs, and Caroline would pay the realtor commission and fees out of her part of the sale. Not for the first time, he thought perhaps he should charge labor, just to make Derek pay a little more.

Buck's contracting business did well enough and what he was doing was for her versus what he wanted from her had nothing to do with gouging her ex for money. He enjoyed helping her out and over the last few months had gotten to know a lot about her. Her simplicity, her need for her own life, to make her own way all tugged at him. But her need to give, to care for, to take care of...well, those things pulled at a different part of him, one he longed to show her.

He crossed through the intersection and parked at the contractor entrance of the home improvement store. There he finished his sandwich before going in to pick up the new screen door for Caroline's back porch and the new boards for her deck. A few of the old ones needed to be replaced and after he did that, he'd put a weatherproofing stain on it. The frame around the current screen door had a bit of dry rot, and he'd decided to simply replace the whole frame and put in a new door, one with a rolling screen that could be closed or opened.

The more work he did, the longer he'd get to be around her. Plus, the house really needed it. From the looks of things, Derek hadn't been much on upkeep and there was a lot to do. It wasn't rundown by any stretch of the imagination. It just needed some routine maintenance that came with owning a house. The floors were new inside, wood and stone and some new carpet. Caroline had had those done before she and Buck met. Whoever installed them, had done a really good job, and Buck would be looking into using them with his business.

The last thing to do before the job was finished would be to paint the inside and outside. It was amazing what a fresh coat of paint could do for the look of a house. He'd have to ask her what color she wanted to use. Neutrals were best, with little flairs of complimenting colors. And the house was already so

completely uncluttered it was as though it were a show house rather than one that was lived in day in and day out.

He wanted to help her get the best price on the sale, and the nicer the house looked, the better the sale price, even in the current economy.

He had a feeling as soon as he was done, she'd be gone. He didn't know where she was going or anything about her plans, but his gut told him he didn't have long to make his move, to touch her, hold her, play with her. He grinned. Play with her. The sooner he got his materials, the sooner he could get back to her place. And after the episode in the adult store, he had every intention of playing with her.

Chapter Two

Caroline's hands were still shaking as she held onto the steering wheel so tight her knuckles were ghostly white. She couldn't believe she'd been so forward with Buck, especially kissing him, telling him she wanted him, liked him wanting her, but... He never said anything else after she showed him the dildos and plugs. He'd been aroused. She felt it in his hand squeezing on her hip, in the press of his cock to her ass. Had she pushed him too much though? Had she been *too* forward?

Seeing him in the store surprised her, but when she heard his voice, the amused interest in it, saw his smile, something happened inside her. Her lust for the handyman took over and she showed him what he wanted to see. He wanted to know what she liked, and she was more than willing to oblige. She'd harbored the fantasy of wanting him to see her as a forty-year-old woman who had life and hunger and freedom to be herself and not the forty-year-old woman whose husband emotionally and physically left her long before she'd ever asked him to move out. It had taken a lot of courage, but then a lot of what she had done over the last year and especially over the last few months had taken more courage than she knew she possessed. Showing Buck what kind of sex toys she liked wasn't really such a big deal. If it ended up that he wasn't interested, well, that was okay. It at least showed her she could put herself out there again and express herself.

Pulling into her driveway, she had to admit to being a bit relieved he hadn't beaten her back. She'd made a few more stops before heading home and figured he'd had some errands of his own. He said he'd be back this afternoon, and she didn't doubt him. There was a job to do, and even if a personal line had been crossed in the adult store, he'd finish the work on her house.

She pressed the button on the garage door opener and drove in. She grabbed her purse and her purchases and exited the car. Leaning against the warm metal, she closed her eyes, still thinking of Buck. The arousal from earlier in the morning when she'd taken coffee to him out at the shed combined with the arousal from the adult store thrummed through her. She took a deep, shaky breath and let it out slowly. What's done was done, and it was time to get to work and stop thinking about it for a while.

"Yeah, you go ahead and try that," she muttered to herself, pushing away from the car in the direction of the door to the house. Straight into her home office, she shrugged out of her hoodie and tossed it and her purse into the corner before setting the bag from the yarn store on her worktable. She had an order to fill for

a crochet basket for a newly pregnant woman. The mother of the mom-to-be ordered the theme basket as a birthday gift, and Caroline needed to get it out in the mail first thing tomorrow.

She pulled a set of three boxes with a pale green stripe pattern from the top shelf of the closet. In the bottom box went a spiral bound crochet patterns for baby book and three skeins of hand-dyed yarn—baby green, baby yellow and a variegated purple ranging from dark violet to very light lavender. Being they didn't know what sex the baby would be, the mother'd requested colors other than pink or blue. In the middle box she put crochet needles, handcrafted and personalized with the name of the recipient. The mother'd requested that, also saying she had been given needles with her name engraved on them. It seemed to be a tradition passed down from mother to daughter during the first pregnancy.

The top box would contain a pair of white baby booties, crocheted by Caroline herself. Throughout the package, were little hidden gifts—a crochet charm, a little book about being a first time mom, a baby duck stuffed animal, even packets of decaf herbal teas and a small journal.

Caroline smiled. She loved the baby ducks. They were her signature of sorts, her extra special touch. For every gift she put together, there was always a baby duck.

She went to the chest of drawers on the opposite wall from her table and in the top drawer, rifled through the ribbons. She had a pretty purple ribbon with very thin green and brown stripes somewhere. It would be perfect for the boxes, but damn if she knew where it was. She closed the drawer and opened the second one. Nope, still nothing. Surely it wouldn't be in the third one, that's where she kept...other things, but she looked anyway.

"What are you looking for?"

Caroline slammed the drawer shut and turned her head at the voice in the doorway. Buck. She hadn't heard him drive up, hadn't heard him come in the house. "Hi. How long have you been standing there?"

"Since you started looking through the first drawer and mumbling to yourself."

"Oh." She stood from her crouching position. "I'm looking for a ribbon."

"To be tied up with?"

She grinned. She didn't mean to. It just happened. She should have been shocked instead, right? Well, maybe not, probably not, considering their earlier encounter, but it seemed her uncertainty when she was driving home of having maybe pushed went right out the window when she was face to face with him.

It had always been the other way around with other men, but with Buck, from the first time they met, she was comfortable with him. It didn't hurt that he looked like he wanted to devour her at times. And she had to remind herself that Buck wasn't a lover chosen for her by another man, by Derek. He was just a man and maybe they were choosing each other.

"Well no, but now that you mention it..." She winked at him and was rewarded with heat flaring in his eyes and a smile spreading over his mouth.

"I'll keep that in mind. I brought the stuff I needed for fixing the deck out back and the new screen door. I'll be working on it tomorrow."

"Okay. Are you leaving for today? I mean, you could have picked up what you needed tomorrow instead of coming back now."

"No, I'm not leaving today. But I am done working outside. I have some things in the house I need to do."

"Sure, okay." Arousal was back full force, and her blood was hot. He was going to be in the house working. She'd be able to hear him, probably even see him when she left her office. It was time to admit how much she wanted him, and it wasn't just a little bit. No, it was a whole hell of a lot.

She turned away, intent on going back to work. She put her hands on her hips and gazed around the room. The ribbon had to be there somewhere. She—

Her thoughts were interrupted by his voice again, though this time from right behind her, his breath on her neck, his body a solid wall at her back.

"You didn't ask what I'm going to be doing in the house."

"Oh. Was I supposed to?" She really didn't care what he was going to do. She just liked the idea of him being nearby. She was coming to like that way too much.

"Yes, you were."

"Okay. Well, what are you going to do?"

His lips feathered kisses at her ear. "You. I'm going to do you."

"I...I have to finish this for a customer." She waved her hand toward the worktable piled high with projects needing to be completed.

"Yes, I know you do, but it'll still be there in a few hours."

True. She had all night to complete things, to finish filling the orders. But would she want to? Would she want to tear herself out of Buck's arms and away from his body to start working again? She highly doubted it.

"I won't keep you away for long. I'll make sure to have you back to work soon as we're done."

"Promise?" Her heart sped up, and she wiped her hands against her jeans. When had they gotten clammy? When had she gotten nervous?

"Oh yes, sweet Caroline, I promise."

She turned and kissed him, harder than she had in the toy store. Her lips pressed into his, and her arms wrapped around his neck. His tongue pushed at her lips and she opened them, letting him inside, tasting him and purring with delight. He tasted like tea, sweet and sugary with lemon. He smelled of aftershave, but she didn't know what kind. She liked it though and wanted to know the name of it. She wanted to be able to go places and find it, smell it and remember this time with him. She sucked on his tongue and

nibbled and when she slid hers alongside his and into his mouth he did more than nibble, he bit. He ended the kiss and dropped his head to her neck, licking a trail up to her chin.

“Have you ever been with a younger man?”

“Yes.”

He smiled. “I haven’t.”

“That’s good, I guess.”

His hands, rough and strong wrapped around her back and tugged her into the hardness of his body.

“You guess? Got a thing for naughty man on man sex?”

“Mmmm. Not really, but I could probably be persuaded.”

“I’ll remember that.”

Her eyes widened. “Why?”

“Because, if it’s something you want from me, I should at least be willing to consider it. It’s what lovers do.”

“It is?” She’d never thought about things that way before. Sure, she knew being in a relationship, whether casual or serious, required give and take, but she also knew there were some sexual fantasies most people shied away from sharing or even considering fulfilling for their lovers. Then again, Derek had tried to manipulate her to gain her cooperation in his sexual games, telling her if she loved him, she’d give in. For a few years, she had, but she tired of it quickly when she realized it was for him alone and that he really didn’t care if she participated or not. It had only been a way to keep her from crying adultery. Soon after, he’d stopped caring how it looked. How it appeared. How it hurt her.

“Yes, it is. So,” he said, sliding his hands under her tee shirt to her bra, cupping her breasts through the soft lacy material, “I know about the clamps, the dildos, the naughty lingerie, the crops. What don’t I know? Is there more? Wait, what’s this I feel?”

He squeezed her nipples between his thumbs and forefingers, drawing a whimper of need from her. He’d found them. For a moment she wished she’d worn one of her new, sexy shelf bras, but then he pulled the cups down under her breasts, creating a make-shift shelf of sorts. He dropped his hands and pulled her shirt up, exposing her chest.

“Pierced? Your pretty, perfect nipples are pierced? Damn, they’re beautiful like that. Lift your arms, I want this shirt off.”

She lifted, and he pulled it free of her head and arms. His gaze zeroed in on the little silver rings, and she saw that familiar lustful look come over him. “You like them.” It was a statement, not a question, and he nodded. “No one has seen them since I had them done.”

“No one? How long ago was that?”

“December. At a place in Atlanta. I was on my way to a cabin in the mountains for the holidays. I didn’t want to be here when...”

It had been an impromptu decision, made the day she saw Derek's wedding announcement in the local paper. Things were well and truly over. It was time for her to move on, and that's exactly what she'd made a choice to do right then and there...move on.

A road trip had been planned for his wedding day and during the drive through Georgia, she decided on a few of the changes she would make. Getting her nipples pierced was just one of them. Starting a home-based business was another. Getting a tattoo and purchasing some sexy, new lingerie *she* liked and not what someone else told her to wear were the last two changes she'd made until she got to the cabin she'd booked for the Christmas week. Making the decision to move, to truly start her life over away from everything she'd known for the last almost twenty years had been the hardest one and yet at the same time, the easiest.

"When he got remarried?"

"Yes."

He grasped hold of the rings and pulled. She moaned long and low, arching, thrusting her chest forward, seeking more. "Good. I'm glad you did something for yourself." He leaned down and took one between his teeth, continuing the pressure.

She knew how much she loved it when she pinched, clamped and clipped her nipples, but she'd forgotten how much she loved it when a man touched them, especially a man with fingers roughened and callused from hard work. She'd missed the scrape against her sensitive skin, and her nipples were the most sensitive part of her body. For now.

"Are you pierced anywhere else?" he asked, continuing to toy with her.

"Not yet." The changes in her life weren't complete. If she had anything to say about it, and actually she had everything to say about it, the changes would never be finished. She would always change, grow, learn. Much as she loved submission, she had a brain and dreams of her own and any good dominant would realize stagnation was never good for anyone. That being supportive of her independence was nothing less than ensuring her devotion.

Bright blue eyes lanced her. "Yet?"

"Yet."

"You're planning on more? Where? Show me."

She had to talk herself into not looking away from him. Stripping out of her jeans and panties was an exercise in balance and nerves. His gaze never wavered. She wanted nothing more than to close her eyes and hide. She wanted nothing more than to stare back at him, show him she wasn't nervous. In that moment, everything was a contradiction. It was one thing to explore her newfound freedom and sexuality on her own, but Buck was the first lover she'd had in all these months.

"On the floor, Caroline and show me."

She dropped, lay back on the soft carpet and opened her legs. Heat filled her cheeks, her entire body, and this time she closed her eyes. Doubt swirled inside. She was older than him, but when she felt his hands on her knees, nothing but the hunger mattered and filled her.

“Smooth. I love smooth pussy, Caroline. So much sensation, so much to see, touch, taste. Show me. With your fingers, show me where you want to be pierced.”

“I...I don't think I can.”

“Oh, I think you have to. Here, I'll help you. Give me your hand.”

Caroline held her hand out and Buck took it, laying it flat against her sex. Hot, wet slickness teased her fingers into moving, sliding through sensitive flesh. Her index finger circled her clit, tapped it lightly. “Here.”

“Beautiful. Where else?”

She parted her fingers and used them to frame the outer lips of her pussy. “Here and...here.” Her fingertips fluttered against the dark pink inner lips.

“Good. Five little rings. I love it. Maybe we can loop ribbon through them...”

“Maybe.” She didn't know where it came from, but it was back, the bravado she'd had with him, the ease she'd known since she met him and she opened her eyes. His fingers joined hers in her sex, both of them teasing her until she was trembling, straining, aching. “Please, Buck, I need to come.”

“I know. I want you to. I need you to. Ever since I met you, I've wanted to know what your face would look like when you came, what your body would feel like when it shuddered against my hand, my mouth, my cock. You know this though, don't you?”

“Yes, I know. I want to know the same thing.”

He grinned at her, his fingers never stopped moving, never stopped driving her higher, harder, deeper into the clawing hunger. “Let's find out then, shall we?”

Chapter Three

Buck lowered his mouth, licked at her fingers, tempted her clit with his tongue. She smelled sweet, like vanilla, but stronger, hotter. He'd wanted women as much as he wanted her, but at the same time, he'd never wanted anyone the way he wanted her. Wanton, almost slutty, needy and desperate for his touch, his attention.

He ate at her, nibbled her cunt lips, drove his tongue inside until she creamed for him, lifting her hips and offering him more, offering him all he wanted. She was the feast he'd been starving for.

She worked her clit, and he fucked her with short stabs of his tongue. She humped his face, and he devoured her. Her free hand gripped his hair in a fist, and she rode up on his mouth, grinding herself to orgasm. Her whole body tensed, and she cried out. She screamed. She whispered his name over and over again until she dropped back to the floor and pushed at him to let up on her.

He looked up, smiled and kissed her lower belly. "Now, back to work with you."

Her breathing was starting to return to normal, and he slid up her naked form until he could kiss her mouth, transfer her incredible taste onto her tongue. Arms and legs wrapped around him until he was locked tight against her. Their kiss scorched his senses, and he was going to have zipper marks along the length of his cock from being so fucking hard.

"Mmm. Thank you," she murmured against his lips.

"You're most welcome," he murmured back. "Ever worked naked?"

She blushed again. God it screwed with his sanity when she did that. Given all her sexual experience, all her knowledge of the world, she still blushed like an innocent. He knew for a fact her husband had been anything but saintly during their marriage, and she had at times participated, but he loved the contrast in her, the seemingly two sides of her.

"No, I haven't."

"Maybe you should. Maybe you should get completely naked and finish your work."

"What are you gonna do?"

"Stay and watch."

Her eyes widened, the amber liquid color darkening. "You're not serious."

"Oh I am completely serious. We're not done, Caroline. Not by a long shot."

"I know, but to watch me work while I'm naked? Why would you want to do that?"

He disentangled himself from her arms and pulled her up. Reaching around, his fingers trailed up and down her back before tugging the hooks of her bra free and removing it. "Because."

"That's not a good enough reason."

Buck lightly slapped her on the ass. "Tough. It's the only answer you're going to get."

Her lips quirked and heat warmed her eyes. She shrugged and moved out of his arms and over to her worktable, her round ass and hips making him regret letting her go so easily. Then again, watching her move, sexy and confident, her body flushed with lingering arousal, was an amazing sight.

"Okay then."

He laughed. He had to. She was such a contradiction. One minute she was shy and innocent, even a little uncertain and the next she was sassy and flirty. She was a woman rediscovering herself, or maybe she was discovering herself on her own terms for the first time in her life. He didn't know which it was, but he would enjoy exploring with her.

At least until her house sold.

He ignored that thought and settled against the wall opposite where she was working at assembling the gift boxes. She was lost in it again and being naked didn't seem to bother her at all as she'd tried to make him believe it did, neither did him being there. It was simply new and different and out of her comfort zone. Every now and then she turned to the side, and he got a glimpse of full lush breast with the little silver ring hanging from her erect nipple. How could he not have noticed before her nipples were pierced? He'd seen her plenty of times outside, inside, with pointed nipples, and he'd never caught the slightest hint. He knew now though, and he would be playing with them as often as possible and the fact she wanted other piercings... Shit, his cock strained at his jeans again, wanting out, wanting to feel her against him without the jewelry, and then with them.

But she's moving.

Shit. Didn't seem like the thought was going to leave him alone until he acknowledged it. He didn't know when she was moving. Was she waiting for the house to sell or was she going to move as soon as the repairs were done? Far as he knew, there'd been no bites on the house yet.

"What are you thinking?"

He lifted his eyes to her face. "What do you mean?"

She laughed. "You were staring at my nipples when I turned around, and you didn't hear me say your name."

"Oh. Sorry. I was thinking about the house and you moving." No sense in hiding things from her. Before she left, whether it was in a week, two weeks or two months, he was pretty damn sure they were going to have a relationship of some sort that went well beyond employer/employee. There was no reason to lie or keep anything from her.

"What about it?"

She knelt on the floor at his feet. He liked her like that. “When are you moving?”

“When you’re done. I have enough left over from the divorce settlement that I can put a down payment on the new place. But, as you can see I haven’t been in much of a hurry. I haven’t asked how long it would take you, and I haven’t started any serious packing.”

Fuck. So she wasn’t going to wait until the house sold. “Where are you going?”

“North Georgia. The mountains.”

He reached up and rubbed a piece of hair between his fingers. It was soft, silky, like her skin, like the sweet juices between her thighs. “Where you went at Christmas?”

“Yes.” She slid her hands up and down his legs from ankle to knee. “I found a cabin there and as of last week, it was still for sale.”

“It’s beautiful there. I went hiking a few years ago along parts of the Appalachian Trail. I didn’t make it far before it began to kick my ass, but I’d love to give it a try again. I fell in love with the outdoors that summer.”

“Yes, the cabin I want is not too far off the trail. The area is full of history. It was my first Christmas alone, and I spent it in the Smokies. It was my first white Christmas too.”

“I’ve never had one of those.”

“It was magical, and I was really glad for hot chocolate and a fireplace.”

“No doubt.” He wasn’t going to pursue the conversation any further. He had the information he wanted, and he could move them forward. He opened his legs and pulled her between them, pressed right up against his crotch, used his hands to grip her hair and pull her mouth down to his. “Are you finished with the gift?” he asked against her lips.

“Yes, for now. I still can’t find the ribbon.”

“We’ll look later. I promise to help.” His lips took hers in a soul searching, soul searing kiss. He wanted to imprint himself on her as deeply as he could. He wanted her to crave him, need him. He. Wanted. Her. All of her. And she would know without a doubt she was his before she walked away from him. She’d been Derek’s but this was different, he needed her to know this was different than that. She had power with him, freedom she’d not had with Derek. “I have something for you. Come on. It’s in the living room.”

“What is it?”

“You’ll have to come with me and find out.” She started to stand, but he stayed her with a hand on her shoulder. “No, no walking. I want you to crawl.”

“Crawl?” Her brows drew down and scrunched over her eyes. “Why do you want me to crawl?”

“Submission. I think being on your knees, crawling, being bound are things you might like. Just a feeling I have about you. If I’m wrong, tell me.”

He watched her carefully, waited for the denial he knew wouldn’t come. He’d rarely been wrong about women, especially submissive women. For some it was an innate part of them, for others it was

something they aspired to, and still for others, it was a game. Caroline's submissive nature was a part of her as much as her creativity and need for expression was. He didn't think it was something she wanted to live all the time, but he did think it was what she wanted in her sex life. And he was more than happy to give it to her, as hard or as soft as she wanted it.

"No. You aren't wrong."

"Good."

"I was afraid I'd scared you earlier."

It was his turn to look perplexed. "Scared me? Why would you think that?"

"Well, even though I haven't dated in a long, long time, and we haven't been involved with one another aside from the work on the house or the occasional conversation, finding out I liked those particular toys and activities..." She shrugged and let the words simply hang there in the air between them.

Buck smiled inside. She'd never had any notion of his true nature. He wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad one. He'd been the one trying not to frighten her off in case he'd been wrong. She was right about that. They hadn't gone *there* until earlier, but signs of attraction and hunger were always evident between them.

He lightly caressed her cheek. "You couldn't scare me off if you tried, sweet Caroline. It seems as though I haven't opened up enough about me and what I like. Otherwise, you'd have known what can of worms you'd opened in the store." He winked. "Come on."

Buck stood and left the room, turning his head once to see her following about three feet behind, her heavy breasts swaying beneath her, her head held high, a wicked twinkle in her eyes. She was a naughty thing and probably deserved a spanking for being so damn tempting. A chain would be beautiful linking the rings in her nipples. A fairly heavy chain too.

"Stop when you get to the edge of the couch." He pulled the clover clamps from the bag and pried open the plastic packaging. He usually kept all his small toys, like clamps, in little velvet drawstring bags. He supposed he was a bit anal about it. The different types were always in certain colored bags. Clover clamps like the ones he held in his hand at the moment would be in a blood red bag. The clamps with the sharp metal teeth would be in a deep sapphire bag. Tweezer clamps would be in yellow velvet. He found this method helped him to find exactly what he was looking for without having to search high and low. Most dominants he knew were a tad OCD when it came to their toys and other possessions. They were neat, tidy, very well organized and Buck knew he was no different. They were also business owners or at least in high-level positions that afforded them a great deal of control over things. He wasn't any different in this either. His father had been a business owner and a dominant in the BDSM lifestyle, and Buck had followed directly in his footsteps.

The clamps hung from his palm when he turned to Caroline. Her eyes widened and lit from within with a fire that fairly leapt out at him. "You bought them? For me?"

"I did. But, they are for us. They will bring you the pain you seem to want and me the pleasure of being able to give it to you." The eagerness in her gaze reached out and grabbed his dick, squeezing tight. Determined, measured steps took him to her. "Up on your knees. Yes, good." He sat on the couch, positioning her toward him. "How long has it been?"

"A little more than a year"

"You've not played with clamps on your nipples yourself?"

"No."

"What about clothespins?"

"Yes, I've used them."

"But nothing else and nothing since the piercings?"

"No."

The pleasure he felt at being the first since Derek to touch her sexually, and the only man to see the sweet rings in her nipples should have alarmed the crap out of him. It didn't though. It only made his desire for her burn hotter. "Because of your rings, I'll put the clamps on at the top and bottom position rather than the normal side of the nipples."

Caroline nodded. "I know."

Buck leaned in and kissed the tip of her nose, then licked the seam of her lips. On her gasp, he slid his tongue inside her mouth and swallowed her cry when he released the clamp onto her nipple. He loved that sound, and it had been too damn long since the last time he'd heard it. Lifting his mouth briefly, he saw a light sheen of tears in her eyes. "Do you still want the other one? Or do you want me to remove the first one, and we won't play like this yet?"

"I want it. Please, Buck, I want it," she whispered, nodding her head and blinking rapidly trying to keep the tears from falling.

He pressed on the clamp, and it opened. The closer he brought it to her nipple, the tighter she seemed to bite her bottom lip. His gaze traveled her body and found her belly visibly quivering, her thighs pressed tight together. He would bet a year's pay she was soaked. He let go of the springs on the clamp, and it grasped her nipple in its evil grip. She cried out, this time without the benefit of his kiss to mute it and the tears did fall, streaming down her face.

When her entire body trembled, he quickly lowered his hand and forced it between her legs. Sure fucking enough she was drenched, and the naughty woman was coming. Shit. Her juice flowed over his fingers and when he slid one inside her, the walls of her sex clamped down and pulsed.

He lifted it to her face a few minutes later. "Suck it off."

And she sucked and cleaned his finger and palm until she'd gotten every drop. Her tongue swirled between each of his fingers, and he was ready to explode.

He tugged on the chain when she was done, and she fell into him. "You came without permission."

“You didn’t tell me I had to wait for it or ask.”

Her breath smelled of pussy, of sex and orgasms. It was one of his favorite things, a woman tasting herself, sucking down her own cream. And dammit, she had him, hook, line and sinker. “No, you’re right. I didn’t. Do you want me to? Do you want to be required to seek permission?”

“No.”

He pulled the chain again, this time keeping the tension on it. The clamps tightened on her nipples each time he tugged, and he knew it drove her closer, higher. God, she was so responsive. “Good. I want you to come whenever you need to. I want you to give into the passion, the hunger, the feelings, but, should I ever change my mind, I expect you to obey me.”

“I will.”

“I don’t hold to Sir or Master or any other title. I want you to feel comfortable with me, I want you to see *me* when we do this, even if it’s only casual and playful. Respect is more action than word unless I tell you otherwise.”

“So, you have experience? Well, obviously you have experience, but...how much?”

“A whole lifetime of it. My father was a Dom, and my mother was a submissive. Though they never played in front of me, I saw something different between them than I did with my friends’ parents. I was probably sixteen when I asked about it. The way she looked at him, the way he looked at her. There was just...I didn’t know how to explain it or put definition to it, so I asked my father. I found myself treating my girlfriends different than I saw my buddies treating theirs. Some liked it, some didn’t. Those that didn’t, wanted to sass and snark at me, be bossy, or have me at their beck and call. I wouldn’t take it, and I wouldn’t rise to the bait.”

She nodded and pulled up a little, hissing at the pain. “I didn’t know about any of it until I met my husband. The first few months he talked to me about it, I was entranced and when we started playing, well, I was hooked. He taught me about pain and pleasure and how they played off one another. He got into bringing others into it after we were married, and at first I didn’t know what to think. It was fun, a lot of fun, and I found I liked playing with both women and other men, only when Derek was there though. He wanted more than once in awhile. He wanted to swing, but, I didn’t and then he wanted to play with others freely, whenever the urge struck, whether we were sharing the experience or not. That was the beginning of the break in our relationship.”

“We won’t ever do anything you don’t want to do. At least, not things like that. I have no interest in bringing in another woman, but if you want one, I’ll be more than happy to sit back and watch you bury your face in a pussy and make her come. And we’ve already touched on the other man thing.” He eased up on the chain slowly, and she sagged, breathed a little easier. “I want all your pleasure and every ounce of your pain. I have your respect and you have mine, there is also trust between us and it will continue to grow. We can have fun now.”

Chapter Four

Buck leaned back against the couch and unbuttoned his jeans. The zipper rasped loud in the quiet of the room. Her nipples throbbed, and her pussy ached with hunger. It had been so long, and she was on the edge again. She'd come quickly when he'd put his mouth to her, and she'd exploded inside when he'd attached the clamps. Just the talk of clamps had had her primed and teetering on the brink. The first bite of new pain pushed her right over the side of the precipice and then his hand was there, steadying her, fingers filling her, and she found her center, her anchor.

Since getting the piercings, her nipples were more sensitive and adding the clamps intensified it in a way she'd never experienced before. And she wanted more. So much more.

He reached into his black briefs and pulled his cock out. The tip was wet and a deep ruddy color. He was hard and the more she stared, the more he stroked the length with his fist wrapped around the shaft.

"Offer me the chain."

Without hesitation, Caroline lifted the chain between her breasts. On her palms, she held it out to him and sighed as the tension tightened the pressure on her nipples. He sat forward on the edge of the couch cushion. "Spread your knees. Good." He wedged his leg between them, straightened it until his knee was bent only slightly. The toe of his boot pointed up. "Scoot back until you feel the end of my boot against that sopping wet pussy of yours."

She did as he asked and tried to contain the shudder that went through her when she felt the roughness of the work boot on her clit. Between the edge of the sole and the top of the toe area, the friction was devastating.

He took her by the arm. "Lean forward. Yes, that's it. Very good. Now, settle your weight on my shoe."

The position had been precarious at best until that last instruction. God, it felt so naughty.

"Now, for the fun. Your mouth and my cock are about to meet. I expect you to be polite."

The chain was draped over his cock, effectively dropping her mouth down over the head. There was no chance for teasing, no chance to get to know his cock. When she tried to lift her head, the clamps tightened. Damn, oh damn, oh damn.

"Oh good girl, you've figured out what happens when you move up. You won't be sucking me, will you? Not like you might have thought."

His hands slid into her hair, fisted, and used her mouth to stroke his cock much like his hand had done. "Tighten your lips around me. Tighter. Good." Her body was at an angle, suspended in a way, her mouth, her breasts, her pussy in his control at the same time. With a tentative move, she rubbed her clit against his boot. That, as well, pulled on the chain, on the clamps, but the pleasure zinging through her was well worth it.

"That's it. Do it again. Make yourself come because, damn, Caroline, I'm gonna join you this time."

His voice was rough when he spoke, the words ground out between harsh breaths. She couldn't see his face, only his lower belly, the springy pubic hair around his cock that was a darker brown than the hair on his head. He stretched her lips, kept her mouth full and was hard as a steel rod. She closed her lips around the shaft and pulled her cheeks in, making him groan. She liked that sound, that pleasure.

Her tongue pressed on the large vein traveling the length of his cock, and she raked the shaft with her teeth, limited movement be damned. "That's so good."

Caroline wiggled her ass, her clit on his boot and for a few moments did nothing but provide him with a hole for his cock to plunder as she concentrated on her needy clit, on the growing flutters in her belly. It was strong, this need to come again. This one would make three in just a couple hours and while the hunger usually went away afterward for a bit, not with him, not with Buck. She just got hungrier with him.

"Oh yeah, make my sweet pussy cream. Fuck that clit to an orgasm."

She did too. She ground her cunt on his boot, used it as her own personal toy and rubbed her naughty little button against it until her body tensed, then let itself go. The second she started to come, Buck released both clamps on her nipples and the scream that reverberated around his cock couldn't be contained.

Tears pricked her eyes again as the blood traveled through her body, flowing back into her breasts and nipples. The prickling, tingling sensations made her gasp, and she fisted her hands in the cushions on either side of Buck's legs.

"So, so beautiful, Caroline." He thrust into her mouth, his movements quickening until he shoved her head down, her nose pressed into his flesh, his come coating her throat. Her gag reflex kicked in, but she ignored it, pushed through it. She swallowed much of the salty, bitterness until he eased his hold on her head. She licked at what had leaked from the corners of her mouth and then lifted her head when Buck fell back into the couch cushions. He withdrew his foot and with his hand on her arm again, urged her into his lap, straddling his thighs. He wrapped her against him, buried his face in her neck, and she snuggled into his warmth.

She was going to miss him. She'd known it for weeks. The longer he hung around working on the house, the more she'd grown attached to him but now, after this, and what would continue to happen between them before she moved made the feeling more keen. She was going to really miss him.

But not until she was gone. While she was still with him, she was going to enjoy everything about him. She was going to enjoy every inch of him.

“You okay? Your nipples are gonna be very sore for a day or two.”

“I’m fine. And the soreness is a wonderful thing. I have missed it.”

He pet her hair, and she sighed. Aftercare. She could come down from the high, from the orgasms, the pain slowly, carefully. She’d missed this too. Perhaps more than anything else. She’d missed the connection, the closeness, the affectionate touch of another human being, a man to be specific.

“Why do you like the pain?”

“It makes me feel alive. It reminds me pleasure is beyond the pain. It keeps me in the moment, gives me a focus when I wish to escape.”

“Why would you need to escape?”

“Some of the situations Derek put me in were emotionally hard. So long as I had the pain or the extreme pleasure, I could enjoy myself.”

“Such as? Give me an example. And don’t look away from me, don’t hide yourself from me.” He tugged her head by the hair he fisted in his hand. When it came to her emotions, he found she would close her eyes or turn her head. He could well imagine how emotionally hurt she’d been with Derek. He’d heard stories, had even dated women that had played with Caroline and Derek and while he wasn’t averse to sharing his lovers or using another’s lover with permission, he was averse to hurting someone, emotionally or mentally.

Caroline focused on his mouth. He could deal with that.

“One night he took me to a party. I was dressed in nothing but a black fishnet body suit with an opening between my legs. When we walked into the party, a girl came to us, knelt on the floor and the connection between them was palpable. The look in her eyes when she was staring at him, and the look in his...they’d been together. I knew it, could feel it. He ordered her to a bedroom, and he followed her. I was an afterthought. He finally turned around and held his hand out to me.”

Buck caressed her lips with the pad of his thumb. “He made you play with her?”

“Yes, but that wasn’t my problem. I always enjoyed playing with other women, had my first sexual experience with a woman, but this time, with this girl wasn’t enjoyable.”

“What happened?” Her eyes were still focused on his mouth.

“I couldn’t get wet. She was eating my pussy and after a while lifted her head and told Derek I wasn’t wet, that it wasn’t working. He pulled out some clamps and tugged me up on my knees and ordered her down on her back between my legs again. The clamps worked. They gave me something else to focus on other than the fact he’d been with her without me. It was the first time I’d been confronted with it. I could only feel *that* pain. I could only feel the tongue licking me. I could close my eyes and feel nothing beyond that moment. But...but when the orgasm was over and I opened my eyes again and saw him fucking her,

saw the pleasure on his face I was reminded again that they'd been together. I got off of her face and walked out, tossing the clamps on the floor."

On the last few sentences, she'd raised her gaze to his. No regret there, no sadness in the dark golden color. She was free of the pain of the past, but he knew there was something left over, something she was able to let go of when she was with him or when she was working. He'd watched her enough to see peace and calm settle over her when he knew she had no idea he was there. At first, she was a bit timid with him, smiling, but it didn't quite reach her eyes. Her smile said "hi", her eyes said "fuck me please". The way her pupils would always dilate and darken when she talked to him. He liked it. He wanted to see it more. He wanted their sexual relationship to bleed into other areas of her life, the way it made her feel, all beautiful and sexy and strong. She might be submitting to him sexually, but she was stronger for it.

Different people responded to sex in different ways. For him, well, hell he was a guy. It made him want to keep fucking day and night, maybe take a break for food and a nap. For her though, for his Caroline, it put her in touch with feelings that remained locked away in normal circumstances. He'd seen the change take place the second before she'd kissed him in the store earlier. And it kept growing. She was relaxed, calm, free. For all the humiliating scenes Derek had put her through, she'd grown from it and still loved getting down and dirty.

Buck grinned. She was also wet as hell. "Time for you to get back to work."

She buried herself in his neck and shook her head. "I don't want to," she mumbled.

"I know, but, the sooner you finish your project, the sooner we can play some more."

With that, she lifted her head again and the heat flared between them.

"Yeah?"

She sounded eager like a kid being told they could have anything in the store they wanted. He should know. He used to sound just like that when his father would take him on his birthday to the store of his choice and tell Buck to pick out one thing he wanted, anything, regardless of cost. For the first few years, he picked out the most outrageous junk he really hadn't wanted, but as a test to see if his father actually meant it. After a while though he'd become more discerning, picking out things that would one day have meaning, things he truly wanted. That was the look and sound of Caroline right then, sitting on his lap. "Yes."

She smacked a kiss on his lips and scrambled off his thighs. "Okay. I'll be done soon."

She took off toward her office and, from the sounds coming from it, she could have been taking the walls down for all the noise she was making. Buck couldn't help but laugh as he got up to go help her. After all, he'd said he would if she obeyed and played with him.

He shucked his clothes and flowed in her footsteps, his dick bobbing against his stomach. "Yeah, you'll get to play inside her soon."

Caroline tied the bow on top of the box and set it aside. She was naked. She couldn't believe she'd worked the last couple hours completely naked, wet, horny and hungry. She'd never gotten so much done in her life in so short a period of time. Damn, it seemed playtime with Buck was a really good motivator.

She smiled at the thought.

He'd helped her look for the ribbon as he'd promised and then he'd left the office to take care of some smaller items in another part of the house. "Wonder if he's still naked too?"

And God, he was gorgeous naked. His body was hard and tanned, and she couldn't remember seeing a tan line of any kind anywhere. She could well imagine how beautiful he'd be nude and in the sun. Fresh need pooled between her thighs, and a new ache settled inside her. She likely wouldn't be around to see him in the summertime. "Shit. Not supposed to get all caught up in him."

And yet, she knew better than that. She'd known the second her lips touched his in the store, she was caught, hooked on, had fallen for him. If she were really honest with herself, she'd admit she'd fallen for him the minute she met him in the Lowe's.

He'd come out of nowhere, like a knight in burnished armor. His dark, sun-streaked hair and his bright blue eyes, his sexy smile, rough and callused hands, his height and the bulge in his jeans... Well, she'd wanted to jump him right there in front of the paint section, maybe even try a few colors on. Just looking at him that day had told her he was younger and damn, she hadn't cared, which was actually kind of interesting.

Derek had been older than her, by a good ten years and her favorite lovers during their time of experimenting with others had been the older men. Younger ones just hadn't appealed to her, weren't patient, and most hadn't had a clue about more than sticking it in and riding. And the whole element of D/s was lost on some and the others tried, but she found herself having to take the lead more often than not. That certainly hadn't appealed to her.

"What are you thinking about?"

She started. Again. Dammit. He had a terrible habit of being able to sneak up on her and she had not even known it. "What makes you think I'm thinking about anything?"

"You've been staring out the window for a while. I've been standing here watching the kids at the end of the street looking and pointing at the naked woman."

"What?"

Caroline looked out the window and sure enough, the three boys who usually took care of her rather large yard were standing out at the road. Brett, the youngest at sixteen, had the audacity to grin and wave. "Oh God." Heat flooded her cheeks, and she stepped out of their line of sight. "How am I going to be able to look at them again when they come to take care of the yard? What will their mother's think of me?"

"I wouldn't worry about any of it. They won't tell anyone except other guys at school they saw their hot, sexy single neighbor naked. And when they come to do the yard, they'll sport boners and be lost in their fantasies when they look at you."

"They shouldn't be fantasizing about me. Why didn't you come and close the shutters or at least move me away?"

He smirked and quirked an eyebrow. He looked so good. "Why the hell would I do that? I liked the view from behind as much as they liked the front view. Besides, it's every guy's fantasy, and you gave them material to last for the next year just by standing there."

"You're a pervert."

"And you're not? Sweet, sweet Caroline." He walked closer, and her breath hitched in her chest. "My sweet, sweet Caroline. You're as naughty as I am. You're as kinky. You're beautiful and lush and everything a real woman should be. Don't be shy about it." He brushed his fingers against her cheek, her lips, down her throat. The drag of the unevenness of his skin left faint scratches that disappeared in mere seconds and the heat radiating off him, which seeped into her had her squirming against the wall. "You wouldn't intentionally stand there naked for those boys. It just happened."

He was right. Caroline knew he was right, and she couldn't deny the little thrill that went through her when Brett had waved. It wasn't that it was them. It was that she was being watched, looked at, admired. She'd always liked that and had been able to get lost in it, turned on by it to the point of orgasm at the slightest touch.

"See, you are a bit of a perv. You like it. Exhibitionism. You like voyeurs." He kissed her lips, pulled her bottom lip between his and bit down. Not enough to break the skin, but enough to make her pussy gush and her thighs squeeze. When he let go, slowly, oh so slowly, it took every ounce of self-control she possessed not to dive in to his mouth. "Now, tell me what you were thinking about?"

"You. I was thinking about you."

He draped his wrists over her shoulders, and she wrapped her hands around his forearms, feeling the play of muscles when he moved his fingers over her skin again. She loved his touch. What would those hands be like on her ass, spanking her? What would the toughened, chapped digits feel like against the tender, freshly spanked flesh? She wanted to know. Now.

"Spank me."

That one eyebrow lifted again. "That's what you were thinking about?"

"No. Not until right now. Not before. Before I was thinking about your age."

"What about it?"

"You're younger than me, and I've always preferred men older than me."

"Interesting. Does it bother you?"

"No. And that *is* the interesting thing. I am not bothered by it at all."

“Good. It’s only what? Five years difference? Not a big deal.” He kissed the tip of her nose and tugged on the ends of her hair. “Bend over the table. Elbows on the edge, hands flat against the surface.”

“The table? In front of the window?”

“Yes. Now.”

“Are you going to close the shutters?”

Chapter Five

It wasn't like she really cared. She was already moving into position at the table. The hard, cool surface of the wood felt good, solid while her knees were a little shaky. She leaned down, the point of her elbow even with the edge of the table and lowered her forearms until her hands lay flat. She stared, unseeing at the calendar affixed to the wall in front of her.

She couldn't see him. She could only hear him breathing, feel his stare. She didn't have to turn around to feel it. When she wasn't lost so deep in thought, she could sense him watching her, staring at her. At those times she would turn and wave, smile and he'd smile back and wait until she turned away from him first before he would go back to work. It was odd, really, but it had never filled her with any unease. His looking was appreciative, sexy, and told her she was hot.

"I don't think it matters to you, does it?"

Right now she was scorching. She was going to burn in Hell. "Yes."

Behind her, Buck laughed. "Liar. You don't. If you did, you wouldn't be bent over already. I must say, it is a very nice picture you present too."

He was right. His words mirrored her own thoughts more or less, she just found she wasn't as comfortable admitting it out loud. It made it real then, her enjoyment of being seen, of being watched.

"Do you think it's wrong?"

"Do I think what's wrong?"

He was going to make her say it. She'd opened up a great deal to him in the course of a few hours, but there was still so much inside her she hadn't let out. With Buck she knew she could be herself. That was evident to her in the store. She could be herself with Derek too, but the difference was with every inch she gave Derek, he took more than she was ready for at any given time. Buck might push her, but she had a feeling he'd back off too if she wasn't ready to take things as far as he wanted to go.

Not only could she be herself with him, she could be who she wanted to be with him. And with moving soon... Was it even wise for her to be getting involved? The answer was no. It's not like she woke up this morning thinking "I'm going to seduce Buck today."

The moving thing was the big elephant, not her exhibitionist tendencies. Was she ready to admit that one?

"That I like it. Being watched."

“I don’t think it’s wrong at all. It’s very erotic. Some might see it as not quite right, even a bit tawdry, but I like it. Sexy as hell if it turns you on.”

So was his hand on her ass. He was rubbing with light circular motions. Goose bumps covered her skin, and her muscles began to relax, sending her into a false sense of tenderness. She knew what was coming but couldn’t convince her mind to tell her body to get ready, to tense for the smack she wanted so badly. She’d asked for the spanking, and Buck would deliver it. The man was always true to his word and did everything he could to please his customers. Even though right then she wasn’t his customer or his client. She was his lover. She w—

The slap landed right in the center of her butt cheek and jolted her from her thoughts. The small sting was delicious and before she could revel in it, a second landed, then a third, each one harder than the one before.

Caroline waited for the tension in her shoulders to take over, but again, it stayed away and she was relaxed, anticipating the burn on her other cheek. She wanted it, craved it, much like she wanted and craved the clamps. There was something to be said for a little pain giving a whole lot of pleasure.

Buck’s hand continued to stroke, to caress, to tease her. She lost herself in the feel of him, a little younger, vital and full of life. It was exactly how she felt inside when he looked at her with that fiery twinkle in his eyes or when his smile broke out. It was exactly how she’d felt earlier in the living room, kneeling on the floor with his cock in her mouth. Full of life. Hungry to live as she wanted, on her terms, submitting yet independent. Could it be done? Derek hadn’t thought so, but Buck...

His hand slid up her back, right over her spine, the heel of his palm pressing down against the ridges. It felt so good and when he gripped her shoulder, massaging the already relaxed muscle into further relaxation, she moaned, arched her back.

He spanked her then with his other hand. The sound loud in the silent room. That hand too was chapped, rough against her skin. That cheek as well received three slaps followed by the tender, gentle caress of the first.

The hand holding her by the shoulder slid into her hair and grabbed hold, fisting in the locks. A series of spanks between each cheek played out. She lost count and focus. She was wet between her legs, wet enough that it pooled and slid onto her upper thigh. Her nipples throbbed, and she could have sworn the clamps were still attached. The arousal sang through her, lit her up inside and she spread her thighs apart, thrusting her ass back toward him.

And then he was there, naked, same as she was, his cock leaving a trail of stickiness on her stinging ass cheeks, cool and thick.

Buck thrust, his balls heavy, lightly slapping against her clit. “Is this what you want, sweet Caroline?”

She had to lick her lips before she could answer him they were so parched. “Yes,” she breathed. Then, louder, clearer. “Yes. Yes, it’s what I want.”

“Say it. Tell me.”

“Your cock. I want it inside me. Now.”

“Good. Then we both want the same thing.” He leaned down over her back, his chest warmer than her already heated flesh. He lifted his hips off hers and slipped his cock between her legs, nestling it between the lips of her pussy. His breath feathered over her ear, fanned her cheek. “What about birth control,” he whispered. “You said you haven’t been with anyone since Derek. I haven’t been with anyone since I started working for you and before that, I used condoms, always.” He placed a soft kiss on the shell of her ear followed by a nip with his teeth on the lobe. “What about the times Derek shared you?”

“C-condoms too. Everytime. He never wanted me on the pill so he insisted on condoms.”

“Are you on the pill?”

Caroline nodded. “Yes.” It was the first thing she’d done for herself after Derek left. She got on birth control. She was in charge of her life. She’d be in charge of her health too. She wasn’t promiscuous. That much was obvious by the fact she hadn’t had any lovers since him and if she didn’t know the person like she knew Buck, she’d have insisted on a condom as well, but...not with him, not with Buck. She’d talked to him enough, learned enough about him, his character. She trusted him.

“Then put me inside. Reach down and put me inside.”

He waited to feel it after lifting himself off her back, but not before kissing the curve of her shoulder, not before sliding both hands up and down her sides. He held her hips, the head of his cock drifting over her clit. The intake of breath and little wiggle against his pelvis told him just how much she liked the contact.

“Put me inside, Caroline.”

She dropped her arm and reached under her body. He felt the anticipation all the way to the ends of his toes. The touch of her fingers on his cock was something akin to heaven and hell all at the same time. She followed his retreat until the head nudged at her opening. She widened her stance, and pushed her hips back at the same time she put gentle pressure on the tip of his cock.

“That’s it. Just a little more.”

He was seriously thinking he’d die before he ever got inside her. He’d jacked off thinking about her more than he cared to admit, twice since he’d returned from the hardware store, one of those times being after they found the ribbon and he’d excused himself to go to the restroom. She was the reason he’d not been with anyone else in a few months. She was the reason for the blue balls he found himself with since meeting her. She was the reason for a lot of things, the current one causing him the most exquisite pain imaginable.

Two fingers split under the head of his penis and pulled gently until he started to slide in. She was tight, unbelievably so. Wet. Hotter than a furnace. Unmistakably the best fucking cunt he’d ever had the

pleasure of. Once fully seated inside her, she cupped his balls, squeezed them at the same moment she squeezed his dick with her vaginal muscles, and he came close to losing it. “Damn, Caroline.”

She let go, returned her arm to the table, stretched her hands out until she could wedge them between the wall and the other edge of the wooden surface. She was holding on. Smart woman.

Buck pulled out even slower than he’d entered, but pushed forward hard and fast. He did it again the same way and the difference between the two startled him. She gripped him tight, not wanting to let go when he slipped out, but when he forced his way back in, the walls opened up, then contracted and she thrust back into him.

She liked it rough. She not only liked the naughty toys and kink, but liked to be ridden, taken, devoured by the sex and bliss. He could give her that. He could give her anything she wanted, anything she needed.

“Up on your toes. Yep, good.” His hand between her shoulder blades kept her down on the table and lifted her ass, dropped his cock inside her at a different, deeper angle. He loved it. Something about a woman in this helpless position... Next time he’d have her in the bed, on her knees where she could bounce and ride him, but for now, the way he had her, she could only be ridden.

“You okay?”

She turned her head, lay her cheek on the table and blew at her hair to get it out of her face. “Yeah.”

He helped her out, letting go of her hip and reaching up, sweeping the strands off her cheek and into his fist. Her hiss when he pulled it tight made him smile. “You know what this position is about, don’t you Caroline?”

“Yes, I think so.”

“Tell me.” Leaning down over her back again, he was able to look into her face when he pulled it up by the hold he had on her hair. Her eyes were dark, melted chocolate. There was a bit of drool at the corner of her mouth that he licked at.

“Power. Control.”

“Yes. Mine. And yours.”

“How do I have any? You’re on me, in me, holding me down.”

“Yes, but if you don’t stay up on your toes, I stop. That’s your power here. You can call a stop to this at any time with word or action.” As he talked, he continued to slide in and out of her. He never stopped the fucking, never stopped the pleasure.

“Do you understand? You have more power here than I ever will.”

“I understand.”

He kissed her lips, ravaged her mouth, sloppy and harsh by the angle of their heads, but when he lifted his head she was smiling at him. He used her hair as a rein and tore into her. The pounding made her

whimper, cry out, scream as her clit rubbed against the edge of the table. By her reaction, she hadn't realized the possibilities.

"Oh damn, Buck," she breathed.

He grinned behind her. She stretched and wriggled around, strained at his unyielding clasp, came and the pulsing of her walls against his shaft taught him a quick lesson in resistance. And he failed it. He pulled out until only the head was inside her, let go of her hair, then slammed back inside, pushing her higher and further up the table. When he started to come, he pulled back again, filling just the entrance with his semen.

A few slow slides inside, a kiss to the back of her head, a nuzzle of her neck. "Lower your feet." She did and his cock slid out, bringing with it a line of cream down the inside of her thighs. With gentle hands on her shoulders, he helped her to stand, then picked her up with his arms around her back.

"Buck, put me down. You can't carry me."

"Shut up, sweet Caroline, and wrap yourself around me."

She looked like she wanted to argue with him but she didn't, simply wrapped her arms and legs around him as he told her. She wasn't as heavy as she thought she was. Yeah, she was bigger, heavier than a size eight girl, but he wasn't a lightweight either. Her softness pillowed against his body, and he loved the warmth. They came drenched him as he walked with her into the living room.

He set her down in the recliner, then grabbed the blanket from the back of the couch. When she realized he intended to join her in the chair, she turned herself and pressed back, making room for him. He got them covered and after a few trial and error moves, they ended up on their sides, facing one another with drowsy eyes.

"Are you staying?"

"All night."

"We're not done, then?"

"Nope." He brushed his hand over her face, his fingers barely touching her eyelashes. "Close your eyes, Caroline. You're gonna need your strength."

"I forgot, you know."

He thought she'd dozed off. He had. And her tone of voice was soft as it whispered its way across his face. "Forgot what," he murmured.

"The window. Being in front of it."

"I know, and I'm glad. You gave in to what you wanted and forgot to worry. Worry is my job. You have some interesting hungers, fetishes. I want to explore them all." He tugged her closer and wedged his thigh between her legs. They were in a precarious jumble of limbs in the chair, but he wouldn't trade the closeness, the intimate connection for anything.

"Okay." She yawned. "Me too." She squirmed and ground her clit against his leg before settling in again. Within seconds her breathing was even, and she was asleep.

Dear God, she knew how to get to him, how to buckle his knees, and he didn't even think she knew it. Heaven help him if she ever figured it out. As it was, he wanted to rut like an animal every time he was around her and now that he'd been inside her, fuck...he was so screwed. Literally and figuratively. How the hell was he going to let her go?

Chapter Six

Caroline walked around the edge of the shed. “Neil Diamond? Really?”

Buck smiled and damn if her knees didn’t weaken, her heart stutter to a stop and her pussy tingle. She did her level best to keep her arm and hand steady when she held out a cup of coffee. This had become a morning ritual, even before they became lovers. When she got up out of bed, she’d shower and dress and bring coffee out to him.

“Something about him this morning seemed kind of catchy.” He winked. “I couldn’t get a few of his songs out of my head, one in particular, so I figured easiest way was to listen. Sweet Caroline...” He sang a couple lines as he took the mug from her and held it up in a gesture of appreciation. “Thanks. Are you named after the song?”

“Yeah. I used to hate hearing it.” *Now, not so much.*

“Why that one?”

“I believe the night I was born my mom was supposed to go see him in concert. That was before she found religion and declared the world evil.”

“Oh. You’re not close then?”

“No. Not since I moved out and married Derek. She and my father didn’t even attend our wedding because we weren’t saved by the Holy Trinity, weren’t married in a church and had been living in sin.”

“I’m sorry. Brothers or sisters?”

“A sister. Haven’t talked to her in ages either. She followed in their footsteps. The only family I was ever close to was my grandparents.”

“They still living?”

“No.”

He took a sip of the coffee, then another, and another. His shoulder-length brown hair blew in the wind, and his dark eyelashes fluttered against his tanned skin. He seemed to be enjoying the strong brew and that small thing made her happy. Though her marriage was laughable toward the end, she did miss taking care of a man, seeing to his needs. It went against everything the modern woman was supposed to be and do, but Caroline didn’t see it that way, never had. It was partly why she’d always felt like an outsider in her own skin. Her ex liked it well enough that she jumped to do his bidding, regardless of the task, but something was always missing, something vital to her happiness and contentment: his respect, his love, his

devotion. Up until the few years, their sex life hadn't been lacking, but everything else had. She wanted it all, needed it all and part of everything wasn't enough for her and she'd asked for a divorce.

"I'll have the wood finished soon and will take it to the back porch. You need anything else today?"

"No. I didn't really need wood chopped either."

"It's supposed to get a little chillier this week before it gets warmer next, so, I thought it best. Besides, you like the fires, and I don't mind the work."

"I know. Thank you."

The cool morning wind gave his bronzed skin a reddish tint, but his blue eyes stood out even brighter than usual. She was in love with him. Or maybe it was simply a heavy dose of lust. It could be both and it really didn't make a difference to her either way. She just wanted him. All of him. In her life, her home, and her bed. She wanted his groan of pleasure, his come down her throat. She wanted his hands on her skin, and his heat against her body while she slept. Last night with him had cemented the desire, the hunger. She was meant for more than she'd had before him.

"Do you have a lot of work today? I know you have that package to mail off, do you have anything else after?"

Caroline sipped at her own coffee. When she lowered the cup from her lips, her tongue licked at the drop of coffee left and his eyes zeroed in on the movement. She liked it when he did that, when he stared at her, watched her like he wanted to eat her alive.

Nothing in her habits had changed since she'd hired him or rather since he'd hired himself to do the job for her. She still dressed the same, usually in jeans and a sweater or a long sleeved pullover. The weather wasn't warm enough yet for short sleeves, and she never wore shorts anymore. As she'd grown older, she'd grown slightly wider. Her hips were full and rounded, her ass was full, too, and her breasts, well, the 38D bras she had to buy...at least they had some really pretty styles if one didn't mind shopping at online lingerie stores. And she didn't. She loved the sexy ones she'd found, like the black shelf style that had arrived a couple days ago. There were no cups, only a lacy underwire shelf for her breasts to rest on, leaving the mounds and nipples free. She'd bought only one, not sure if she'd like it, but after trying it on, she had gone online immediately and ordered two more, one in blue, the other in red and had them shipped two-day express. They would come today.

She not only felt sexy, but looked sexy in the bra and she rarely ever considered herself a woman that looked, let alone felt that way. Over the last few months though, since Buck had been coming around, she found herself doing little things to make changes in how she saw her age and what time and genetics had done to her body. Her husband essentially leaving her for a younger woman hadn't helped an already shaky self-image. Even though she asked Derek to leave, to actually pack his stuff and get out, he'd already left in all the other ways that mattered. The younger women he'd paraded through their marriage hadn't bothered her, but she'd been curious about the fascination. Meeting the younger handyman, Caroline had begun to

kind of understand it. A five year age difference wasn't much, but to a woman of forty, it was enough of one to make an impact. Buck hadn't come on to her, flirted with her or touched her unless it was necessary. The only thing he'd ever done to make her think he saw her as a woman rather than a client, was that look of heat every so often when she licked her lips or curled her hair back behind her ears to keep it out of her face. She didn't know if he'd seen the strands of gray at her temples or if he realized she had to use extra creams to keep the lines and wrinkles down to a minimum. But when he looked at her with that bit of lust flaring, it made her want to feel younger and sexier, even if she didn't look it.

"Not a lot of work. I have a couple of baskets to put together, but they don't need to go out until the end of next week."

"That's good. I know I like being busy and seems like you do too."

"Yes. I'd rather be busy than twiddling my thumbs all day wondering what to do. I used to do that far too often when I was married."

Buck leaned his hip against the axe handle, and she had a hard time keeping her eyes trained on his face. She wanted to look down or lean against him. She wanted to drop to her knees, press her face to his crotch and rub her cheek against his cock.

When he licked *his* lips after taking another swallow of coffee, she looked away, somewhere over his shoulder. His tongue licking the drop of coffee seemed to have the same effect on her that it had on him when she did it. And things were even hotter between them after yesterday and last night. She'd not had so much sex in one night in a long while and though she should be sore, all she could think about was getting naked with him again.

She liked feeling free and sexy and pretty and wanted. She liked being the woman inside and letting her out to see the light, to be seen by a man like Buck. Even though he likely didn't know it, he'd helped her to see that side of herself, and she was enjoying the discovery.

She hadn't felt that way about herself during her marriage. At least not the second half of her marriage. When Derek focused on her, on them, she'd felt like the sexiest, most beautiful woman alive, but when he'd started looking away more, wanting and having other women, she lost that feeling. She'd retreated into a shell, and she was damn glad to be out of it.

"That's right. You didn't work before."

She looked at his face again, briefly raising her gaze to his. "No. I started my gift baskets after the divorce. Since it's an online business, I can move it anywhere there's Internet and shipping. I like it and it's..." She shrugged.

"Yes. A personal touch is lacking these days. I've seen some of what you do. It's good. I'm sure your clients are very happy."

Caroline smiled. She liked him being proud of her. "Thanks. Well, I guess I should let you get back to work." She didn't want to though. Staying, talking, looking at him was what she wanted to do instead. The

taste of his come was still on her tongue from breakfast when he'd told her to strip down and suck him, and she was eager for him to tell her to do it again.

"Welcome." He picked up the axe, wrapping his hands around the wood shaft and lifted it to rest on his shoulder. The move pulled his tee shirt tight across his chest, and she knew his gaze followed hers as she looked him up and down, smiling into his face and bright blues. "Neither of us wants to work right now, do we?"

Caroline shook her head. "No."

"What do you want, sweet Caroline?"

"More of you."

"Huh. Interesting." She followed Buck into the shed. "I think that can be arranged. I had a thought yesterday about you and this sawhorse here." He patted the piece of wood. "But it might be a little chilly this morning."

"Coffee warmed me up. Didn't do that to you?"

"Oh I'm warmed up, but it wasn't me I was concerned about."

"Sweet of you." Caroline pulled her sweater off over her head. "I'm okay though." And from the way his eyes widened... "Like it?"

He reached out and flicked the ring in one of her nipples. "Love it. You need to wear that kind of bra all the time. Leave those beauties free and exposed."

She grinned. "Yes. Exactly what I was thinking. I have two others, but, there are a host of colors I haven't ordered yet."

"Well, we should definitely get that done. God, Caroline, they're beautiful." He wrapped his large hands around the globes of her breasts and squeezed, tugged, massaged the creamy flesh. She moaned in need, and he grinned at her. "Matching thongs?"

"Lacey boyshorts."

Buck groaned and she purred. "Driving me crazy, woman."

"That's the whole idea," she whispered into his hair when he lowered his head and licked at the valley of her chest. Her fingers unsnapped and unzipped her jeans, and she shimmied out of them.

Buck stepped back a couple inches and looked down. "You deserve a spanking for being such a tease."

"Mmmm." She kicked the jeans off to the side near the door. "And how am I a tease?"

"You came out here under the pretense of bringing me coffee."

She watched him unbuckle his belt and pull it through the loops, one at a time. The hissing sound it made caused her to shiver. "But I did bring you coffee."

"You did."

"Am I to be punished?"

“Spanking isn’t for punishment. It’s strictly for pleasure. Mine...and yours.”

She liked that. A lot. “Then what?”

“You will bend over the top of the sawhorse, spread your lovely legs, and have your pussy plundered.”

Well, hot damn. She squirmed, clenching her thighs tightly together. “And when might that take place?”

“Not a little bit eager are you?”

“Nope. A lot eager.”

“Then let’s see if we can’t take care of you.”

Buck backed off and grabbed a blanket from the corner. “We used to use that when Derek wanted to play outside.”

“Does it bother you if we use it now? I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

“No, I don’t care.” The blanket was draped over the top of the horse, and Caroline pressed her lower stomach against it. “Do you want the bra and undies off?”

“Not on your life. It’s possible you might have to buy another pair. Legs spread like I said, up on your toes, and bend over. Next time, you need to wear heels. Tall, very high heels.”

She groaned. “In my closet, there’s a red box. It’s full of the kinds of shoes you’re talking about.”

“Next time.” He rubbed his hands along the backs of her thighs, caressed the backs of her knees, squeezed her calves. “I don’t mind feeling the muscles tremble while you’re on the balls of your feet, straining.”

She wished desperately for something to hold onto. At the same time, she loved the feeling of being exposed to Buck like this. It was erotic, hot. Her confidence level shot sky high around him and ever since yesterday and last night, all she should think about was getting naughty with him, exploring more of what they liked together, learning what he might like that she could be drawn into.

She wanted to make the most of the few weeks or months she had with him before she put the house on the market and moved. She didn’t want to walk away with any regrets.

When he walked around in front of her, his crotch was at face level. If he moved just a spit closer, she could nip at his hard cock safely and unfairly tucked inside his jeans and though she started to say something to him, ask him to step closer, he turned away and she was given a yummy view of his tight ass.

Something about a man in blue jeans.

“See something you like?”

“Oh yeah.”

He knelt and took each of her wrists in his hands and brought them up, wrapping his belt around them. He secured the buckle on a hook screwed in to the surface of the built in workbench. Why Derek had

wanted this place, she never quite understood. He'd loved the barn, but hadn't once used it for anything other than storage. She'd never cared one way or the other, but at the moment...

"Tug on it, see if it's tight enough."

She tested it, and the leather didn't budge.

"Good. Too bad I don't have some weighted nipple clamps out here with me. They'd look pretty hanging from your rings."

"Ooooh. I don't like weights."

Buck took her head in his hands. "You don't?"

"No," she whispered, the fib telling on her even as she said it. The teasing going on between them mixed with the lust and need was a level she'd never reached with her ex or any of their lovers. It was fun, and it only added to the sexiness of the situation.

"You like having your hands bound?"

"Yes." She struggled to get comfortable on the sawhorse and found if she tried to lower her feet to the ground, it pulled the leather tighter around her wrists. Buck was a clever and evil man. She loved it and when he smirked at her realization, she laughed. Oh yes, this was so much fun.

He smacked her ass through the boyshorts when he moved out of her line of sight. "Let's get down to business, sweet Caroline." He smacked her ass again, punctuating his words. The tension she'd been waiting for yesterday to show up, was still strangely absent. Was she *that* relaxed around him? Was her body so at ease and welcoming?

By the time he stopped spanking her, her cheeks were stinging and the roughness of his hands only added to the discomfort. Damn, she loved this too. He knew what she liked, knew where to take her and it didn't take him long to get her there. Her body was primed and ready for anything he wanted to do to her so long as he didn't *stop* doing her.

He pulled her panties to the side and spread her entrance with his fingers. "Ready, Caroline? Say it. Your pussy is telling me yes, but I want you to say it. I want the word from you."

Caroline nodded. "Yes." Pulling on the belt binding, bouncing on her toes, she was telling him with her whole being she was ready.

"Good."

What she felt next wasn't the heated flesh of his cock like she'd expected. It was cold, hard, ungiving and wide... "Buck?" she gasped as her sex was stretched and filled.

"Remember the dildo yesterday in the store?"

Oh God, he didn't. "Y-yes?" A little more was pushed inside her, and she strained on the tips of her toes.

"Consider it a gift. Like it?"

He pulled it out, leaving only the head at her hole, slowly teasing her with it. "Yes," she hissed.

He slammed it deep, fucked her, and gave her no quarter, no mercy. The more it penetrated her, the warmer it became, smoother in its slide, but it was uncompromising in its size. It didn't mold to her body and fit all snug the way a real cock would. Instead, her body molded itself around the intruding toy and when Buck found the right depth, the right angle, the right rhythm, she couldn't stop the moan of pleasure and whimper of growing need.

The hardness of the head nudged against the wicked little spot inside her and as Buck tortured it, he slapped her ass. It wasn't a teasing or light slap. It was hard and made her yelp at the surprise.

"Do it again, Buck."

He did. He slapped her other cheek just as hard and she knew there'd be handprints for the rest of the day and maybe into the next. She loved carrying marks made by a lover. She loved the sign that someone had been there, touching her, enjoying her.

Two more strikes to each cheek and he plunged a finger inside her ass. "Come on, sweet Caroline. Come for me."

Grinding herself on the unrelenting dick rubbing against her G-spot while Buck finger fucked her did push her over the edge. She let go, completely, fully and another cry tore from her.

"That's it. Give me more. Damn, your ass is clenching so hard around my finger."

She didn't know how much more she could give him. The muscles in her legs were trembling, and she was afraid she was going to end up ripping some part of his belt because she was tugging so hard, holding it so taut.

He eased up on the pressure inside her pussy and slowly slid the dildo in and out a few times before sliding it out completely, at the same time pulling his finger from her. Her sex was still clenching as was her ass and his warm hands rubbed at the backs of her thighs when he pressed himself against her back. "So sexy, Caroline. So beautiful and so sexy."

"Yes, I must say she is."

Chapter Seven

Caroline whipped her head around to find Derek standing in the doorway of the barn with his new bride. Embarrassment should have come crashing in. Humiliation. Something. But nothing did. Nothing but pride and a twisted feeling of satisfaction. She grinned at the couple.

Buck took the buckle off the hook and loosened the leather from her wrists. He kissed her on the forehead. “You okay?” he whispered.

His gaze was on her. He was concerned, and she was touched. “I’m perfect.”

He helped her to stand and brought her clothes to her. She simply laid them on the workbench and turned to face her guests.

“Rings. Nice touch, Caroline.”

“Yes, thank you. They were a gift to myself for your wedding.” She went to stand closer and held out her hand to his wife. “Hi, I’m Caroline. Congratulations on your marriage.”

At first, the woman didn’t seem to know what to do, but finally she shook Caroline’s hand. “Brande. And thank you.”

Could he have picked a woman with a more cliché name? “To what do we owe the pleasure of your visit?”

“We?”

“Well, yes. As you can see and could no doubt hear, I’m not alone.” She glanced over her shoulder and smiled. “Buck, this is Derek.”

Buck nodded and came up behind her, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her against his solid warmth.

“We already know one another, Caroline. Didn’t he tell you? He’s the one that made the floggers you loved so much.”

For some reason, it didn’t surprise her. “Really? I guess I’ll have to see about having some more made for me. But, that still doesn’t tell me what you’re doing here.”

“I have a proposal for you.”

She could swear her eyebrow lifted of its own accord, rather than by any command her brain gave. “The last proposal you had for me didn’t work out so well.”

“We had some good times, you can’t deny that.”

He was right, damn him. “No, I can’t.”

Derek waved his hand in an up and down gesture at her. "Wouldn't you like to get dressed before we talk?"

"Would it make you feel better if I did? I wouldn't want you to be uncomfortable." She glanced at Derek's wife who was looking over Caroline's shoulder at Buck and appeared to want to eat him for breakfast. "Brande?"

The woman reluctantly removed her gaze back to Caroline's face. "I would rather you be dressed."

"Buck? What do you think?" she asked over her shoulder. He kissed the tip of her nose and smiled.

"Why don't you at least put your jeans back on? The sweater is your choice. Your nipples are still going to poke at the fabric, though. It's actually a big turn on to see them all pointy and hard under your shirts."

He was teasing her, joining her in the play. "Okay."

When he let her go, Caroline got dressed and led the way to the house. Buck followed close behind Derek and Brande. Without his touch, a little uncertainty set in and some of her bravado started to slip.

Once inside the house, she put on a new pot of coffee while Derek and Brande sat at the kitchen table. Buck simply stood in the doorway with his arms crossed over his chest.

"Do you want me to go?" he mouthed when she looked in his direction.

"No," she mouthed back. "Please stay."

He nodded and leaned against the doorjamb while she took a seat at the table. "Okay, so, talk. What's this offer you have for me?"

"I want to buy the house from you."

Now she was shocked and surprised. Sort of. He did love the house and had been reluctant to leave it when she asked him to move out. It was sad. He had been more concerned leaving the house than he had been to leave her. "The house? This house? Our house?"

"This house. I want to buy you out."

"Why?"

"You know I've always loved it. I don't want it to be sold to anyone else."

"You want to live in it? With her?" She didn't say it with bitterness or malice. She really wasn't sure how she felt about it.

"I do."

"I don't know what to say. We bought this house when we got married. It's been my home for almost twenty years and now you want to share it with someone else." She turned to Brande. "How do you feel about living in my house?"

"It wouldn't be your house. It would be ours."

Caroline didn't know how to respond to that either. Being so unsure she simply turned her head toward Buck. He was in front of her in a matter of seconds down on one knee. He took her face in his hands and kept her eyes on his.

"Let her think about it, Derek."

"Do you make her decisions now?"

"No. She makes her own, but she needs a few days to process this. What you're asking isn't even... You can give her a couple of days at the very least."

"Caroline, I am prepared to write you a check today for the house. You can have a few weeks to get a new place and move. Buck, I'd be happy to have you stay around and finish the work you'd started. There are a few things I know Brande would like you to do too. Actually, I'd like to hire you on a continuous basis to take care of things since...well, I don't have the patience for home improvement."

"No. I'm a professional contractor. I've done the work as a favor to Caroline, but I'm not available to work for you after she moves. I can recommend a few guys I know though."

"I'll match whatever price..."

"It's not about price, Derek. I'm not available."

"Suit yourself. Caroline, do you really need a few days? I'll just buy it the day you put it on the market."

"Yes, I need a few days. I'll call and let you know what I decide."

"Very well, though I honestly don't know what there is for you to think about..." Derek and Brande stood, and Caroline followed them out to the garage. Brande turned to her as Derek continued huffing and puffing his way toward their car. The other woman looked her up and down and surprise surprise, her eyes softened when they reached Caroline's face again.

"He didn't leave you for me."

What an odd thing to say to the one that used to wear his ring. "I know he didn't. He left because I asked him to and I just let everyone else think that it was my fault things didn't work out. Our marriage was over long before you seriously entered the picture."

"I love him."

Another odd thing to say. As if she cared. "Good. Once upon a time I did too."

"I know it's odd to think I would want to live in this house, but he talks about it a lot. He wants to live here, grow old here. It's his dream house, and the only reason I want to live here too is because I want to be with him. Do you understand?"

"It's not for me to understand. If you're happy with him, then..." Caroline shrugged, unsure what else to say. She had nothing against the other woman. She just didn't want to have to deal with her. She was done with this—having to see and talk to the other women Derek fucked. This wasn't her life anymore. The

house...well, it wasn't hers anymore either. She was ready to leave it behind, same as she was ready to leave everything behind and begin anew. She just hadn't realized...

"Derek," she called out. He stepped out of his car. "You pay for all the legal costs, and you pay Buck to finish the work he started. Do those things and give me half the appraisal value and you can have it."

"Half the appraisal?"

"Yes. Half."

"The divorce settlement should have been more than enough to take care of you."

"Half Derek. No less. My take if it's sold on the market will be more. You know that. Don't try to bullshit me thinking I'm so dumb I'll agree to whatever you say. Been there..."

Brande touched her arm, and Caroline fought the urge to fling her hand off. Caroline looked at her.

"You'll get half, Caroline. He'll pay it. I'll make sure."

She wanted to ask how Brande could make a promise like that. Derek always did what Derek wanted and nothing a woman could say would sway him. "How old are you?" she asked instead.

"Thirty."

Ten years younger than her own age. Maybe she did have more pull than Caroline imagined. "Thank you."

Brande smiled and joined Derek at their car. They drove away, and Caroline stood, watching until the taillights disappeared from view. "Do you think I was wrong to demand that much?"

Buck hadn't spoken, but he was standing there, silently supporting her, listening. She could feel him, sense him. It was comforting and she liked it. Liked the way he stood up for her in the kitchen, too. He was a special man, and she wished she could take him into the Georgia mountains to that little cabin with her.

"No. You probably deserve more."

"I want to leave. I don't hate it here. I just want my own place."

"I know you do."

She turned. He was ruffled from their encounter in the barn. Neither had been able to enjoy the afterward or even talk about it. Her pussy was still wet, her nipples were straining at her sweater, as they always did since the rings, but the ache for him, his touch, and his mouth was what she felt more than anything. "Why did you tell him no?"

She walked as she talked and when she stopped in front of him, he tilted her head and kissed her. "Because." His hands went to the hem of her sweater and pulled it over her head. "I like these uncovered and fuck, Caroline, I love this bra. I want to mark them, tattoo my name on them. They're beautiful."

Tattoo his name on her breasts? God, the image in her mind of ink and him together on her body forever... "Because why?"

"I'm yours. I work for you. I don't want nor intend to work for him." He flicked and pulled at her rings. "Do you ever change out the rings?"

"I have a gold pair. I don't like them as much though. And I have a couple of charms I can slide on the rings." She was trying not to squirm as he teased her, as he told her he was hers. She tried not to let that go to her head, to her heart, but she couldn't stop it from going straight to her throbbing sex. "Why don't you want or intend to work for him? He's got money. He could keep you busy."

He pinched her nipples between his thumb and forefinger and tugged, effectively pulling her into the house. "Caroline, I don't need the money. I'm not a handyman. I'm the owner of a contracting company."

"You are? I mean, I remember you telling him you're a contractor, but I didn't know you meant you owned a contracting company."

"Yes."

"Then why are you working for me? If you wanted the work, you have people who work for you, right? People who could have done it all?"

"Yes, but I didn't want anyone else working out here. I wanted to do the work myself." His fingers went to work on the snap and zipper of her jeans. He pushed them down over her hips and again, with her nipples pinched between his fingers, he tugged her toward him. "I wanted you, sweet Caroline."

"Oh." So it hadn't just been her from the very beginning months ago. He wanted her, too. For some reason, his admission made her belly flutter all the way up to her chest, right under her left breast.

One perfect brow lifted. "Oh? That's all you have to say?"

"Yes." She pressed her nakedness against his body, wrapped her arms around his neck, and kissed him much as he'd kissed her a few minutes earlier. He held her to him, then picked her up in his arms. Her legs immediately surrounded his hips, and she rubbed herself on his hardness.

He backed them into the kitchen table, lowered her feet to the floor and yanked at the opening of his jeans. His cock was out, and she was impaled with her panties pulled to the side. One hand in her hair and his mouth was attached at her throat, licking and sucking at the tender skin.

"Ride me," he groaned when she squeezed him inside her, when she moaned at the feel of his scruff.

She ground herself against him, thrust her hips forward, then pulled up until only the head was inside her. His fingers slid down her crack, and one was inserted before he pushed her down his length again.

"Oh I like that," she moaned, wiggling against his invasive finger.

"Good. No teasing me. Fucking ride me dammit. Give me your come, sweet Caroline, and I'll give you another finger."

She nodded and mewled at the promise. Gripping his shoulders, lifting up, sliding back down, grinding, pulling, pushing, taking him, she did as ordered. She rode him. True to his word, a second finger was inserted alongside the first one in her ass, guiding her closer toward the edge.

"You love the ass play."

"Yes," she breathed.

The digits scissored inside her when she lifted and closed together when she slid back down. She dropped her head to his shoulder and ground her clit between them until the orgasm rushed over her, inside her. Teeth bit into tender skin, and she shivered, answering it with her own bite to his neck.

“Damn Caroline. What am I gonna do without you?”

Chapter Eight

Buck flexed his back and stood straight for the first time in more than an hour. The deck was finally finished, and the entire surface stained. The new storm door was up as was the new frame. Basically, the job at Caroline's was done. Well, it wasn't Caroline's anymore, not when she returned from the lawyer's office. It would be Derek's house again.

Caroline would be bringing a small U-haul trailer back with her too. She'd sold her little compact and bought a used Jeep Grand Cherokee. Buck had gone with her, helped her pick it out and put a trailer hitch on it for her. She figured she might need something a little more sturdy in the area of north Georgia she was moving to instead of the little Focus she drove. He couldn't argue with her.

He heard tires crunching on gravel. Caroline was back. Without conscious thought, he smiled. He'd offered to go with her today to for support, but she'd said no, preferring to take care of things on her own. Even though she liked knowing someone was there for her, and was able to bounce ideas off him, she wanted to make the life decisions, the new choices herself. That was fine with him. He didn't own her, just sexually dominated her. He could happily own her though if it was what she wanted or needed, but it wasn't and he didn't feel a relationship between them would suffer because of it.

Their D/s play wasn't the formal relationship his parents had. His mother deferred to his father on everything, but was fierce when it came to defending their way of life and stood her ground when necessary. There were many things Buck didn't know about their relationship but he knew the basics—his father adored his mother, and she in turn adored him.

As he'd told Caroline before, he didn't even realize anything was different about his family until he was in his teens. It was then he began noticing things and asking questions. His mother was always sweet, supportive, and though she would argue with his father about some things, it was never in front of anyone. His mother wasn't a pushover either, wasn't a weakling. She was the strongest woman he knew or had known, until he'd met Caroline.

They would like each other too. His mother and Caroline. Caroline was learning and growing in her independence, especially with her business and his mother had had her own business as a personal chef for as far back as he could remember. He knew it had started with her selling kitchen tools at one of the home party companies but with encouragement from Buck's father, it had become so much more.

His parents were two strong personalities, just as he and Caroline were and he'd hoped he could make it work too. What the hell was he going to do when she left? How would he stay behind? How long was he supposed to give her before following after her? Or was he supposed to wait for her to come back to him?

With the exception of her office furniture, she'd chosen to leave everything but personal items behind. It surprised him, yet pleased him at the same time that she didn't want to cling to anything from her past, from her life with Derek save the kinky things he taught her to love.

Nothing at all had been said between them about his comment after sex that day two weeks ago when he'd wondered aloud what he was going to do without her. Instead, they got up from the kitchen chair and went on about things as they had since the day they met, except now they were lovers and he spent the nights in her bed, tangled in the sheets and her body. He'd purposely left the comment hanging. He didn't want her to feel pressured, but damn, he didn't want to let her go. He wasn't going to beg her, wasn't going to insist or insinuate himself in her new life. If she asked him to come along, as he'd been hoping she would, he'd drop everything and go. But she'd kept her lips tightly closed on the subject.

With the tee shirt he'd stuffed in the waistband of his jeans, he wiped the sweat off his face. Caroline was special and something told him he wouldn't find another like her. More to the point, he didn't want to find another like her. He wanted her. Period. And she was going to leave in two days... "Shit."

He tipped the thermos of water over his head. He was hot from the inside out. She'd used these past weeks to get things going at the cabin. They were expediting the sale for a few reasons, and the couple selling were glad to get what they were asking on it. He was glad Caroline was getting the new home she wanted.

"You look mighty fine like that."

He turned and a slow smile spread across his face. She was in Capri pants today, and he could see the marks around her ankles from the rope bindings used last night. Her neon green painted toes peaked out from her black flat sandals, and her scoop neck sweater dipped down low enough so anyone could see the tops of the beautiful mounds of her breasts. Gazes would be drawn lower still to the nipple rings that stood out against the thin material. She was wearing one of the shelf bras they'd both fallen in love with.

"You don't look too bad yourself." He shook his head, slinging the excess water from it. When he focused on her again, her bottom lip was caught between her teeth and her gaze raked him from head to toe. "So? How'd it go?"

"I'm free."

He nodded. "Did you bring the trailer back with you?"

"Yeah. I figured I'd start loading it today before it gets dark and finish tomorrow that way I can get on the road bright and early day after."

"Need any help?"

"Of course I need your help. Especially if you'll do it in only your jeans and work boots."

“Anything for you. You know that.”

“Mmm. Really? Anything? I might have to take you up on that. Maybe I could get you to do it naked.”

“Only if you’re naked too. But, if we’re talking just bottoms, you have to go topless as well.”

She flashed him. “If you’re good, maybe I will.”

“If I’m good? Who’s in charge here?” Buck laughed. “You’ve gotten over the fear of being seen by the neighbors.”

“They’re not my neighbors anymore. Let Derek deal with it.”

“Good girl.”

“Why didn’t you tell me you made the floggers for Derek?”

The sudden or rather sharp right turn of conversation caught him off guard for a second. He was soon back on the open highway. “I was wondering when you were going to bring that up.”

“We’ve *been* a little busy lately, but he mentioned it again today at the lawyer’s office. Wanted to know if you’d made one for us.”

“I didn’t tell you because... I didn’t want you to think I felt sorry for you or that I was doing this job because I knew once upon a time you were kinky.”

“I wouldn’t have. You should know that by now.”

“I do, and I kind of figured it when we first met, but, I wanted to be sure.”

“Good.” She advanced on him slowly and had him backed up against the outside wall of the screened-in porch. “How much did you know about Derek and me and the things we did?”

“I knew enough. He asked me once if I wanted to join in, but, I’d seen you and knew I’d want you all to myself.”

She grabbed his cock in her hand and squeezed making him suck in a breath. The woman was hell on him, and he loved it. She gave no quarter, gave not an inch when she wanted something from him and she’d use every weapon in her arsenal to get it if she had to, which she didn’t. “You’ve had me all to yourself for months.”

“I have, indeed, but only being lovers for a few weeks hasn’t been enough.” He paid her back by squeezing her tits through her sweater. The hiss between her teeth, he sucked into his mouth. “I want you, Caroline. I couldn’t imagine wanting to share you. Not with another man and likely not even with another woman. If you need it, fine, I’d give it to you, but...I don’t need it. Not like he did. I don’t need anything like he did. I only want, only need you.” *And you’re fucking leaving me.*

He smashed her lips against his in another kiss, a hard kiss, a meaningful kiss. His hunger for her didn’t diminish, ever. Every second of the day he was thinking about her, wanting to be inside her, with her, fucking her, talking to her. He didn’t care. He was so head over heels in love with her and he wasn’t

even sure she realized it. He tried showing her with his body, his words, but he was never so direct about it as to utter those all-important three.

Again, he wouldn't let her feel pressured, couldn't let her think he was trying to make her feel bad about leaving. She had to go, but dammit he didn't want to lose her.

Derek had been her first, and every partner during their marriage had been more. He didn't know how many total there were, and he didn't care. She wasn't a slut in his eyes, or a loose woman. However, there were good sluts and bad whores. She'd been a swinger with her husband, and he was okay with that. Derek had taught her a lot, helped her find things she enjoyed and wanted and now, it was his turn to expand on it.

"What are you thinking about? You have me wanting to fuck out here with what your fingers are doing to my nipples."

She showed him just how much she wanted to fuck by how she rubbed herself into his cock, by licking at the drops of water still dripping down from his hair onto his shoulders and chest, by holding his balls tight in her hand.

"I was thinking about sending Derek a thank you note for teaching you so well."

"Yes, he was good for something, wasn't he?"

"He was, and I'm glad you're free now. I know you were hurt, and I never wished hurt on you, but I'm glad you divorced him and were available for me."

"As we discussed earlier, you could have had me before."

"I know. But also, as we discussed, I would have wanted you more than once and for more than a few hours. I would have been trying to have an affair with you just as he had affairs with other women. I wanted you more than that, and I didn't want to be another nameless cock."

"Then I'm glad things turned out the way they did so we could get to know one another. You've been very good to me the last few weeks. In all ways." She dropped her forehead to his chest. "I'm going to miss you."

His heart tightened at her words.

Buck gripped the back of her hair and tilted her head up, nuzzling against her neck, biting the tender skin until she squealed. "I'm going to miss you, too, sweet Caroline," he whispered. There was so much more he wanted to say, but he couldn't bring himself to sway her decision and that's exactly what would happen.

"So, about helping me with the loading. Topless or naked?"

Buck laughed and pulled at her sweater. "Topless to start, but I'm sure you know the bra stays."

She flipped her top off the rest of the way and gave his cock one last squeeze, making him groan. "You sure you don't want to do something else before we start? I mean, we might be too tired afterward for any kind of play."

"Yeah, right. You're never too tired for play, and you sure as hell know I'm not."

She sashayed into the house by way of the new storm door and knew sure as shit he'd follow. He also knew sure as shit there'd be no loading of the trailer in the next thirty minutes or so either. Unbuttoning his jeans, he turned and went in search of his submissive yet determined and cheeky lover.

"Where do you want this?"

Caroline turned to see Buck coming from the garage with one of her foldable worktables. True to his word, he was shirtless and true to hers, she was topless. She was fairly invisible to anyone that might come up the drive unless they walked to the opening of the trailer. For the last hour, they'd been packing her office and were beginning to load it. His come was soaking the inside of her jeans, and her ass throbbed from the glass dildo he'd inserted in it while fucking her. She'd screamed at the stretching, but once she calmed enough to breathe deeply, to listen to his dark magic voice, the pain diminished into discomfort, which then became pressure. Delicious, filling pressure she could still feel even though he'd pulled it out the second she started to orgasm.

"I guess against the back wall over here." She pointed into the trailer. "There's gonna be plenty of room even after we get it all in."

She watched the line of Buck's back as he lowered the table. The definition of his muscles when he moved. The strength lying just beneath the surface of his skin. Every inch of his body was solid. He worked hard every day, never went to the gym, but worked outside or inside, very physical from morning until night. Unless of course he was fucking her, which happened quite often. His stamina was much better than hers, but she'd noticed some additional flexibility and limberness in her body over the last few weeks.

"Done staring at my ass?"

"I wasn't staring at your ass. I was staring at other parts of you, but now that you mention it, turn around." Her gaze traveled from the back of his neck, down over his shoulder blades, his back, and ended at his oh so perfect ass. In jeans it was delicious to look at, naked it was a work of art and bore scratches and nail marks from their most recent romp.

She slipped her hands into his jeans and squeezed said perfect ass. "Ever had anything inside you?"

"No."

"Ever been curious?"

"Nope. Why? You want to put on a strap-on and fuck me?"

"I'd never thought about it before, but..."

He looked over his shoulder at her. "You just want to get me back for the dildo."

Caroline laughed and stood on her tiptoes, placing a kiss on his cheek, rubbing her pointed nipples against him. The sexual freedom, the *general* freedom to be herself with him overwhelmed her at times. He accepted her for who she was and what she wanted and gave her what she needed. Dominance and freedom both at the same time. She wasn't lying earlier when she admitted she would miss him. Leaving him might

just break her heart, but she couldn't ask him to come with her. She couldn't take him away from his business or his friends. She couldn't let him think she was dependent on him, that she couldn't stand to be on her own. "Maybe."

"Well, maybe I'll think about it, for you. But, given that you're leaving soon I doubt I'll change my mind by then."

"I guess I'll have to be happy with knowing you might have considered it."

"Good girl. Now, stop fondling me so I can get the other tables and your desk loaded."

"But you like when I fondle you."

"Yes, I do. And you like it when I hop to when you want something done."

"True." She released his butt from her grasp and stepped back. "Now, get to it."

He swatted her ass as he stepped down from the trailer. "Brat. You'll pay for that."

Caroline giggled. "I can't wait."

They worked on the loading and moving a few of the larger boxes out to the garage until it started getting dark. Once the lights she had on timers came on, she locked the trailer for the night. There were parts of this house and her life in it she would miss, like when she and Derek first bought it, when she got to decorate it, when she learned about sexual pleasure and play, and when she realized she could stand on her own without a man. Derek had been a huge part of her life, had *been* her life for so many years, but it was time for a new and different chapter.

She loved taking care of a man and seeing to his needs and desires, but she knew there was a way to do it while taking care of herself at the same time. She'd learned that in the few weeks she'd been intimate with Buck. Maybe it was because she was moving that he didn't make any demands on her. Maybe it was because he didn't want to take her all-important independence away from her or make her choose between giving it up or losing him. She didn't know, but she was happy with the way things had evolved between them and had a feeling that were she staying, they'd continue and find a way to make things work. He was a keeper of a man and if she were honest with herself, she would admit to wanting to keep him, to wanting him to keep her.

"Caroline? You okay?"

"Yeah. Just looking at the stars. It's a beautiful night out."

"It is. Interested in sharing a shower before dinner?"

"Oh I would love to."

Yeah, she wanted to keep him, wanted to keep them and build on what had started in the adult store. Or did it start in the Lowe's? It didn't matter either way. She loved him.

She walked up the driveway to the door that led into the house from the garage. Buck already had the shower running in her bathroom, and she stripped off the bra, toed off her shoes, shed her pants and panties and walked into the steaming room to see him leaning against the tiled wall, stroking his cock.

Damn the man was hot. “Need some help with that?”

“Yeah. I need you on your knees sucking it.”

Chapter Nine

“I can’t believe it’s my last night in the house.” They’d spent most of the morning loading the rest of her belongings into the trailer. In the afternoon, Caroline had cleaned the house from top to bottom, mainly to keep herself from thinking too much about the big change ahead, and Buck had done some last bits of work outside. She didn’t know what he’d been doing and hadn’t asked. Even though she was incredibly excited about the cabin and getting on with her life, the day was a melancholy one for her, mainly because she was leaving Buck and the fantastic sex.

And, the two did go hand in hand. Buck and sex. He cared for her, talked with her, shared with her, but sex with him, submission to him in sex was more than she’d ever thought it could be. It was so damn good. She was often left exhausted, tested, sore, and primed for more.

After their shower last night and a quick dinner of grilled turkey and cheese, Buck had stripped her robe off her body and fucked her on every available surface in the house. She’d swear their juices left tracks back to her bed where he slid inside her on last time before falling asleep, and she’d awakened this morning with him inside her still, slowly thrusting.

“Do you want to be alone?”

Caroline put her fork down and pushed her plate away. The steak and potatoes Buck grilled had been perfect. She hadn’t had something so good in a long long time. The steak melted on her tongue, and the potatoes were seasoned to perfection with salt and pepper and a sprinkling of *herbes de Provence*. She couldn’t eat anymore of it though, not if she wanted to have dessert. And her grandmother had always told her to save room for dessert. “No, of course not.”

“Just checking. I’d go and leave you to your thoughts if you wanted.”

“I’ve done enough thinking today. I don’t want you to go.” Not ever, but morning would be there soon enough, and she needed to keep her composure until she was on the road, away from him before she broke down. Not for the first time, she thought of what she would be leaving behind. “Besides I made dessert. You want some?”

“Cherry cheesecake? Are you kidding me? Not on your life.”

She jumped up from the table and made a beeline to the fridge. “Good. I’ve been waiting all day.” The cheesecake had been made in the early morning hours so her KitchenAid could be boxed securely. It, her Cuisineart food processor, and a few baking pans that were her grandmother’s were the only kitchen items going with her. Brande could do whatever she wanted with everything else.

Basically, Caroline was leaving Derek and his wife a furnished home. Oh she knew they would replace most of it, but she didn't care. She was starting over and didn't need any of it. She already had a bed being delivered to her new place tomorrow afternoon so she'd have a place to sleep that wasn't the floor when she arrived, though she was taking her pillow from the bed she'd been sharing with Buck. She wanted his scent with her. The realtor was going to let the guys from the bedding store in so the frame and all could be set up. Living room furniture and new kitchen dishes were things she would shop for the moment Derek's check cleared.

Buck got up from the table and brought the plates over to the sink. "Cheesecake is my favorite, you know."

"No, I didn't know, but I did know it was my favorite."

"I love cherries too."

Caroline laughed. "I bet you do. When was yours popped?"

"What?"

The look of surprise on his face was priceless, with his slack jaw and wide eyes. It obviously had been the question he'd been expecting from her. "When was your cherry popped? I'll tell you if you tell me."

"I know when you lost yours or roughly when you lost yours. I lost mine when I was fifteen. She was an older woman."

Caroline turned toward him holding the knife she was going to use to cut the cake in her hand. He smirked at her, not a bit afraid, not thinking at all that his manhood was in danger. "How much older?"

"About like us, five years or so.. She was my nemesis's older sister."

She turned back to the business of cutting the cheesecake. "Usually it's the best friend's older sister. Not the enemy."

"I know, but she was hot and I knew it would piss him off. We kept seeing each other for about six months or so after the first time."

"Here," she said, handing him a small dessert plate. The cheesecake had a thick graham cracker crust and a thick layer of cherries on top. "I hope you like it."

The first forkful was already in his mouth and he was smiling. "Oh my God, Caroline. You should have gone into the cheesecake business instead of gift baskets. I've never tasted anything like it."

She laughed. If the state of Georgia allowed home based food businesses she would have considered it. "Thank you. I've been eating this since the first time my grandmother made it at Christmas one year. She always made it for me when I spent the summers with her and my grandpa after that. Eventually, she taught me to make it. It's my favorite."

"It's the real deal?"

"If, by real deal you mean being full fat cream cheese, full fat sour cream, real butter, real eggs and real vanilla, yeah, it's the real deal. There's fresh squeezed lemon juice in it too. And the cherry sauce is homemade. I couldn't buy store bought cherry pie filling for this."

"You amaze me."

He presented a forkful to her, and she opened wide, closing her lips slowly around the tines. He pulled the utensil back, then leaned in and licked at the drop of cherry syrup on her lip. The lick became a full-blown kiss, and the kiss ended with her body in full-blown arousal. Good God what the man did to her.

"It's only a cheesecake," she whispered when he lifted his head and took another bite from his plate.

"No it's not, Caroline. The love that went into it over the years your grandmother made it for you and the care that went into you making it for us tonight... No, it's not just a cheesecake. You know better."

She felt the heat suffuse her cheeks at the compliments. "Thank you."

"Welcome. Now, eat that slice on your plate. I have some plans for the rest of the cherry sauce."

It was her turn to be surprised. "How do you know there's any left?"

"If there isn't, I'll scrape it off the top of the cake."

"Oh."

She took a bite and let it melt in her mouth. It never got old, the flavor of this recipe. She never tired of it. It was a labor of love and reminded her of some of the happiest times in her childhood and now, well, she wouldn't be able to fix it again without thinking of Buck and this last night with him.

Damn. She wanted him so much. *Then why aren't you asking him to go with you? Or at least asking him if you could work something out to keep seeing each other?* She had no answer for her inside voice. She didn't know. It could be fear, more than likely was fear. Fear he'd say no. Fear he'd say yes. Though the yes shouldn't bother her. He wouldn't demand anything from her she didn't want to willingly give him. He wouldn't crowd her or demand any change of her. She didn't know how she knew that, but she did. The last weeks weren't a normal situation, and she couldn't possibly be certain a long term relationship would work between them, but...

Buck jolted her from her thoughts by putting the cheesecake back in the fridge and taking out the bowl of left over cherries.

"Come on, baby. Let's go play. You've got a way too serious look on your pretty face. No maudlin thoughts tonight." He took the plate from her, but not before she got the last bite off her fork. He put both in the dishwasher along with the dinner dishes, then took her hand, pulling her behind him.

"Off with the clothes and get on the bed."

"What are you planning?"

"You'll see. Get naked, Caroline. Now."

He started stripping, and she followed suit. She climbed on the bed and spread her legs when he inserted his hand between her knees. He turned and reached for the bowl and it was then she noticed the mark on his hip. “What is that?” she asked, pointing.

“A tattoo.”

“Yes, I see that.” Her heart started thumping. “A little ‘s’ and a big ‘C’?”

“Uh huh. Little ‘s’ for sweet, big ‘C’ for Caroline.”

“Why? Why would you do that?” She was going to cry. The tears were behind her eyes, and she was going to cry. He wasn’t supposed to do something so... It was then she realized he loved her. As much as she loved him. And all the plans she made and everything that had been set in motion, sucked. Right then, leaving tomorrow morning sucked more than it had an hour ago.

“Because. I want some small part of you to keep with me.”

With that statement, certain her tears were going to fall, Buck dipped his finger into the bowl and let the sauce drip onto her belly. She jumped from the cold. “Holy shit,” she gasped, all sweet sentiment forgotten.

He leaned down and breathed hot air over the cold red drop and the contrast made her shiver. Another drop joined the first, then another until there was a line leading from her navel to her clit.

Propping herself on her elbows, her gaze followed his tongue as he licked at every speck of the syrupy concoction. *This* was something she’d never done. Food play. More cherry sauce, more licks over her clit. She gave up and lay back, spreading her thighs wider, bending her knees and fisting the blanket in her hands.

“No moving, Caroline,” he said, placing a cherry in her belly button. “If you move, it might roll off and create a big mess.”

To punctuate his words, Buck tilted the bowl and drizzled her belly with its contents. Oh. God. It was cold, thick, sticky from the very second it touched her skin. He pressed on her stomach and a line of it rolled down...down...down.

“Gorgeous.”

It was the last thing he said before burying his face in her sex. His tongue licked through folds and dipped inside. His lips sucked. His teeth grabbed her clit and...

“Oh damn, Buck.” She was fighting every muscle in her body not to move. If she did, more than the cherry would make a mess. But to stay still, to not writhe and wriggle, to not fuck his face drove her mad. The only thing she could do was turn her head back and forth in frustration, rip the blanket from the bed and toy with her nipples.

Held tight between her thumb and first finger, Caroline pulled and tugged, twisted and twirled them.

“That’s it. Find a way to give it to me by staying still.”

Buck slammed two fingers inside her and it took more will power than she knew she had not to buck against his hand, but when his thumb slid into her ass and his mouth once again settled on her clit, she didn't care anymore about being still, about being good.

She lifted with her feet, fixed her eyes on the cherry in her navel and humped his fingers, his mouth. She rode the wave beginning to crash, pushing her pussy into his face until she cried his name and cursed like a sailor, until the tide let her go and she could sink down on the bed again.

She pulsed against the impalements and hated the empty feeling when they were taken away.

"You moved."

His breath caressed her bruised clit and with one final lick, one final soft lick, he began moving up her body, licking at the cherry sauce. When the only thing left was the cherry itself, he picked it up in his teeth and presented it to her. With her tongue, she curled it into her mouth and chewed, swallowed, then kissed him, wrapping her arms and legs around his body.

She poured every ounce of emotion she could into that meeting of lips. It wasn't a deep kiss. It wasn't a frenzied kiss. It was just lips—her top one between both of his, her bottom one under his. It was the sweetest kiss they'd shared. It was the best kiss she'd ever had.

And she couldn't keep her tears from falling that time.

"Come on, Caroline, you'll like this, I promise." He had no idea if she would or not. Hell, he didn't know if he would either, but damn being inside her would be enough to love it. She was tired. She was worn out. She was wet and aching. Her eyes were red from the crying, and he'd tried everything he knew to help her stop. It wasn't making this any easier on her or him, and he didn't want their last night to be him holding her while she cried herself to sleep.

So, his plan was for her to fall asleep physically exhausted from sex. Other than the play with the cherries, there'd been no kink tonight. It was him and her, fucking, having sex, making love. He needed to imprint himself on her heart and soul. He felt things for her he'd never felt for another woman and he needed her to remember him, to ache without him. Because he sure as hell was going to ache without her.

"I know what you're up to, Buck. Don't think you're getting away with pulling the wool over my eyes."

"I don't know what you're talking about. I'm just trying to get you to fuck me." He put on his most innocent face and smiled. She arched a brow and huffed at him, clearly not fooled.

"Thank you." Her voice was soft and sincere.

"You're welcome." His was too.

"How do you want me?"

He bent his knees until he was low enough for her to straddle him. "Turn your back to me, step over my legs, and back up until you feel my cock on your ass."

“Okay.”

As unsure as she was about this, she put her trust in him. She turned away, lifted her leg over his outstretched ones, and positioned herself on his thighs. “You’re sure this is going to work?”

She sounded doubtful, and he couldn’t blame her. Looking at the position in the book, he’d doubted two real people with real bodies could do it, but... “Yeah, I’m sure. Up a little higher on your toes. Yes, like that, hold still until I tell you.” He grabbed his cock in his fist and positioned the head at the entrance to her pussy. “Feel me?”

“Yeah,” she breathed.

“Good. Now, slide down and take me.”

And she did. Slow and easy. She slid down the shaft until she was deeply impaled on him. Then she tested the position, tested her power in it, and moaned long and low.

“Now, lean forward and grip the other side of the door jamb. Hold on, and walk your legs back. Oh yeah, good girl, Caroline. Beautiful.”

“You’re so deep inside me and when I move like this...your cock rubs against... Oh God, Buck.”

“Told you you’d like it.” His own voice was tight and strained. She was tighter this way, and he wanted nothing more than to flood her cunt. He straightened his legs back out, and it pushed her forward toward the other side of the door opening. “Use your legs. Lift and lower yourself, fuck yourself on me. Fuck me, Caroline.”

With one hand gripping the side of the doorjamb his back was against, he used the other hand to grasp her hair and tug. He pulled her head back while she rode him. Her knuckles were white she was holding on so fiercely.

Her grunts, moans, groans and breathless sighs fueled his need. She’d come a handful of times since the episode on the bed, including twice in the shower and once again right after with the help and aid of her vibrating bullet.

With the head of his dick rubbing against that one evil little place inside her, he had a feeling she was going to come again. She loved those G-spot orgasms, and they left her weak for hours. She would sleep like a baby, which is what he wanted.

“More, Caroline. Harder. Fuck me. Fuck the livin’ hell out of me.” He twisted his hand in her hair, wrapping the already captive strands around his wrist. She hissed and clamped down on his shaft, lifting slowly, dropping down until he too hissed.

The rough sex fit them both, the slight edge of pain, the razor edge of pleasure. She needed it as much as he did. She thrived on it, and he loved to see her revel in the use of her body.

“That’s it. Give it to me, Caroline. Don’t hold back.”

She bounced on her toes, short and shallow fucks meant to drive them both insane. The wet slick slide on his shaft broke him. He couldn't hold on any longer and ground out her name between clenched teeth, coming while she continued riding him. It was painful but it was the most delicious pain he'd ever felt.

"Buck, I think I'm gonna...oh yeah, I'm gonna..." She screeched out her orgasm and rode it until he had to let go of her hair and still her with a hand on her hip.

"Stop moving. My dick is screaming it's so sensitive."

Her walls clutched at him and she leaned forward, resting her head against the wood of the doorjamb. "I'm not sure I can get off you," she said a few minutes later. "Where did you learn about this position?"

"Saw it in a book. Thought it might be fun to try. And it was, but I'm not sure I can stand, much less walk."

She laughed and straightened, pulling herself off his spent cock. He forced himself to straighten too. "We both might be crawling to the bed."

"No, I'll help you, baby."

He cupped her face in his hands, in his rough workman's hands she loved on her skin so much and kissed her with tenderness. "Let's get into bed," he whispered, collecting her against him and walking slowly, gingerly to the bed and depositing her on the side she always slept on.

He crawled in behind her and wrapped her in his arms, curled around her body, and tried to forget the fucking fact he wouldn't be holding her tomorrow night.

"Goodnight, Buck," she whispered, kissing his hand closest to her face.

His name on her lips...shit. "Goodnight, my sweet, sweet Caroline."

Chapter Ten

Caroline watched out the driver's side mirror as Buck walked around the back of the trailer. He was checking the locks one more time to make sure they were secure. She was tired, and her eyes were gritty. She'd cried some before she went to sleep then cried again when he made love to her early this morning.

She was a damn basket case, worse than she ever figured she'd be. But Buck was solid. His lip hadn't even quivered. He didn't tell her not to go. He didn't ask to come with her. He didn't even say he'd call, write or send up a flare.

He didn't want things to end either, though. It was in the way he touched her, the way he kissed her, the way he looked at her when he thought she didn't know. They were both grownups. They could do this. People moved and separated all the time even when they cared for one another. And...if she kept telling herself that, she might actually start to believe it by the time she reached Atlanta.

"Everything looks good. Got the keys?"

He stood at the window. She wanted to reach out and touch him but didn't dare. "Yeah. In my pocket."

"Okay then, I'd say you're all set. Take care with the turns."

They'd had this discussion before that she'd never towed anything on the back of a vehicle. "I will. I'll be fine, Buck."

"I know you will. I would say call me when you get there..."

"I don't know if I can."

He nodded. She knew he understood and that it didn't make things any easier. "Be careful."

It was her turn to nod as she cranked her Jeep and put it in drive. It was awkward, this feeling of something being unfinished. She wasn't used to it and didn't like it. Not one bit. There was more to say, more to do, oh hell lots more to do, but...

"You need to get on the road. You don't want to hit Atlanta anytime between now and eight tonight."

He was trying to make a joke, and she did manage a smile that didn't seem forced. Not to mention, Atlanta was hell on traffic. She dreaded going up I-75 anywhere near the large city. Come to think of it, I-75 sucked no matter if you were near Tampa or Valdosta or Atlanta. There was construction at every mile marker it seemed and dumbass drivers that didn't know they weren't supposed to brake on the interstate. Hence, the lack of traffic lights and stop signs.

Thank you was on the tip of her tongue, but it wasn't enough to convey what he'd brought to her life in the months she'd known him. He saved her from that too with his next words.

"It's okay, Caroline. Nothing needs to be said."

He stepped back and hooked his thumbs in his waistband. She drove out of the driveway and turned at the street just as she had for the last twenty years. Only difference was she wouldn't be coming back. On the upside, she was getting exactly what she'd wanted all along after her divorce. On the downside, she'd met Buck in the midst of it all and the large stone sitting in the middle of her chest making it hard to breathe reminded her of something more she wanted but hadn't dared hope for. A second chance at love, kinky love, hot and delicious in blue jeans.

Her heart skipped a beat when her cell phone rang. It wasn't him. "Hello."

"Hi, Caroline."

"Derek?"

"Did you talk to Buck about staying on for us?"

She'd totally forgotten his plea when she'd left the attorney's office. "No. We were busy, and it slipped my mind."

"Damn."

"You have money, you know people. You'll be able to find someone."

"Yes, but not someone quite like him. He does amazing work and has a few other qualities we're looking for."

Caroline felt sick to her stomach. She could well imagine what other qualities he was referring to. "I don't think Buck would be interested in playing with the two of you."

"Why is that?"

"Just a feeling, but take your best shot."

"Do I detect a little emotion from you? You've been nothing but ice since before the divorce."

"No. You detect nothing. We're done, Derek. Don't call me anymore. You got what you wanted, and I'm getting what I wanted."

She pressed End. Had he always been whiny and needy and grouchy when he didn't get his way? She noticed it when he'd come to the house asking her for it, but she'd never noticed when they were married. Either way, he was no longer her problem. In truth, he hadn't been for a long time, but it sure seemed she was still taking care of him and not at all in the way she liked taking care of a man.

She smiled at that. Sort of. Would she ever meet someone else like Buck? Someone who liked kink and hot rough sex as much as she did? Seemed that type of man would be rare and hard to find. For her sake and long-term sanity though, she hoped not. However, moving to the mountains in the middle of nowhere was probably not the best place to look for him. Shit.

She turned on the mp3 player and scrolled to her namesake. The song had never made her cry and smile and want to sing along so much in all her life as it did right then. She hit the ramp getting her onto the interstate, singing at the top of her lungs.

Three hours, one Mountain Dew and one large bottle of water later, and she could see the downtown skyline of Atlanta. It wasn't late at all, barely one in the afternoon, but it was a Friday and traffic was already slowing to a crawl. Why? Why was it always congested when there were three lanes, four lanes, and sometimes six lanes going in one direction. On the other side of the city, she would take I-575 out of the city and she'd be on the home stretch to her new home in Blue Ridge. When she'd happened upon the little town in the middle of the Chattahoochee National Forest on the Georgia side, she'd fallen in love.

Her new home was a three-bedroom cabin being sold at a steal of a price. It had been a vacation rental until the owners were forced to put it on the market due to loss of jobs. She'd stumbled across it during a trail hike. It needed TLC, and she was good with that. Nothing major that she had seen and up until her purchase of it, the realty company had been taking care of the upkeep of the outside and keeping it dust free on the inside.

Twenty years ago, she couldn't have foreseen wanting to move out of south Georgia, but then, she'd not foreseen her marriage falling apart either. Something about the peace of the mountain area, the uncluttered feel of people, the clear air and views far as the eye could see all spoke to her and called her name. She was lucky to be at a place in her life where she could answer the whisper, even if there was one little pang of regret left behind named Buck.

Her family, which she wasn't close to at all given her general lack of too much conservatism in her political or sexual views, hadn't cared one way or another really that she was or where she was moving. If their beliefs came to fruition, she'd be in Hell for her sins anyway come the afterlife. While she didn't reject religion, she wasn't about to reject the one life she'd been granted either.

Her friends had been Derek's friends and well...they went where the money and fun was, which was with him. Without those two groups, usually very vital groups for the average person, she found she was stronger than she first thought she was.

However, as fortune or God would have it, the right lane opened up enough for her to slide over and take her exit north. Pulling the trailer hadn't been as difficult as she'd thought it would be. She just found she needed to be a little more careful in her driving though and distance judging. Not to say she'd been a bad driver before, but her little Focus could whip in and out of traffic with no effort at all. The Jeep towing trailer couldn't maneuver quite so easily. She had a new respect for people driving larger vehicles, that's for sure.

The battery on her mp3 was low, she had to pee and the Jeep needed gas. The large station looming on the right looked promising, and she pulled in. It would be the last stop before the grocery store. She would need a few basic supplies she couldn't bring with her like milk, eggs, yogurt and cream cheese.

She'd made Buck promise to take the rest of the cheesecake home with him. She'd have to make another one. She couldn't imagine anything feeling more like home than her grandmother's cheesecake. If only the woman could have seen her grow up. She'd been one of only two members of her small family to accept Caroline for who she was and love her no matter what. Her grandfather had been the other one. Neither had judged her and both had tried their best to love Derek, where her parents had done their best to try and save him. Or rather, save his soul. Him they could have cared less about, but his soul...well, they'd never been able to touch it.

She pulled up next to the gas pump. "Fill or empty first," she mumbled. As soon as she stepped out of the Jeep, she knew the answer and made a mad dash for the store.

"How long she been gone, son?"

"Not even two days. Pathetic, huh?" Buck toyed with the last cherry on his plate. It was from the last piece of cheesecake, and he was reluctant to eat it. He missed her. Fuck did he miss her. Not even a full forty-eight hours gone and he was moping. Hell, he started moping long before she actually left Friday morning.

"Not if you love her."

"And I do."

"Then honestly, I have to ask why you didn't go with her. Your business is fluid. It can be run by someone else, and you can start a new branch wherever. She's the most important thing to you, so you have to treat her as such."

His dad was right, but then he always was. "What about what's important to her though? Not like she asked me to go with her. She's starting over, starting new."

"Did you ask? I'm guessin' if you had, you wouldn't be on the phone with me askin' me what you should do. You've never come to me with this kind of thing before."

"I've never been in this situation before. I want her. I don't want to wake up without her, I don't want to intrude on her new life either."

"Sounds like a bit of a breakdown in communication. You can't have that in any relationship or things come to a screeching halt."

He knew that, but the thought lingered that she hadn't asked for some reason, whether it was she didn't want to appear needy or whatever, there had to be a reason. "Where she move to?"

"Some small town just this side of the Tennessee border."

"Mountains? Damn, son, think of all the people that want to build mountain cabins. Would be an interesting new direction for you. You always liked the outdoors."

"I know."

“Look, I know you don’t want to crowd her. I know you’d rather her to wake up and come to her senses and call you, but sounds like both of you are a bit stubborn on this front. You want her. She wants you. And both of you are sitting on your asses waiting for the other one. Be the man I raised you to be and go tell her how you feel. You can’t expect a submissive woman to always put herself on the vulnerable side if her Dom doesn’t. It doesn’t work that way. Not successfully at least. If she says she doesn’t want a relationship beyond what you had, then at least you know.”

Buck sighed and ate the damn cherry. In trying to be considerate to what Caroline was doing with her life, he’d let her slip away. He wasn’t afraid of the rejection, he was afraid of her resenting him stepping in when what she said she wanted was her own life. Instead of having this conversation with his dad, he needed to be having it with her. He needed to get off his ass and go to her just like his dad had said. She took a chance on Derek and then took a chance by asking him to leave. Buck wasn’t sure she was willing to take another serious chance until or unless he put himself out there.

“Thanks, Dad. I appreciate it.”

“You’re welcome. I know it’s hard, but if you believe she’s worth it, then you have to fight for her.”

And Caroline was worth it. “Mom around?”

“No. Some new knitting group. I haven’t asked yet.”

“Knitting? Mom?”

“Yeah. All I know is it was started by one of her long time clients. She’s enjoying it and that’s all that matters, but if she starts making everyone hats and scarves for Christmas, I’ll have to have a talk with her.”

Buck laughed. As if his father would say anything. He’d just nod and say thank you, indulging her as long as she was happy. “Tell her I said hello, and I love her.”

“Will do.”

After saying good-bye and hanging up, Buck went into the bedroom and pulled out his large duffle. He used the bag when he went on one of his outdoor treks, either hiking, skiing, or hunting, the damn thing went everywhere with him. It was a faded green monstrosity that could fit a body if need be. Everything in his closet and bureau could be thrown in it save for his two suits. His mother would kill him if he tried to put those in the bag. He wouldn’t even have to tell her he did it, she’d just know. Some sort of mom-dar that no one other than another mom could understand. Ranked right up there with eyes in the back of her head and knowing just how long that piece of once-upon-a-time pizza had been under the bed.

He’d leave in the morning after talking to his foremen. He had two and split the jobs between them, but that was with him floating between them and helping out when needed. He’d have to arrange some new procedures if things with Caroline went in the direction he hoped they would. If they didn’t, well, it would be a nice little mini-vacation, even if his heart got stomped on.

“Melodramatic ass.”

His gut told him Caroline would be happy to see him. His dick told him the same thing, although his dick would be damn glad to see her too. Which reminded him, he would need to grab his toy bag from the back of the closet. It contained a few special items for Caroline. He just hadn't had time to give them to her.

Damn Derek and his fucking up Buck's time with her. "Not only his fault. Not like you moved in to stop her or anything."

Talking to himself had become a habit the last couple days, and he wasn't sure it was a healthy habit to develop. He might be okay so long as he didn't start having whole conversations with himself.

He took his bags out to the living room and set them by the door and stood there, looking around. "Why the hell not leave now? Drive through the night?" He could stop halfway if he wanted or drive all the way. It was only something like five and a half hours, probably less in the middle of the night.

He was just...when it came to something he wanted to do bad enough, he wanted to get to it, get started. He wasn't the let's wait and see kind and maybe that's what had him so frustrated. Caroline'd left, and he was waiting to see.

It wasn't like him so it was time to do something that was. When he'd thought he was the only one with feelings for her, he was okay to bide his time and if it came, he was ready to jump on it. But he didn't have that excuse now.

Mind made up, he cleaned what little mess he'd made in the kitchen, and adjusted the thermostat. He looked around, making sure everything was off and in order then grabbed his keys, his bags and headed out the door.

It was two in the morning by the time he filled the gas tank and hit the interstate. He popped the button on the stereo and sounds from the latest Bon Jovi album filled the quiet cab of his truck. He'd been a fan for years and though he'd cut his hair, he was still a hair band fan at heart. Crüe, Bon Jovi, Ratt, the original Guns and Roses and Aerosmith. He liked them, had been to see them at one time or other.

Few people on the road in the middle of the night made for good time and as long as he could stay awake, he'd be all right. He had a big enough music collection to last for hours so he should be good.

His parents were on the west coast and it was just past eleven for them, so if need be, he could call them. They'd always been late to bed, early to rise people which meant they'd be up for a couple more hours at least. But each mile took him closer to Caroline, and he could sleep once he got there. With her hopefully. The idea made him smile.

Chapter Eleven

“Did you find everything you needed?”

Caroline smiled at the clerk, Janis. No one knew her or her past or her sexual interests. They didn’t look at her with judgment in their eyes. They all smiled at her, asked about her, asked if there was anything she needed to help her get settled in their community. She felt at home, truly at home for the first time in her life. “Yes, thank you.”

“Baking something today?”

“Yes.”

“I’ve always found nothing makes a new place feel like home quite like the smell of something baking.”

“Yes, I agree.”

“You liking it up here?”

“I love it actually. It’s beautiful. I like seeing the mountains outside the windows.”

“That cabin you bought is on a really great piece of property. Too pricey for most folks here, but I’m glad to see someone sweet as you bought it. It’s big enough to raise a family in too.”

It certainly was. She’d taken the finished basement and made it her office. If it hadn’t been for her realtor’s husband helping her move things down the stairs, she would’ve had to use one of the spare bedrooms. Which she could have done, but she was glad to have separate work and living space.

She paid for her groceries and took the three bags in hand. She purposely ignored the comment about a family and tried to ignore the pang in her chest that said Buck would have been a great one to consider having a family with. She didn’t do such a good job of it. It stung and not for the first time, she mentally kicked herself for not having asked him what he was doing for the next few months, years, the rest of his life. “Thank you, Janis. I hope you have a nice afternoon.”

“I will, Caroline. You do the same.”

On the way back to the cabin, Caroline waved to other people she’d met. She’d made a friend in one of the part-time waitresses, Rosie, and thought about stopping into the diner for breakfast, but the parking lot was crowded and she had a lot of refrigerated items.

Rosie had come over yesterday and helped Caroline unpack her things, carted the boxes away, bought her a welcome to Blue Ridge dinner and then they sat outside on the deck wrapped in blankets, sipping wine, looking at the stars and warming themselves by the outdoor fire pit.

Been a long time since she'd had a girl friend who wasn't a lover, and she'd forgotten how much she enjoyed having female friendship that wasn't hampered, hindered or all around fucked up by sex. It ruined those friendships as much as it ruined the friendships with men, which was why she never became friends with men she was lovers with or vice versa. Just wasn't worth liking someone that much on so many levels for it to *all* come to a screeching halt the minute the sex stopped.

Buck though, that had been different. Nothing ever felt odd or forced before or after they started fucking like a couple of horny teenagers. They were discovering each other and what they each enjoyed, but there was something to be said for being comfortable with someone, free to delve deeper into feelings and motivations. She'd had that with him, too. Sex added fun and intense pleasure, but they were able to talk beyond the bed and the spankings, and she'd really enjoyed that.

And she had missed cooking for more than herself. Caring for someone other than her own person. She was meant for that, to be a caregiver, to do for others. It's one of the reasons she picked baskets and gifts for her business. It was providing not only a product but a personal touch of service as well. She thrived on that most of all, knowing she was helping, giving, offering something of herself.

The small gravel and rubber lined drive loomed on the left and she carefully turned in. She wasn't sure what she'd do when there was snow piled high, but she'd figure it out. She planned on making a couple trips into town a week to mail off packages, but to also get out of the house, to talk to people, to become part of the place she'd chosen to live.

The cabin came into view and as it had since she arrived, it made her smile. Big. Then she saw the truck. His truck. Buck's truck. He was rocking in a chair on her front porch and stood as soon as she parked her Jeep. She turned off the ignition, and he walked down the three steps. She got out and he was there, his hands in her hair, his lips on hers, his hot solid body warming hers from the outside in.

"What are you doing here?" she whispered against his cheek as he held her head close.

He looked down into her eyes and kissed the tip of her nose. "You forgot a few things when you left."

"I did?"

"Uh huh. You did."

"Dare I ask what I forgot?" Not that she really cared. He was here. He'd brought whatever it was to her.

"Me."

Okay, she cared. A lot. "I didn't forget you."

"You left me there, and you didn't ask me to come along."

"I didn't know how."

"I kind of figured. So, I brought me here to you."

Caroline threw her arms around his neck and hugged him so tight he had to push her away so he could breathe again. "For how long?"

“As long as you want me to stay. I won’t push, I won’t force my way into your life. I won’t take anything you aren’t willing to give, but I want to be part of your life. I don’t want to be part of your past, a memory of a fling you had for a few weeks with the handyman. I want to be part of your now, your tomorrow, and as many days after as you’ll let me be.”

Well, she hadn’t expected that. Though considering Buck, maybe she should have. “But you’re not just any handyman. You’re not a handyman at all.”

“I used to be. It’s how I started out.”

“I didn’t know how to ask,” she said again, needing him to understand it wasn’t that she didn’t want to, or that she didn’t want him. God, she wanted him, needed him, but she couldn’t ask. She didn’t even know why other than her own lack of self-confidence which until she faced the moment of actually leaving, she hadn’t had a problem with. “I want you so much and started missing you before I ever left. I shouldn’t have to tell you I want you in my life and in my bed, but I guess you needed me to. I don’t know how to live with someone else since... I want to try with you. I do.”

She wouldn’t mention Derek’s name again. He was her past. He had moved on, and so had she. Buck was her present and the stars willingly aligning right, her future. “Come on in. Wait until you see the view out the back.”

She grabbed her bags from the grocery store and Buck pulled a few duffle bags from the cab of his truck.

“You picked a beautiful place.”

“It was a steal, I swear. It was cheap, considering it’s a cabin looking out at the mountains.” She told him what had happened with the previous owners while she put the items she’d purchased away.

He came to stand at the back door, which was on the other side of the breakfast bar after putting his things in the master bedroom. He was no guest. He was her...what? Lover? Boyfriend? Everything? She had to smile at that last one. That didn’t seem to fit them. They were two different people who shared something special, who complimented one another in some very significant ways.

“You can see for miles standing here.” He looked over at the fireplace. “Used it yet?”

“No, but I have used the little one outside. Night is really chilly. Holy crap I hadn’t realized how chilly it would be in spring.”

“I’ll have to see about keeping you warm. It’s a gas fireplace too.” He winked, and she blushed by the heat in her cheeks. “I won’t need to chop wood for you.”

“Whatever will you do to keep yourself occupied?”

“Well, aside from seeing about starting up an off shoot of my business, I guess I’ll just have to keep myself occupied with you and getting to know this little area you’ve picked out for us.”

Us. She loved that. She hadn’t thought about it until he actually said it. “This is really real, huh?”

“About as real as it gets, I suppose. I’ve never done this before.”

“Done what before? Lived with a woman?”

“No, I’ve lived with a few girlfriends, but it’s not been anything like this with you is gonna be. More than my dick and my mind are involved this time around. My heart is too.”

She walked up behind him and wrapped her arms around his middle. She was free to do that—free to touch him. Kiss him. He looked over his shoulder at her and smiled, melting her into a puddle.

“What were your plans for today?”

“I didn’t have any other than to set up my computer. I’d said on my website I would be out of touch for the weekend, so I have to get back to work tomorrow. I was gonna bake a cake today though.”

“Cake?”

“Yeah. Chocolate cheese cake.”

“Well, damn, don’t let me stop you on that one. The computer thing can wait, however, until the cheese cake comes out of the oven. I have plans for you.”

“You do?”

He turned and pulled her close. “I do.” Lips nibbled, teeth nipped, tongues played. “You haven’t asked what else.”

She was confused, but then his kisses had that power. “What else what?”

“I said you’d left some things behind. Things, plural. I was one of them.”

“Oh. Well, what else did I leave?”

“Go look on the bed.”

“O-kay.” With eyes narrowed in his direction, she turned slowly and went into their room. There it was again. Their. His and hers. Together. Like us. Happiness curled inside her even as her gaze lit on what he’d laid out. “Oh my.”

Reaching around her, Buck picked up the silver chain with small clamps on the end. “This is made for nipple rings. The clamps fit inside the ring, add a little weight to them, and will help remind you of me.” He draped it around her neck.

She wanted the chain attached. Right now.

He then picked up the graduated glass butt plug in one hand and the quirt laying beside it in the other. “Think you can keep the plug in while I mark your backside?”

No one had ever used a quirt on her. A crop, a flogger, but never a quirt. And the plug...oh God. “Only one way to find out, I guess.” Her voice was a whisper, and she couldn’t take her eyes off the new toys. “Did you make it? The quirt I mean.” The braided leather of the handle was a mix of black and brown. It was intricately woven together in a tight formation. She knew he’d made things to be used on her before, but she’d never gotten an up close and personal look at them save for the end that would be marking her. She’d always had to kiss it, pay homage to it, and it was something that while some might find bothersome or offensive, she loved.

“I did. I’ve been working on it for a while. For you.”

He drew the ends of the leather up the front of her body, and it wasn’t at all close enough to what she wanted to feel it doing. And there was her name. Stamped, branded in the leather. Her name. It was true. He’d made it just for her. For himself to use on her. Her nipples tightened, and her pussy flooded as arousal slammed into her, rocking her back against his solid chest.

“You want it, don’t you?”

“Yes,” she breathed. “I want it.” He kissed her neck in that way he had. It made her think of possession. It made her feel that way, too. Like she was being possessed by him, especially like this.

“Good. The cheese cake can wait a bit. Strip.” He kissed her shoulder. “My.” He sucked her earlobe between his lips and bit. “Sweet.” He blew against her cheek and whispered in her ear, “Caroline.”

About the Author

To learn more about Lissa Matthews, please visit www.lissamatthews.com. Send an e-mail to Lissa Matthews at lissa@lissamatthews.com.

Look for these titles by Lissa Matthews

Now Available:

Pink Buttercream Frosting

Coming Soon:

Arctic Shifter

Desire: Blend sinful with sweet. Whip to perfection. Don't forget to lick the spoon...

Pink Buttercream Frosting

© 2009 Lissa Matthews

Aidn Greer is a much-sought-after Dominant in the BDSM lifestyle with an unusual problem. He hasn't owned a submissive in more years than he cares to think about. He's bored with unchallenging women, yet mentoring other Doms and training subs has left him cold as well. He's craving something other than plain old vanilla—a taste of something sinfully sweet that, for once, he can really sink his teeth into.

Professional cake baker Bailey Harris wasted ten years bored to tears with her marriage, enduring a job she hated, and harboring a secret desire for something passionate, fulfilling and dark. Then she found it...in the world of BDSM. Exploring on her own brought the kind of mind-opening experiences that led her to declare her independence—and exposed a yearning to find the one Dom for whom she's willing to kneel. Permanently.

When Aidn and Bailey meet, it's fire and ice. Sugar and spice. And an experience that satisfies every detail of both their fantasies. Almost. While the big, beautiful sub is everything Aidn wanted, her fierce independent streak could be more of a challenge than he bargained for...

Warning: This book brings together scorching-hot counter sex, decadent pink frosting, and no-holds-barred BDSM play for a spanking good time. Be sure to bring an ice-cold drink along...

Enjoy the following excerpt for Pink Buttercream Frosting:

Bailey pasted a smile on her face as she greeted her two o'clock appointment. Just because she hated all things having to do with men and romance and love and sex thanks to Mr. Slink Away Dominant, didn't mean she couldn't be sincerely happy for the newly engaged couple seated across the table from her. Did it? No, of course not. She was, after all, a professional.

"So, what's the date of your wedding?"

"Valentine's weekend," the bride gushed, holding tightly to the arm of her very uncomfortable looking groom.

Bailey understood his pain and wanted to throw up, wanted to break her pencil and jab Barbie Bride in the eyes with the jagged ends. "Oh, isn't that just wonderful!"

"Yes! Please tell me that you have the date open for a wedding. I just don't know what I'd do if you're already booked."

"Let me check the calendar to be sure." She flipped open her day planner and made a show of checking dates. She was open for anything, everything, and most especially Barbie's wedding. "Yes, actually, I am still available and that gives us just about six months."

“Oh that is just perfect. You were recommended so highly that I just had to have you and you did such a gorgeous job with my friend’s wedding cake. I knew you’d be perfect for what I want.”

Bailey was touched, this time truly touched by the kind words. “That’s a great compliment, thank you. What is your color scheme? Red and white?”

The bride beamed. “White with red and pink accents. Perfect for Valentine’s Day, don’t you think?”

Pencil snapping. Jagged ends. Deep breath. All without her smile faltering. “Absolutely. What color pink?”

“I want a really pretty shade and not anything that would clash with the red.”

That feeling of throwing up...it was back. “No, we don’t want anything to clash. I have a variety of cake flavors, do you have a preference?”

“Chocolate. That’s what you made for Angie’s wedding and it was to die for.”

“Great. Chocolate. Buttercream frosting?” Did they see the tightness around her mouth at all or was it just something Bailey was feeling as she looked at them?

“Is that what was on Angie’s cake? I want it to taste just like hers. Can you do that? Make it taste exactly like hers?”

The plea was so earnest that Bailey fought not to laugh. “I’m pretty sure it was buttercream I used on hers and yes, I can make it taste just like that.”

“Oh, good. And I want roses all over it in pink and red.”

“All right. Let me get one of my pattern books and you can see if there’s something that fits the vision you have in your head. I’ll just be a second.”

Bailey stood, walked behind the counter and knelt down, trying to compose herself, trying to get back the professionalism she was quickly losing. She didn’t know why she was losing it, except for the fact that images of Aidn kept drifting in and out of her mind. It wasn’t marriage she was seeing though, it was a collaring, which was dumb as she’d only been with him once and he’d walked away. It was just a feeling, a gut feeling, that he was the one. It was a feeling that pissed her off.

A few deep breaths later, she stood and pasted another smile on her face. She grabbed some wedding cake books and a couple of magazines and set them on the table for Barbie and Ken to begin going through. “I have some cake samples if you’d like to try them.”

“No, that’s fine. I know what the chocolate tasted like and that’s what I want. I don’t need to taste anything else,” Barbie said absently, her eyes and fingers devouring the pages of cakes in front of her. Ken simply sat there, helpless, looking even more uncomfortable in the silence that ensued. Bailey tried to give him an encouraging and kind smile but wasn’t sure she pulled it off.

“This one!”

Bailey looked at the picture that the bride was pointing to and inwardly groaned. The cake consisted of four stacked tiers, with cascades of icing roses from the top to the bottom and gum-paste petals sprinkled along the base.

“And I want alternating red and pink roses.”

“And the scattered, loose petals?”

“Can you make them white? Or would it be better if they were a color?”

“I think either would look lovely, but it’s whatever you want. It’s your big day.”

“Yes, it is,” she squealed.

“And what do you think?” Bailey asked, turning toward the still-silent groom.

“Oh he doesn’t care. He likes whatever I like.”

Sheepishly he shrugged his shoulders and nodded his head. For some reason the gesture caused a small twinge of sadness in Bailey. Her husband had been like that. Agreeing to whatever she wanted, never having much to say about anything. His nonchalant attitude about work, social plans, life and her...it was just more than she could take for the rest of her life. Now that she’d found heat and passion in a whole different personal lifestyle, she couldn’t regret having left him and striking out on her own.

She did wish things had worked out differently with Aidn though, that it had been more than just a one afternoon deal.

After filling out some paperwork and taking a deposit, Bailey walked the happy couple out and then returned to the kitchen. She needed to bake, to play. It helped her forget, to cope through tough times.

Half a bag of powdered sugar later, along with half a pound of butter, some vanilla and cream, she was feeling pretty good. Aidn hadn’t crossed her mind but three or four hundred times. Surely, that was some sort of improvement.

Love comes at the turn of a card...or the crack of a whip.

Sting of Desire

© 2009 Lilli Feisty

Sandine would love to walk out of her ex-boyfriend's life forever. Except the sadistic bastard stole the ancient tarot cards her late mother gave her, knowing she'll do anything to get them back. Including endure his abuse on the stage of his sex club.

For the crime of trying to get her prized cards back, she's steeling herself for the public beating of her life. Knowing that no matter how much she screams, no one will come to her aid.

Harry Marshall should be immune to undercover work at sex clubs by now. From the moment he spots Sandine chained at the mercy of the suspected drug dealer he's after, his gut tells him something isn't right. He can't believe he'd risk blowing his cover by stepping in, much less his body's erotic reaction to inflicting pain on her luscious body.

Question is, how deeply involved is she in her ex's drug dealing—if at all? If she'd stay out of his way long enough to find out, he wouldn't have to put his own mission in danger to keep protecting her from her ex...and herself.

Enjoy the following excerpt for Sting of Desire:

Harry gunned his Harley up an almost vertical street. As he crested the top of F'illmont Street, the San Francisco skyline appeared, its multicolored lights reminding him of the Christmas trees his mother used to decorate many years ago. But even happy childhood memories couldn't knock the thoughts of Sandine out of his head. If anything, the contrast only succeeded in furthering the self-disgust that had settled in the pit of his belly, a feeling that had been fermenting ever since the adrenaline rush of being with Sandine had dissipated.

He eased up on the throttle slightly to rumble through a stop sign at the bottom of the hill. Why had she trusted him? Her trust—that was what had put him over the edge, that was what had gone straight to his heart, his head. The smoky look in her eyes, the moan on her lips, the tremble in her legs. All of it killed him.

She'd submitted to him completely.

He hit the throttle, his black coat flying behind him in flapping waves. It didn't take a fucking shrink to figure out he was attempting to outrun his feelings.

His Harley wasn't that fast.

She had wanted him to do it. He knew that, just as he knew he liked his steaks rare and his showers hot. She wanted him to master her, and he had liked doing it too. A lot. But the guilt had sucked the lingering pleasure from him like a leech would fresh blood.

Nothing made sense.

Before he had started this case a file had been dropped on his desk. Sex Clubs for Dummies, he'd called it. But he'd read it—he always studied a case voraciously before he went in. He liked to be prepared, with weapons and knowledge. And so he had gone in armed with more than a whip, some guns and a few knives. He'd gone in with information.

Over the past three weeks he'd seen others engage in similar acts, and sometimes he'd felt a slight stirring of sexual excitement, but for the most part he'd been able to keep those feelings in check and stay focused. He'd been in control.

But nothing had prepared him for the overwhelming adrenaline rush of whipping Sandine. Which begged the question he'd been asking himself for an hour. Was it her or the act itself that had affected him with such intensity?

Or was it the combination?

Either way, what it came down to was he had beaten a woman and derived pleasure from doing so.

Inflicting pain—the act went against the very foundation of his ethical beliefs. Morals that had been drilled into his head ever since he could remember. His father had been a doctor, donating his time and services all over the world. The man had been a champion for those less fortunate than he. He'd been a spokesperson for peace. A hero.

Harry wasn't a hero, not by any stretch of the imagination, but he was a cop—a good cop—and shouldn't that mean something? What it *should* mean is that he didn't get off on that sort of thing. His father would roll over in his grave at the thought.

Yet, the feeling that had come over him while he did it—while he'd *whipped* Sandine—a sense of calm mixed with elation, was odd and thrilling and hit him like a drug. It was similar to the way his body reacted just before a freefall jump.

So, now you aren't satisfied with extreme sports, you need extreme sex too?

He gunned his bike up another hill, feeling like he was about to drive straight into the sky. All he could think about was holding her, making sure she was okay. Some primal, protective instinct beat in his chest, unlike anything he'd felt before.

He didn't understand it, any of it. Sure, he had done his research and knew the basic psychology of why Le Cheval held allure for so many people. But he had thought himself above all that. In fact, that was why the chief had picked him for this job. Unlike half the force, Harry's preferred flavor was vanilla.

Wasn't it?

Sandine eased into the claw-foot bathtub, closing her eyes as the water enveloped her tight limbs into its warmth. Taking a few deep breaths, she attempted to center herself. Something had happened tonight, a part of her mind had unlocked, and she needed to know what had triggered it.

All she saw was Harry, circling her, cracking that whip with a mastery that had melted her. And that was what he had done tonight—mastered her. Dominated her. Opened her up and let her go.

He amazed her. Her mind floated from how he'd played her earlier. Adrenaline thrummed lightly through her body.

And yet she had no idea who he was, this man who had saved her from Cain's anger.

Rubbing the scrapes around her wrists, she wondered how she could have been so stupid. A fucking Tarot reader, trained in divination from birth—how could she have acted so impulsively, with no pause to listen to her own intuition? What would have happened if Harry hadn't been there to intervene?

She sighed as the warm water lapped at the trace of a line where his whip had struck her outer thigh. The reddened skin would be fine by tomorrow, but she wanted the proof to remain. Wanted to see his mark on her skin.

It had been hours since she'd seen him and still her body tingled from the caress of Harry's lips on her skin, the feel of his large, warm fingers sliding into her body, the sting of his whip across her ass. Lightly touching her lip, she recalled the way his tongue had caressed the inside of her mouth. So natural, that kiss.

She had been *so close* to coming—simply thinking of the pleasure he had given her put her on the edge of an orgasm.

Again.

She closed her eyes, imagined him kissing her now, recalled his taste of whiskey. Whiskey and smoke.

She lightly pinched a sore nipple. Like a familiar lover, Harry had loosened the nipple clamps *exactly enough* to give her sharp pleasure. She raised her legs, rested her calves on the edge of the cold ceramic tub. She touched her ribs and moved lower, could feel the leather of his whip wrapping around her waist. The crack of the whip seemed to echo in her ear.

The water lapped at her skin as she submerged her hand to trace her shaved S, where she lingered for a moment before touching herself between her legs. Even in water her pussy felt wet and slick on her hand, and as she caressed her sex she pretended it was Harry's hand teasing her. His hands were lovely—long and confident, like the rest of him.

The look in his eyes as he had circled her, snapping his whip on the ground, reminded her of the lion trainer who had traveled in the *cirque* with her family. Like Harry, the trainer had been tall and lean, and even as a girl she had been fascinated with the graceful way the man had wielded his tool, the way he could coax a roaring beast into submission with a few controlled flicks of his wrist.

She slid her fingers to her clit, rubbed that throbbing point until she gasped, watched her toes go stiff. Her pulse began to race as she recalled the bound woman in the chair, the way her face had contorted in pleasure as the kneeling man licked her very center. Le Cheval had been throbbing with energy tonight, and

Sandine had soaked it in like a plant does water. Her veins still hummed from the palpable excitement, feeding a long-forgotten part of her soul.

Ironically, despite her public display earlier, here she was alone, masturbating. But even this felt different, more exciting. She thought of Harry as she rubbed her clit and pinched her nipple, trying to find the exact pressure he had applied earlier. She couldn't get it right, damn it. God, if only he were here to do it again...

She remembered how she had wanted him to fuck her, how she had begged him for it.

Moaning, she slid her hand deeper into the folds of her sex, palming herself as he had done. It wasn't exactly right—her hand felt small in comparison—but at least it provided some degree of gratification. When she pushed two fingers into her body, working them in and out, she gasped in pleasure.

She wanted it all. She wanted Harry to fuck her, lick her, whip her—pain and pleasure—

She wanted *him*.

She climaxed, her body shuddering before each muscle froze, her legs spread wide and slung over the edge of the tub, his name on her lips. And as her heartbeat slowed and her eyes drifted open he was there, leaning against the sink. Watching her.

He gave her that crooked grin. "You called?"

There's only one man she needs to believe in. Him.

If You Believe

© 2009 *Crystal Jordan*

Unbelievable, Book One

When it comes to her love life, the name of Aubrey Mathison's coffee shop says it all: "Bean There, Done That". There's only one harmless man in her life right now—the homeless one parked outside the shop. Except the crazy things he says keep coming true.

She has to laugh at "You'll meet your soul mate today", though. Divorce taught her that men as gorgeous as sexy police chief Price Delacroix are not to be trusted. She's totally up for a one-night stand, but more than that? No, thanks.

Price bears his own scars from the past, but he knows instantly that Aubrey is his. How to convince her he wants more than to be her personal jungle gym? Cut her off. That means no more mattress gymnastics—until she starts seeing things his way.

Aubrey is just as determined Price's campaign to wear down her resistance is going to fail, no matter how wickedly determined he is. Until her resident prophet spouts a new prediction: her soul mate's life is in danger...

Enjoy the following excerpt for If You Believe:

Mr. Crazy Man was back. He hummed a little before speaking again. "Dogs are bad luck for you today."

Shit. She hunched her shoulder and spun away. "Thanks."

If she went her normal route home, she'd have to pass by the dog park that made up a corner of the town square. Maybe she would try a different way. Just for the change of scenery. Change was good for the soul, wasn't it? If she went by the dog park, it just seemed like too much self-fulfilling prophecy.

Taking a left off the main path where she usually took a right, she wandered into the older district of town that had great Victorian houses. She'd always loved that style of architecture, but Scott had wanted modern. Now that she lived alone, it just seemed like too much upkeep. And maybe it was because she was afraid it would put her one step away from crazy cat lady to rattle around in a big old house like that. She turned the corner on to her street. She had four blocks left to go.

"Woof." Her blood ran cold at the deep bark that came from behind her. A lot of people walked these streets in the evening. And took their dogs with them.

A kid of about twelve had lost the leash on his Great Dane. The air went whistling out of her in what might have been a high-pitched squeak.

It wasn't that she believed Jericho or anything, but the fire thing had kind of creeped her out. Watching that pony-sized excuse for a dog running at her made her blood run cold. Anyone would freak out. It had nothing to do with Jericho's warning. Nope. Not a thing.

She backpedaled as fast as her legs could carry her just the same. The back of her ankles hit something that yelped and the next thing she knew she was going down hard on the pavement. Her back arched when her tailbone made sharp contact with the ground and all the breath rushed out of her lungs. Curling into a fetal position on her side, she wrapped her arms around her knees and tried remember why she didn't want to die right then.

When she opened her eyes, a pointy little muzzle snapped in her face as a dachshund yapped. Dog breath, *blech*. She groaned and pushed into a sitting position. A strong arm wrapped around her back to cradle her against a wide chest. *Price Delacroix*.

"Don't move, Aubrey." His deep voice rumbled, and that was all it took to get her hot and bothered. Her sex dampened at the sound of his rich, deep tones. The way he smelled. The hardness of his muscles against her body. *Thank you, Jesus*.

"I'm fine." She tried to pretend the breathiness of her voice was just from having the wind knocked out of her. The way her nipples tightened and her muscles softened told her it was a lie.

"You took a hard fall. Stay there." His words were almost harsh, but his touch was gentle when he brushed her hair away from her face. She fought the urge to lean her cheek into his palm. Everything about this man made her react.

Her original assessment that the two of them were destined to burn up the sheets was dead on. She really wanted to try him on for size. She'd bet he fit just fine. "I'm really all right, Chief."

"Price. You'll call me Price." His other arm slid under her bent knees and lifted her as he stood.

She squeaked and clutched his shoulders. His soft T-shirt bunched in her fingers as she held on tight. "Don't drop me."

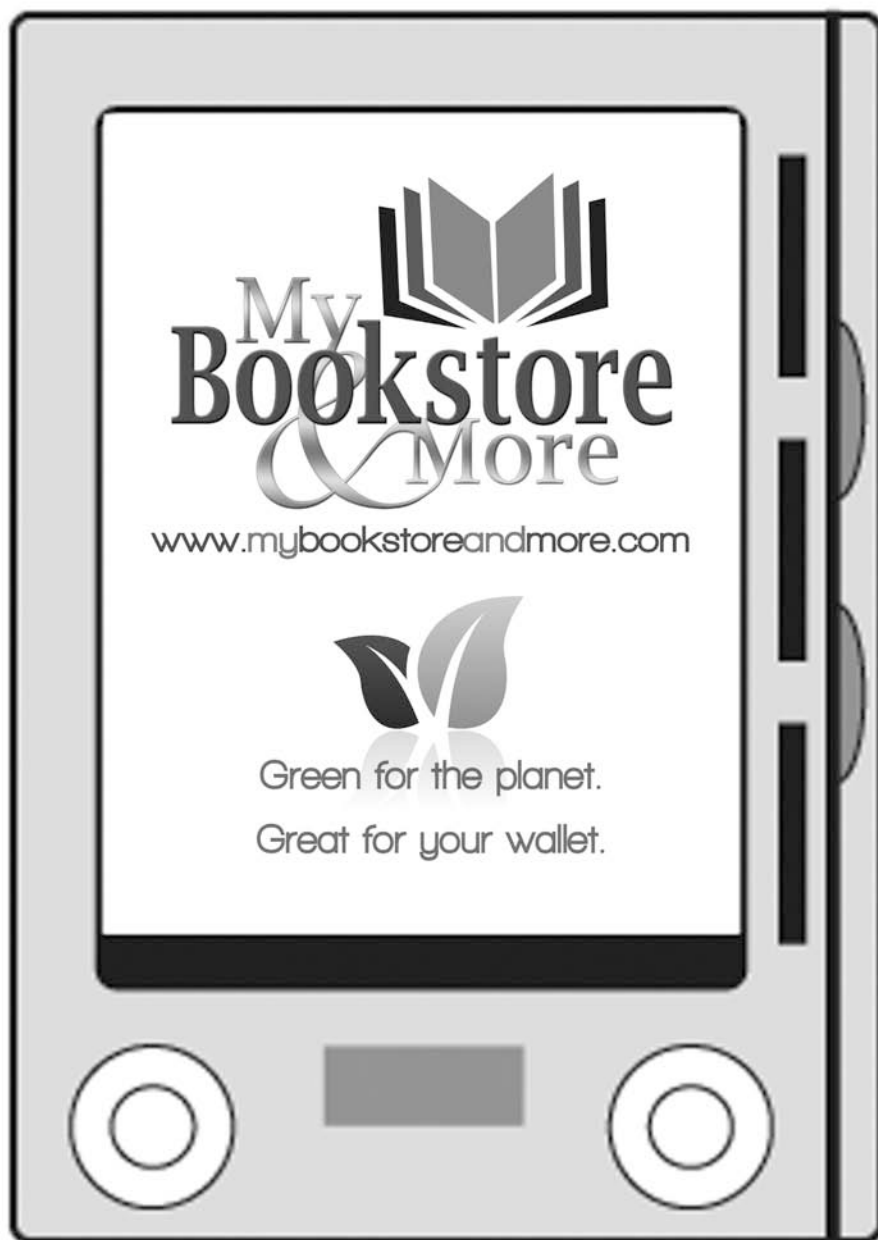
A wicked grin flashed over his face before he focused on her eyes. Some of her panic must have shown because he cuddled her closer. "Not a chance, sugar."

"Is she all right, Chief Delacroix?" Mrs. Chambers, the biggest gossip in town, reined in her wiener dog and stared at the two of them.

"Oh, she's fine. Ma'am." He dipped his head in a nod, dismissing the older woman while he turned to walk up the driveway in front the big Victorian on the corner. She sighed in envy when she saw it.

She glanced over his shoulder at Mrs. Chambers. An avid gleam entered the older woman's eyes as he mounted the porch. Pitching her voice low, Aubrey had to warn him. "Look, I know you're new in town, but Mrs. Chambers—"

He nudged the front door of his house open, and then kicked it shut behind them. “Will spread it all over town that I carried you into my house? And will probably embellish it by saying that I practically stripped you on the sidewalk and fucked you against the street lamp.”



Samhain Publishing, Ltd.

It's all about the story...

Action/Adventure

Fantasy

Historical

Horror

Mainstream

Mystery/Suspense

Non-Fiction

Paranormal

Red Hots!

Romance

Science Fiction

Western

Young Adult

www.samhainpublishing.com