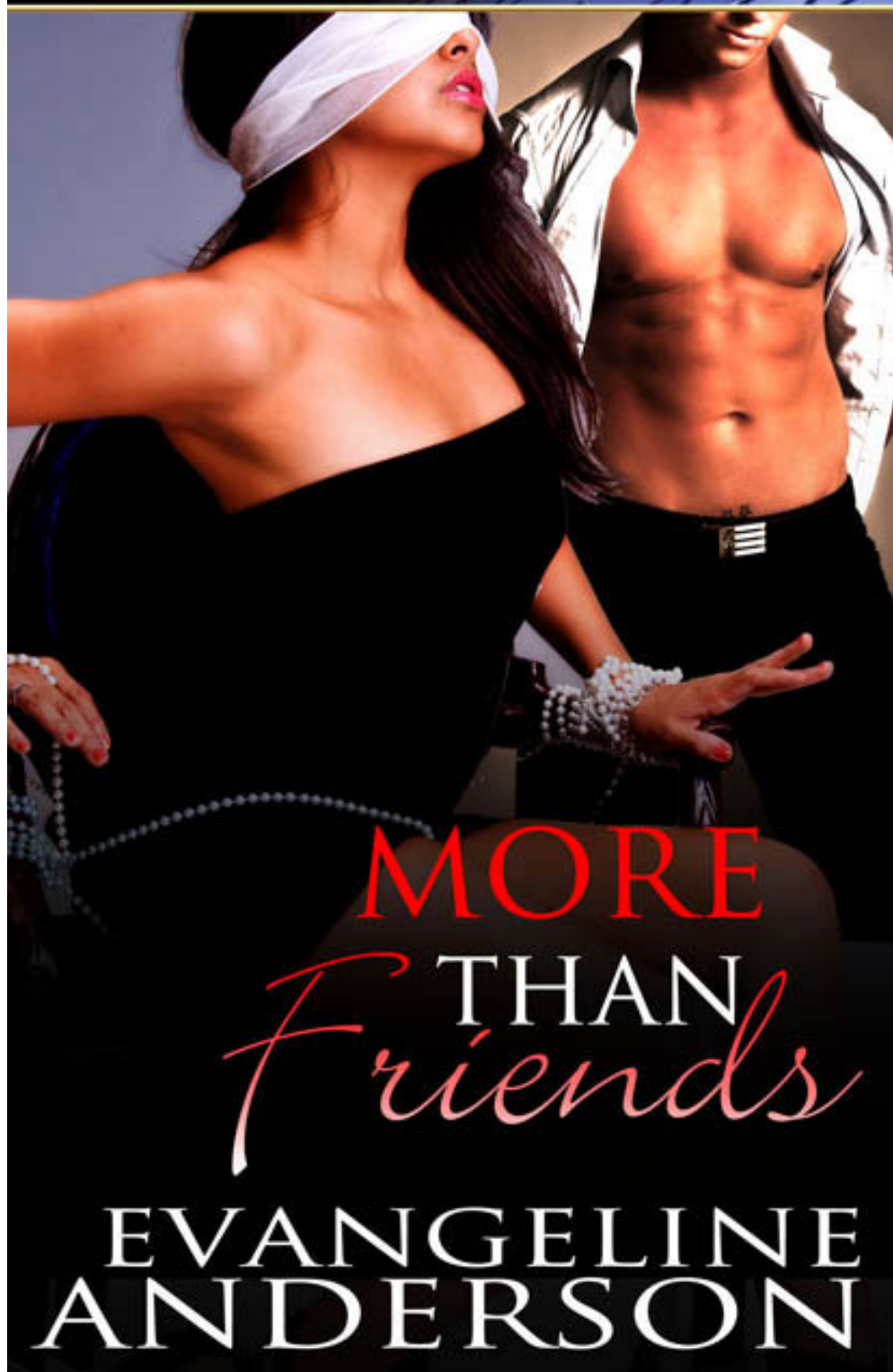


ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



## **More Than Friends**

*Evangeline Anderson*

Zach and Emily have been best friends since high school but Zach wants much more. Emily is the girl of his dreams—and unfortunately taken. Zach knows her jerk of a fiancé isn't good enough for sweet, perfect Emily, but what can he do? The answer comes in the form of a frantic phone call late one night—Emily is in trouble.

When Emily agreed to go to the Rustler's Roundup charity auction for her eccentric employer, she never dreamed that *she* would be the goods auctioned off. Now, standing half naked on stage and being bid on by complete strangers, she's about to get a lot more charity than she planned on. Luckily for her, Zach rides to the rescue just in time. But in order to free her from the Roundup, he has to do a lot more than bid on her—spanking and sex are on the menu as well.

Will the hot sexual encounter destroy their relationship? Or will they finally become more than friends?

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)

More Than Friends

ISBN 9781419927973

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

More Than Friends Copyright © 2010 Evangeline Anderson

Edited by Shannon Combs

Cover art by Syneca

Electronic book publication June 2010

The terms Romantica® and Quickies® are registered trademarks of Ellora's Cave Publishing.

With the exception of quotes used in reviews, this book may not be reproduced or used in whole or in part by any means existing without written permission from the publisher, Ellora's Cave Publishing, Inc.® 1056 Home Avenue, Akron OH 44310-3502.

Warning: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. No part of this book may be scanned, uploaded or distributed via the Internet or any other means, electronic or print, without the publisher's permission. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000. (<http://www.fbi.gov/ipr/>). Please purchase only authorized electronic or print editions and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted material. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, or places, events or locales is purely coincidental. The characters are productions of the authors' imagination and used fictitiously.

# ***MORE THAN FRIENDS***

**Evangeline Anderson**

## *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

The author acknowledges the trademarked status and trademark owners of the following wordmarks mentioned in this work of fiction:

*Antiques Roadshow*: British Broadcasting Corporation

Baylor University: Baylor University Non-Profit Corporation

Dungeons and Dragons: TSR Hobbies, Inc Corporation

eBay: eBay Inc.

Hummer: General Motors Corporation

MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Corporation

Visa: Visa International Service Association

*Vogue*: Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.

## **Prologue**

“Our second slave girl of the night is sent to us compliments of Ms. Gretta DeVille, and you know she only sends the very best, so let’s start the evening off right. What am I bid for this pretty young thing? Tight little ass, long silky hair and just look at those tits—fit just right in the palm of your hand! Come on, gentlemen, you know you want a piece of this. Let’s start the bidding at one thousand dollars. One-thousand-one-thousand-one-thousand-and-who’ll-give-me-two?”

Emily Cline was pushed out into the center of the large wooden stage as the auctioneer continued speed talking, listing her physical attributes at the top of his lungs. She stumbled in the spiked black heels that were strapped to her feet and would have fallen if he hadn’t stuck out a hand to catch her. Instead of holding her steady, he twirled her roughly, showing the crowd of yelling, leather-clad men the way her short black leather skirt rode up her thighs, revealing the lacy tops of her garters. Dizzy, Emily tried to stand up straight and regain her composure when the auctioneer released her. But inside she was a mass of confusion as the bids began to come pouring in.

*Oh God! This isn’t really happening, is it? No, it can’t be. It has to be some kind of really vivid nightmare. It’s like that horrible dream I had in tenth grade when Jeremy Norlow gave me that pill he said would make me feel like I was floating but instead I kept thinking I was stepping off the edge of a cliff.*

It had been a good ten years since the mysterious pill incident and high school was long behind her but Emily had the same sick feeling in the pit of her stomach. The feeling that she had stepped off the edge of the cliff and there was no net down below to catch her when she hit bottom.

She looked down at herself, at her neat teacup-sized breasts that were currently pushed up and out by the bizarre corset-like contraption the wardrobe mistress had

forced her into. They were spilling out the top of it like ripe fruit and her nipples, barely covered by the black lacy edge of the constricting device, were so hard they felt like diamonds at the tips of her breasts.

The black leather skirt she was wearing seemed more designed to showcase the wispy black garters and panties she had on than to conceal them. There was a zipper in the back of it that ran from the bottom edge right up to the waistline as though the skirt had been made especially to show off her ass. The five-inch stiletto hooker heels she was wearing were so high they made her totter everywhere, using mincing little steps like a geisha. Although no self-respecting geisha would be caught dead dressed like she was now.

“Five thousand!” A male voice in the crowd was shouting but the spotlight shining in her eyes blinded Emily and she couldn’t see anything but a vague, blurry sea of faces. Faces she knew represented some of the wealthiest men in Houston. Not that she cared—she just wanted to go home, didn’t she? Her head was certain she did, but her heart wasn’t so sure. It was pounding against her ribs as if it wanted to get out and the silky black panties that barely covered the soft mound of her sex felt hot and slippery between her legs. The conflicting sensations of sheer terror and heart-racing lust were horribly confusing. *This isn’t me!* Emily told herself. *This isn’t what I want. Is it?*

Oh God, how had she gotten herself into this? Being auctioned off like a piece of meat wasn’t her idea of a good time. But everything had happened so fast it was difficult to pinpoint exactly where she’d gone wrong, how she’d ended up on the auction block in the first place. Who was going to buy her? And what would they do with her when they did? Emily had never felt so vulnerable, so helpless and frightened. With a trembling hand she pushed her tousled tawny brown curls out of her eyes and took as deep a breath as the corset she was wearing would allow. *Calm, have to keep calm,* she told herself.

“Five-thousand-and-who’ll-make-it-six?” the auctioneer barked. “Come on now, it’s not much to pay for fifteen minutes on the stage with this lovely little slave. Ya’ll know

the rules – there are no rules! Because tonight at the Rustler’s Roundup, *anything goes!* And remember, it’s for a good cause.”

*That’s right, a good cause.* Suddenly her muddled mind took her back to the beginning, the night before when her employer, Gretta DeVille of the Stanhope DeVilles, had informed her that she would need Emily to attend a charity auction on Friday night.

*Some auction,* Emily thought as the bidding reached ten thousand dollars and the men in leather cheered and hooted like animals. If only she had known that she was going to be the item up for bidding she never would have agreed to go. But she had been blissfully ignorant of her eventual fate. If only she had listened to her best friend Zach’s warning...



## **Chapter One**

"She wants you to attend a what?"

"A charity event. You know, a party. A fundraiser." Emily shrugged and swung her legs like a little girl. She was perched on the counter in her best friend Zach's kitchen eating ripe red grapes out of the bowl he offered her. Today she had on her favorite peasant skirt and no shoes—it felt wonderful to be barefoot after a day of marching around in heels. "It's called The Rustler's Roundup and they have it every year at this same club," she said, popping another juicy bite-sized globe into her mouth. "Apparently she can't go herself so I'm supposed to get all dressed up and represent her high and mightyness."

Her employer was an older woman who had been an elegant socialite in the Southern social scene in her younger days. Now Ms. Gretta DeVille had become a rich and eccentric recluse, rarely going out and relying on Emily for everything from picking up her dry cleaning to...well, other less mundane tasks.

"Here we go. So what's the catch to this charity gig?" Zach wanted to know.

"No catch." Emily shrugged again. "It's not like attending a benefit is the craziest thing I've ever done for her."

"Nope." Zach shook his head. "That would probably be the tea party you threw for Mistress Kimberly, her pot-bellied pig."

"Hey, I'll have you know that was the social event of the season—the pot-bellied pig season, anyway. And that still wasn't the craziest thing." Emily threw a grape at him and he caught it in midair and ate it with a grin.

Zach was slouching against the kitchen island opposite her, his tall frame draped in his usual attire, jeans and a T-shirt. His dark blue eyes were framed by expensive designer glasses Emily had helped him pick out. She'd gotten him contacts too but he

mainly wore them while he was gaming—so the frames of his glasses wouldn't interfere with the fit of his headset. His thick black hair had a rumpled appearance except for the one little curl that always stubbornly appeared in the middle of his forehead. Emily called that his worry curl because whenever he was deep in thought one large hand would creep up to his forehead and Zach would begin twirling the lock of hair around one finger. The fidgety little habit reminded her of when they had first met, back in high school.

Back at West Stark High, home of the Fighting Badgers, Emily had been one of those lucky girls who just naturally got along with everyone and moved through the different social circles with ease. She'd been active in everything—student council, drama, choir, the yearbook committee, the tennis and the debate teams and had even raised a calf in 4-H. In fact, she'd been good at everything but math—specifically algebra. She could write essays that were fourth cousins to literature and debate the pros and cons of any issue but when Mr. Fourtengrass, her sophomore Algebra teacher, plunked down a piece of paper filled with numbers and equations, Emily's chest grew tight and her brain went numb. Seeing that she was making straight As in every other subject but was about to flunk his class, her teacher had put her together with Zachary Roberts for tutoring.

Zach was a math whiz—more than a whiz actually. He was more like a prodigy. While Emily was wrestling with the quadratic equation, he was zooming through advanced trigonometry and calculus. But unlike many super smart people Emily had met, he was actually able to share the wealth and explain how  $X + Y = Z$  without making her feel like an idiot. She loved the way he was so patient with her, explaining a concept over and over from different angles until she finally got it. He never got angry or irritated with her for not understanding something that was clearly easy for him and he was always willing to help.

His patience wasn't the only thing that had drawn her to Zach. He was quiet and shy and socially awkward—so tall and lanky that his nickname in high school had been

Scarecrow. But he had a dry sense of humor and a maturity Emily hadn't seen in any of the boys she dated or hung out with, most of whom still thought fart jokes were the height of hilarity. Little by little, they began to talk about more than math and before she knew it, Zach had become her go-to guy. When she was sad he could always cheer her up and when she was in a bind she could always count on him – that was more than she could say for any other man in her life, even her boyfriend Jason, she thought with a grimace.

She and Zach had remained friends through college, keeping in touch with letters and phone calls—Emily had gone to Baylor and Zach had gone to M.I.T.—and now they both lived in Sugarland, one of the many bedroom communities on the outskirts of the great Houston sprawl.

"Name something crazier than the pot-bellied pig tea party," Zach challenged her, breaking her train of thought.

"Um..." Emily munched on another grape. "What about the time she had me interview male strippers to find just the right one to jump out of her eighty-year-old mother's birthday cake? I was supposed to get one who wasn't too 'greasy looking'." She shook her head. "I thought the poor old lady was going to have a heart attack when that guy popped out of the cake and started shaking his junk right in her face but Ms. DeVille said it was perfect."

"Perfect for whom?" Zach wanted to know.

"I don't know—certainly not me. I had to watch Mister Muscles the Naughty Policeman dance twice and neither time did anything for me." Emily sighed. "Greasy or not, there's always something just so cheesy about those male strippers."

"I wouldn't know," Zach said dryly. "Since I only strip for fun, not profit."

"You *have* filled out a lot since high school." Emily eyed her best friend's broad chest and well-developed biceps. Despite the fact that Zach was a software engineer and a video-game designer, she knew he hit the gym on a regular basis. No one would

call him Scarecrow now. "Maybe next time I need to hire a stripper I should call you," she said, giving him a mischievous grin.

Zach smirked. "You couldn't afford me, baby. I'm first-class all the way."

"Ha-ha, funny guy." Emily aimed a kick at him and Zach caught her bare foot easily and began to massage her arch in that divine way only he could manage. "God, that's good," she groaned, letting her eyes flutter shut briefly as his hands worked their magic. "You're gonna make some lucky woman *so* happy some day. Which reminds me." She sat up a little and offered her other foot to be massaged. "How did the date with Zelda go the other night?"

"Uh, well...I dunno..." Zach suddenly got very interested in massaging her other foot and wouldn't meet her eyes.

"Zach? Please tell me it went well. Come on now, I went to a lot of trouble to set that up." Emily glared at him and tried to ignore the effect of his big hands on her tired arches.

"I don't know, Em. She just wasn't...we didn't seem to hit it off." Zach shrugged his broad shoulders unhappily and dipped his chin. "She's not my type."

"Not your type?" Emily demanded. "Come on, Zach, she would be any man's type. Don't forget, she goes to my gym and I've seen her work out. She's got that whole blonde Valkyrie thing going on. Tall, thin, tan and with boobs out to here." She made a motion well outside the outlines of her own firm but smallish breasts. "I think they're real too."

"Yeah, like I said, not my type. You know I like my women petite, pale and brunette." Zach looked up and caught her eye for a long moment and Emily found herself blushing for some reason. "And pumped full of silicone, of course. Gotta have that in my dream girl." He ended the awkward moment with a joke and dropped his eyes. He was obviously trying to get her into a better mood but Emily refused to be mollified.

"I can't believe you didn't like her," she said, pulling her foot back and crossing her arms over her chest.

Zach sighed. "I don't know, Em. Maybe *she* didn't like *me*. Did you consider that?"

"How could she not like you?" Emily demanded. "You're the perfect guy—sweet, funny, charming...and nice." She shook her head. "You were probably *too* nice, weren't you? Don't try to deny it, you always are."

Zach raised his shoulders and frowned. "What's wrong with being nice?"

"Nothing. But there's nice and then there's *nice*, as in too nice. Just look at you, Zach—you're not in high school anymore. You're not the geek in the back of the math class answering all the teacher's questions before he can finish them and planning to stay home on the weekend playing Dungeons and Dragons instead of going out." She gestured with both hands, trying to make him understand. "You're handsome and successful and...and...you could have any girl you wanted."

Zach looked at her directly. "Really? *Any* girl?"

"Sure." Emily nodded vigorously. "You just have to have confidence in yourself. Nice is really good as far as it goes but sometimes a girl wants someone who'll take charge—someone who's strong enough to stand up to her and say—"

"Sorry, sweetheart, but I have to work late tonight. Why don't you do your own thing and I'll catch you later?" Zach finished for her, doing a dead-on impression of her longtime boyfriend Jason.

"All right, point taken." Emily acknowledged defeat. "I don't mean you should be inattentive—not that Jason is—inattentive, I mean. But I'm just trying to say that sometimes you have to take control of the situation—women love a take charge kind of man. Somebody you know is going to get the job done. It's just so...sexy."

"And this is the advice I get from my favorite feminist?" Zach cocked one eyebrow at her disbelievingly. "Don't be so nice? Take charge of the situation and drag your date around by the hair?"

"I don't mean you have to regress down the evolutionary ladder *completely*," Emily objected. "It's just...well, I guess I'm just disappointed. I was really looking forward to going on a double date—you and Zelda and Jason and me—it would have been the perfect foursome. And just think how cute your wedding invitations would have been—Zachary and Zelda request the honor of your attendance—"

"You're in an awful hurry to get me married off." Zach sounded hurt.

"No, I'm not," Emily protested. "I just want you to be happy, you know that, Zach. I mean, look at you, all alone in this big house..."

"I'm almost never alone. You're over here every day," he pointed out, grinning. "Telling me about your crazy boss and all the hoops she makes you jump through. What about the time she made you dress up in a wig and dark glasses and actually pretend to be her?"

Emily sighed. She knew her friend was changing the subject but she could never stay mad at Zach for long. "That was just to fool her sixth husband in the nursing home. She had promised him she'd lose some weight and she didn't want him to know she hadn't followed through. That wasn't too bad compared to the time I had to take her poodles Fifi and George to the nail salon—not the animal salon, the *people* salon—to get their toenails painted pale pink to match the dress she was going to wear to the third annual Canine Parade. She actually made me bring a swatch of fabric with me to make sure it was a perfect match!"

Zach laughed. "Those were some well-dressed poodles—straight out of doggie *Vogue*." Of course Emily had told him all of these stories and dozens more but they never got tired of laughing over her weird job.

Emily sighed. "You know, when I answered her ad for a personal assistant, I thought I was going to be taking letters or arranging her schedule—not making manicure appointments for her dogs."

"Yeah, but she pays well, right?" Zach reminded her.

"Yup, she may be crazy but she's *rich* and crazy." Emily straightened up on the counter and grabbed another handful of grapes. "In fact, in another month or so I may have enough to quit and make Posh Party Planning more than just a pipe dream." For years she'd been dreaming of owning her own business and thanks to the fat paychecks of her eccentric employer, her dreams were about to become a reality – she could feel it.

"You know I'd loan you the money for the startup," Zach said, frowning at her.

"Zach, we've been over this—I'm not taking a loan from you, no matter how insanely successful you are. You've already designed my entire website for free, that's as far as I'm willing to go."

"Well, I know better than to press the issue but I still say you're being silly. Once you got Posh started, you'd have me paid back in half a year. You're gonna be the most sought after party planner in the greater Houston area—if that pot-bellied pig tea was anything to go by, I mean." Zach kept a completely straight face while he said it.

"You...!" This time the grape Emily threw whizzed over his head and splatted in the sink behind him.

He laughed and shook a finger at her. "Temper, temper, Emily. So what's the deal with this latest party – the one you have to go to on Friday? Is Jason going with you?"

Emily shook her head. "The way he's been working lately? Not on your life. Besides, Ms. DeVille told me I *could* bring a 'gentleman friend', but that it wasn't essential. So I'm flying solo."

Zach frowned. "I'd go with you but we're testing the Warrior-net for the first time tomorrow night and I have to be online with my gamers." He was the inventor and main developer of the best-selling video game Warriors of Oblivion and his company Quickline had spent months building an online version that players from all over the world could participate in.

Emily's hand flew to her mouth. "Oh, Zach, that's great! It's finally ready to go online?"

He smiled. "Just put in the last patch today. Of course we'll find more bugs as we go along but for right now it's pretty much as smooth as I can make it."

"It's going to be amazing," Emily said sincerely. "If it's anything like the computer game version I want to play it too." She probably would never have gotten interested in any kind of video games without her best friend's influence but once Zach had introduced her to the multi-level role-playing world he'd created from his own imagination in college, she was hooked. In some ways she'd even helped him design it, giving him hints that would make *Warriors of Oblivion* more appealing to women as well as men. For instance, she had told him that the game needed more female characters and that they needed to be as strong as the male characters. And she'd also suggested what they privately called the "shopping mode" of the game so that the point wasn't just to roam around the countryside killing monsters and fulfilling quests—the character you were playing also earned gold from his or her conquests that he could spend on any number of magical accessories, weapons, clothes and jewelry.

"Come over on Saturday night and we'll game the night away," Zach promised her. "Unless you have other plans?"

Emily shook her head. "I don't think so. Jason will probably be watching whatever football game is on or doing a weekend at the office again—he's been doing a lot of overtime lately." She sighed. "You know, we never go out anymore. This could be a lot of fun, dressing up and going out to a fancy charity ball. But no, he can't miss working late even *one* night. The things we girls put up with for halfway decent sex. Although, come to think of it, that hasn't been so great lately either." She grinned but she was only half joking.

"Yeah, men are pigs." Her friend's deep voice was dry as a bone and she could tell he was smiling at her without even looking at him. "So I take it you're going to go dressed to the nines?"

Emily frowned. "Well, no, actually. That's kind of the weird part. See, it's going to be held at that Club E in Montrose—I think that's where they always hold it—and Ms.



DeVille told me not to bother dressing, that they would have an outfit ready for me to wear when I arrived. She said she was sending my sizes over with the RSVP."

"Really?" Zach's black eyebrows went up in surprise. "That's strange—I've never heard of a charity function where someone else picks your clothes out. And Club E— isn't that some kind of a weird deviant kind of place?"

Emily shrugged. "Who knows? And as for the clothes thing, I think it's some kind of a costume ball."

Zach frowned. "You *should* know. With a track record like your boss' she could be sending you anywhere. The important thing is that you're safe and careful, Em. You know what a rough part of town Montrose can be once you get off the main shopping drag and into the club district."

"No, the *important* thing is that Ms. DeVille is paying me a huge bonus for spending my Friday night doing her dirty work. And I'll be fine, Zach. I have that bottle of pepper spray you gave me and anyway, I'm sure it's just going to be a bunch of boring old rich people milling around, drinking flat champagne and bidding on art and antiques."

"So there's an auction?" Zach asked.

Emily nodded. "Uh-huh. And get this—Ms. DeVille told me to feel free to participate in it if I wanted to. Like I could ever afford anything at something like that."

Zach shrugged. "You might be surprised. Maybe you'll find something cheap that you can sell on eBay for a profit or something."

"Hmm—I did see something like that on *Antiques Road Show* once," Emily said thoughtfully. "Maybe I'll look into it after all." She glanced at her watch. "But right now I need to get going. Help me down off the counter, will you?" She held out her hands and smiled at him appealingly. She probably could have gotten down herself but she didn't want her skirt to ride up when she slid down.

Zach took a step forward and put both large hands on her waist. "Your wish is my command, milady," he said, easing her down. She was short enough that when her feet

settled on the cool Spanish tiles his chest was barely nose level but Emily had never let her diminutive stature bother her. She smiled up at her best friend and gave him an impulsive hug.

"I'll be thinking of you Friday night. I'm sure the Warrior-net is going to come up just fine."

"I'll be thinking of you, too." Zach hugged her back, enfolding her in arms that were strong enough to break her in half but so gentle that Emily didn't feel anything but safe and protected. She breathed in the scent of his skin and smiled when she realized he was wearing the new cologne she'd bought him for his birthday. It was a dark, spicy scent—something she'd hoped would inspire her best friend to discover his dominant side and find the woman of his dreams. But unfortunately he seemed destined to remain the same old loveable Zach and not the mysterious and irresistible stranger she'd tried to make him into. Well, she loved him anyway and if girls like Zelda from her gym couldn't see his good qualities, they deserved to miss out.

"You're the best," she said, standing on tiptoes to peck his cheek before pulling out of the embrace. "But I've gotta run."

"See you Saturday night?" Zach let go of her somewhat reluctantly and his deep voice was hopeful.

"Count on it," Emily promised him as she slipped into her shoes and grabbed her purse. "See you then and I'll tell you all about the Rustler's Roundup and how boring it was."

Zach frowned. "Just be careful."

"Always." Emily grinned at him as she let herself out the kitchen door. Spending her Friday night at the Rustler's Roundup charity ball might not be the most exciting time of her life, but she was sure she and Zach would laugh about it later.

## Chapter Two

Zach sighed as he watched the door close behind her. He sometimes wondered if Emily had any idea of how beautiful she was. But of course she didn't, which was part of her attraction. She might not have been a tall blonde Amazon like the woman from her gym she'd tried to set him up with but he didn't care. Her sweet face and slender, petite frame were more attractive to Zach any day. Not to mention the fact that she could melt him completely with just one glance from those big gray-green eyes that were always shining with mischief.

He wondered if he'd ever work up the nerve to show her how he felt. He'd fallen for her hard in high school – almost from their first tutoring session when she'd come to him in tears over her math anxiety. He still remembered her shoving the paper filled with, what to him appeared to be exceedingly simple equations and saying in a trembling voice, "Please help me. I'm going to flunk if I can't understand this but I've tried and tried and it doesn't make any sense."

"Well, sure," he'd told her, taking the paper from her hands and gesturing for her to have a seat beside him. Her tears had moved him somehow, filling his chest with a protectiveness he didn't understand. After all, he barely knew Emily Cline. She was one of the popular kids and Zach...well, Zach was definitely not. But once they started talking, he forgot about the fact that he was at the bottom of the high school popularity ladder and Emily was close to the top. He forgot because she *made* him forget.

Back then, Zach had been awkward and gawky, all long limbs and a voice that hadn't quite changed yet. But when he showed Emily how to work an equation she made him feel like a football hero. Unlike some of the other popular students he'd tutored she didn't want him to do the work for her – she had a genuine enthusiasm for

learning and a desire to do well. Zach liked the fact that she didn't want to coast on her pretty face and tight body and just barely get by.

Emily had an intensity and passion for everything she did that drew people to her and she wasn't one of those girls who would be sweet to your face and cut you up behind your back. Nasty-nice—that was the expression his mother had always used for it. No, Emily was kind and thoughtful and beautiful through and through—was it any wonder he'd fallen head over heels for her and stayed that way for the last ten years?

Zach had come out of his shell and come into his own in college, thanks in a large part to his best friend's long distance dating advice. But none of the girls he dated came close to measuring up to Emily. Whenever he had another woman in his arms, it was Emily's hair he smelled, her small firm breasts pressed against his chest, her berry-sweet lips he tasted. She was like a habit he just couldn't get over—not that he wanted to. After he'd finished school, he'd moved into a house not far from her apartment even though he could have settled anywhere in the world. He'd done it even though he knew it was hopeless, because Emily was taken.

*Have to tell her how I feel—how much I love her, before it's too late*, he told himself for the thousandth time. But he'd been telling himself the same thing for so long that the words rang hollow even to him. He'd *almost* told Emily how he felt the night they graduated high school but then he'd thought better of it and decided he should wait until after he'd made something of himself. He'd graduated at the top of his class at M.I.T. and gotten a great job as a web designer while he worked on his game Warriors of Oblivion in his spare time. He'd grown three inches, filled out a lot, hit the gym daily and he was a success by anyone's standards by the time he finally felt ready to declare his true feelings. But by then Emily had been dating Jason, a guy she'd met in her senior year at Baylor.

Zach kept waiting for them to break up—after all, Jason was a jerk who didn't deserve Emily in his opinion. But the relationship dragged on and on, even though they'd come close to calling it quits several times over Jason's lack of commitment.

Emily was always complaining that he wouldn't even get engaged, let alone married and her mom was nagging her for grandchildren. The guy was stone-cold crazy to Zach's way of thinking. If he'd been given a shot with Emily, he would have skipped the engagement and gone straight to the wedding. He wanted her in his arms and in his bed every night of his life and seeing the way Jason took her sweet smile and sunny personality, not to mention her slender, beautiful body for granted just about drove Zach crazy.

Thinking about that made his mind wander off in another direction entirely – what he'd like to do to and with his best friend if he could ever convince her to see him as more than a sweet, harmless guy who was always too nice. For starters he wanted to do more than massage her feet – a *lot* more. He closed his eyes and rubbed his suddenly aching cock with one hand as he pictured the scene that might have been a few minutes ago if he and Emily were more than friends.

He would start with massaging her feet but he wouldn't stop there. He loved her dainty feet, so small that his hand from palm to fingers was longer than her curving arch from heel to toes. And he loved the way she always painted her toenails candy apple red, as though she was hiding some wild side she wasn't allowed to express during her everyday life as a personal assistant. But he wanted to touch everything above her lovely feet. He wanted to press his lips to the delicate inner curve of her ankle and watch her gray-green eyes widen in surprise.

"Why, Zach, what are you doing?" she'd ask, biting her lush lower lip the way she did when she wasn't quite certain about something.

"Kissing you. Tasting you," Zach imagined himself saying. Imagined the heat filling her eyes as she realized what he wanted.

"But I thought we were just friends," she'd say as he licked a long, slow trail from her slender ankle, up the curve of her calf, to her tender thigh.

"I want more than that. Much more. I want everything," Zach imagined telling her. He could almost see the chillbumps his touch would raise on her sensitive, pale skin as his lips brushed her inner thigh.

He knew that Emily hated the fact that her skin was so pale it wouldn't tan—she just burned if she stayed out in the sun too long. But Zach loved her classic rose leaf complexion and the contrast of his dark tan skin against her lighter coloring. He also liked the way he could tell if she was happy or upset or embarrassed at once by the way her cheeks tinted with a perfect blush. Now he imaged seeing that rosy blush on her cheeks for a different reason—it would be a warm, sexual flush that would spread across her upper chest and along the slender column of her throat while he kissed higher and higher, blazing a trail with his tongue as he lifted her skirt to get to his prize.

Zach could imagine what he'd see when he lifted the layers of fabric to get to her. Emily had come over to do laundry at his house for several weeks when her washing machine was broken so Zach knew that she had a weakness—almost a fetish—for exotic underwear. Yes, under her sensible, comfortable everyday clothes she was wearing satin and lace and sometimes even garters. He'd seen the heaps of slinky little nothings in her laundry basket and when she'd caught him looking he'd blushed like a schoolboy. Emily had laughed and said something about feeling pretty on the inside even if what she was wearing on the outside was boring. Just the thought of lifting her skirt and finding a pair of black lacy garters and some shiny black silk panties clinging to the soft mound of her pussy and damp with her juices made him weak with need.

Zach was out of control now, as his imagination took him where it had so often before. He didn't care that he was still leaning against the island of his kitchen in the middle of the day. His jeans were completely open and his cock was out, riding in his fist in long, slow strokes as he thought of laying Emily down on the very counter she'd been sitting on earlier and spreading her legs to see the color of her panties. He wanted to kiss her trembling inner thighs before he pushed the flimsy fabric aside and tongued

open her soft, hot cunt. Wanted to press his bare face to her naked pussy and breathe in her sweet, feminine musk while she moaned and gasped and called his name.

He could imagine the way her hips would buck in his hands as he lapped her cunt, the breathless way she'd cry out while he spread her pussy lips and circled her clit with his tongue, tracing the tender button over and over as he tasted her salty-sweet juices.

"Oh God! Oh Zach!" he imagined her gasping, her neatly manicured fingernails clawing at his bare shoulders. "Oh, please...*please!*"

"Come for me, Em," he would growl, looking up just long enough to see the expression of ecstasy on her face. Her eyes tightly shut and her soft pink lips half open, panting for breath as he pushed her higher and higher. Then he would press his mouth to her pussy and suck her clit while he slid two long fingers inside her, finger-fucking her hot depths and lapping her cunt hungrily until she came and came and came...

He could almost taste her honey on his lips as he came himself, his cock fountaining a hot geyser of cum over his hand as he imagined giving Emily the best orgasm of her life. As he pictured himself worshipping her cunt with his tongue, feeling her thighs squeezing tight around his cheeks as she came all over his face, crying and begging for more. Begging to feel his thick cock inside her, filling her...fucking her.

"God...Em," he groaned when the last tremor of orgasm subsided. "Love you so much...need you so much."

Suddenly a wave of despair almost flattened him where he stood. Was this what he had to look forward to the rest of his life? Pining after a woman he didn't have the balls to go after? Barely getting by on friendly hugs and innocent kisses on the cheek when he craved so much more?

What a coward he was, always pretending to be the perfect friend when inside he was burning up to possess her. What an idiot to wait so long to tell her how he felt! But what could he do? She was unavailable and she obviously didn't think of Zach the way he thought of her. He had to do something to change her mind, something to turn himself into the take-charge, confident kind of guy she seemed to crave. She could talk

all day long about how handsome and successful Zach was and how he could have any woman he wanted in the world but he knew unless he made some drastic change, she would never see him as more than a friend. It was time to stop making excuses. Time to stop letting her relationship with that jerk Jason get in his way. Time to get serious and do something.

But what?



## Chapter Three

"Honey, I'm home." Emily dropped her keys in the small china bowl on the hall table with a clatter as she walked into the small but tastefully decorated one-bedroom apartment she shared with her boyfriend Jason. They could have afforded something bigger and nicer if Jason didn't have such a huge car note every month. But he assured her that he had to have a nicer car to impress clients so she paid most of the rent and made do.

She'd been kind of surprised to see his Hummer outside in the parking area since he'd told her he was working late that Friday night as usual. But maybe he'd gotten off early for once—that would be nice. He could talk to her while she fixed her hair before she had to head off to the Rustler's Roundup. Since she was going to be getting an outfit once she got to Club E, she wouldn't have to worry about anything but that and her makeup. She never wore much so a light touch-up would do, which wouldn't take long.

Emily had worked late at Ms. DeVille's mansion that night, helping her eccentric employer set up for a wedding she was hosting on Saturday. Not just any wedding either—a wedding for two pure-bred miniature poodles.

George, one of Ms. DeVille's poodles, was going to be bred to Cecelia, one of her friend's poodles, so a ceremony was in order. There was a doggie-sized table with a white satin tablecloth, cloth covered chairs, miniature outfits for the bride and groom and the rest of the wedding party and even a doggie wedding cake baked by an exclusive bakery that catered to canine comestibles. Emily couldn't begin to guess how much all this was costing, all she could think was that in another month or so if things worked out she'd never have to plan a party for animals again. Because hopefully she'd be too busy planning parties for *people* once her business took off.

After getting off work, her first impulse had been to drop by Zach's house and hang out for a while but then she remembered that he was doing his first online gaming session and decided not to. She didn't want to get in his way when he was busy with something so important, even though she was dying to tell him all about the doggie wedding. She knew he would get a kick out of the kitschy details as much as she did—like the chew-toy wedding favors and the miniature bride and groom made out of frosted dog biscuits that topped the cake.

She could tell Jason all about it but he would probably just nod and grunt, his eyes never leaving the television screen. Lately he was fairly inattentive, no matter what she had told Zach to the contrary. Emily was intending on calling him on it when they had a minute to sit down together and really talk. But there never seemed to be a good time to mention that she was feeling neglected and besides, Jason always got so defensive when she tried to discuss their relationship. Sometimes she wondered why she stayed with him. He was good-looking enough that he always turned female heads wherever they went and he was a good lover—or he had been when they first met in college. But lately their sex life felt flat and stale and Jason refused to commit to anything more long term than living together. Sometimes she thought they just stayed together out of habit.

Emily pushed the depressing thoughts out of her head with a sigh. No point in dwelling on the negative—she had always been a glass-is-half-full kind of person and tonight she had to be in good form at the Rustler's Roundup. If Jason didn't want to talk that was fine. She could always tell Zach about the poodle love connection tomorrow night when she went over to his house to game. In the meantime, she just wanted a minute or two to unwind before she had to gear back up to do the charity event.

"Jason?" she called as she wandered through the apartment. The least he could do was say hi before she had to go back out again. He wasn't in the living room plunked in front of the flat screen and watching sports as she'd expected, or in the small kitchen getting himself a snack. The TV was on though, a music video playing loudly—some group Emily never heard of. *Where is he?* she wondered uneasily. For a moment she had

a quick, scary vision of her boyfriend stretched out on his back, lifeless on the bedroom floor. Her grandfather had died of a sudden heart attack and her grandmother had found him that way when she got up one morning. *Don't be silly*, Emily told herself. *Jason's way too young for that and besides, there's not even any history of heart disease in his family.*

"Jason?" she called again. If he was here, why wasn't he answering her? The lead singer on the TV hit a high note and Emily grabbed the remote and flipped it off in annoyance. No wonder he couldn't hear her with that racket going on! "Jason?" she shouted. "Ja—" That was when she heard the sounds coming from the bedroom.

"Yes, yes, yesyesyes! That's right, that's the way. Who's my blue-eyed girl? Huh? Who's my blue-eyed girl?"

*Oh my God!* Emily wandered down the hallway leading to the bedroom in a daze. The voice was unmistakably Jason's and he was talking the way he always did when they made love. Only in Emily's case, he called her his *green-eyed* girl. *What the hell's going on?* But as she placed her hand on the knob of the bedroom door, she had a sinking feeling she already knew.

Steeling herself to see the worst, Emily threw open the bedroom door with a bang. Jason and the red-haired woman in the bed with him didn't even notice. They just kept humping like bunnies. *Or like dogs*, Emily thought sickly. *Gonna need the fire hose to pry them apart.*

Then the nauseous feeling in the pit of her stomach faded to be replaced with deep, red rage. Working late, huh? Never has time to talk about our relationship or the energy to make love to me anymore but he has plenty of time to screw around. In my bed! It was the same bed she'd had since she was a teenager—an antique with four solid oak posts she'd inherited from her grandmother. Emily loved that bed and had always felt safe in it. Somehow the fact that Jason was having an affair didn't seem as important as the fact that he was screwing his other woman in that bed—in her bed.

"Jason!" she shouted at the top of her lungs. "Jason, goddamnit, look at me!" Both people in the bed jerked and her boyfriend jumped up and off the panting redhead like he'd been burned. Now that Jason wasn't in the way, Emily recognized the woman as his boss's wife. The woman grabbed the sheets and pulled them up to her chin, her eyes wide.

"Emily?" Jason looked at her as though she must be some kind of nightmare. "Are you...what are you doing home?" he asked stupidly. "I thought you had that charity thing tonight."

"It doesn't start for another hour," Emily said. "But I guess you thought it was safe to bring your girlfriend back to our apartment to have sex in *my* bed instead of always doing it in the office, is that right? Because I'm sure this is what you meant when you told me you were working late all those times the last few months."

"Look, honey, I swear, I—" Jason started toward her but Emily put up a hand to stop him.

"Don't start. I don't want to talk about it and I don't want to hear your lame explanations." And to think she'd been worried he might have had a heart attack! Now she felt completely capable of ripping out his heart with her bare hands and handing it to him.

Jason made a derisive noise. "Please—like I should have to explain. Like I'm the only one in this relationship who's been seeing someone else."

Emily felt numb. "What are you talking about? I've never cheated on you."

"You expect me to believe that? When you're over at your 'best friend's' house 'til midnight half the time? When you're on the phone to him every time I turn around? I'm supposed to believe nothing's going on between you and Zach?"

"I have *never* cheated on you," Emily repeated. "Not with Zach. Not with anyone."

Jason snorted and ran a hand through his blondish brown hair. "*Sure* you haven't. And that's why he's all you can talk about. 'Zach this and Zach that.' And every time I turn around he's over here or you're over there. I mean, I get it, babe—he was here first

and he's always wanted you. Don't think I don't see the way he looks at you. But if you'd let me into your life half as much as you let Zach in, I wouldn't have had to go looking outside for satisfaction."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Emily looked at him, bewildered. "Zach doesn't...I don't..." Suddenly she recognized what Jason was trying to do—it was what he always did when they argued. He was changing the subject. Twisting the facts until whatever was wrong was her fault. As if her close friendship with Zach could somehow excuse his infidelity. Well, he *wasn't* going to get away with it this time.

"You—" Jason began again but Emily shook her head.

"I don't want to hear any more. Just get your things and get out. Both of you."

Jason frowned, his handsome face turning an ugly shade of red. "You can't just kick me out. My name's on the lease too!"

"But I pay most of the rent so you can afford that stupid Hummer." Emily crossed her arms over her chest, breathing hard. "So this place is mine and as far as I'm concerned you can go live in your car. If you don't like it, I'll call your boss and let him know what you've been doing with his wife right under his nose."

"I...you...you wouldn't," Jason stammered and the redhead turned white as a sheet.

Emily whipped out her cell. "Oh yes I would—I've got his number from the time you went on a business trip with him and forgot your phone. I'm calling unless you get your stuff and get out of here *now*."

After that everything was a blur. Jason and his boss's wife cleared out quickly, stopping just long enough to grab their clothes and the keys to the Hummer. Emily was left holding her cell phone in one hand, staring as the big, stupid car roared out of the apartment parking lot.

She felt as if her heart had been run over by one of the Hummer's tires and completely flattened.

*How could he?* She'd known that she and Jason had been growing apart in the past year but she never dreamed he would cheat on her. Maybe because she'd never even considered cheating on him. Her parents had been married for over thirty years and that was what Emily had always wanted for herself—a relationship that lasted. One built on mutual respect. Mutual trust.

*So much for the trust part,* she thought and realized that her cheeks were wet with tears and she was squeezing her cell phone in both hands, hard enough to break the plastic casing. *Oh God, I can't believe this.* Blindly she brought the cell to her ear. Zach's number was the first on her speed-dial function and she needed to talk to her friend right now. Needed to hear his deep voice telling her everything was going to be okay.

But instead of Zach, she got his automated message, explaining that he was unavailable right now but if she would like to leave a number, he'd get back to her later.

"Zach," she babbled after the beep. "Zach, please, I know you're busy but I need you. I just...I need you." She hung up and let out a little sob. Of course he was unavailable. The Warrior-net came up that night and he was probably gaming. And in the meantime Emily realized, she was late for the Rustler's Roundup.

She groaned and cast a longing look at the open door to her apartment. Oh God, there was nothing she would rather do less than go to this charity event now, tonight. What she wanted to do was curl up in her bed and just die quietly. Then she remembered what had just been taking place in her bed and her stomach did a slow forward roll. No way was she going to curl up in that. She was more likely to burn it. And besides, no matter how much she didn't want to go, Emily knew there was no excuse that would be good enough to appease her crazy boss. No reason Gretta DeVille would accept for Emily's absence at the charity event she was supposed to attend tonight.

Emily took a deep trembling breath and squared her shoulders. Just because her life was falling down around her ears didn't mean that she could stop and have a pity party for herself. Now that Jason was out of her life, and she *did* intend for him to be out for

good, she needed her job more than ever. She had paid most of the rent but Jason had taken care of the utilities on their small apartment so Emily would have to carry a double load, starting at the beginning of next month. With a sigh she realized this was going to mean she'd have to put off opening Posh Party Planners a little while longer. There was no way she could afford it right now, not and keep up the apartment on her single salary. Well, she would worry about that later. Right now it was time she got herself to Club E before she got fired.

Trying not to think about how her life had gone to hell in the last thirty minutes, Emily wiped her eyes, locked her apartment, and left.

"Are you sure I have to wear this?" Emily looked down at herself doubtfully. The corset-type bustier she was squeezed into was scarcely decent and the tiny black leather miniskirt with the zipper up its back was smaller than anything she owned herself. She didn't even want to think about the garters, thigh-high stockings and high black hooker heels the wardrobe mistress had strapped on her feet, which made her feel like she was walking on stilts. It was just too weird.

Emily didn't quite know how she'd gotten into the outfit since she'd arrived at Club E in a fog, her head still full of the breakup with Jason. She'd presented herself at the door, the bouncer had checked her name off a list, and the next thing she knew she'd been whisked into the bowels of the club and decked out like a horny frat boy's sex fantasy.

"Of course you must wear!" The wardrobe mistress who had set up shop in the back room of Club E seemed to be some other nationality—maybe Russian—and her accent was so thick it was hard for Emily to understand her. But what she lacked in knowledge she made up for in her delivery. Everything she said seemed to be a direct order.

"Well, but..." Having been raised in the South, Emily had politeness ingrained into her personality. "But this isn't exactly what I had in mind," she said, as tactfully as she

could. In fact, she'd been imagining a big, floaty ball gown or maybe a slinky black sheath when her employer had assured her that an outfit would be provided for her at the club. She'd never dreamed she'd be dressed up like a hooker who'd fallen on hard times and was looking to make a quick buck. Then again, she'd never dreamed she'd walk in and find Jason in bed with his boss's wife. Suddenly what she was wearing didn't seem quite so important.

"You are in auction, yes?" demanded the wardrobe mistress, her bushy black eyebrows bunching in the middle of her forehead in an alarming way. They looked like an angry caterpillar that might bite.

"Uh, yeah, I suppose so." Emily vaguely remembered the bouncer asking her the same thing. She'd said yes, although to tell the truth she was far too upset to bid on anything, even if she found a real bargain. Still, the show had to go on and since she was here representing Ms. DeVille, she might as well try to make a good impression.

"You are in auction, then you must wear." The wardrobe mistress gestured to Emily's outfit with finality and nodded her head.

Emily felt trapped. There was no saying no to this woman with the big scary eyebrows! She was really going to have to walk out into the middle of the Rustler's Roundup, which was no doubt filled with the upper crust of Houston society, looking like a hooker or an exotic dancer.

"But...well, is anyone else dressed like this?" she asked desperately, looking around the small windowless room that was crammed full of PA equipment and racks of glitzy clothing. If this was a costume party, she didn't want to be the only prostitute look-alike in the crowd. There was some cheering going on from behind the small wooden door to her right that was marked Stage but Emily hadn't seen anyone else besides the wardrobe mistress and the bouncer who had brought her in.

"Yes, all girls in auction dress like this." The wardrobe mistress nodded again and Emily felt a sudden surge of relief. Maybe there was some kind of theme to this



Rustler's Roundup that Ms. DeVille had forgotten to tell her about. As long as she wasn't the only one in such an outlandish getup, she was all right.

"Here is makeup. You need." Suddenly the wardrobe mistress was back, dabbing at Emily's face with a series of puffs and brushes.

"But..." Emily opened her mouth to protest and the mistress promptly coated her lips in slippery red gloss. She shut it again before the maniacal woman decided she also needed a tongue ring. After all, it was only makeup and the wardrobe mistress was right, she *did* need it since she'd cried most of hers off in the car on the way over. The funny thing was, she no longer had the urge to cry. Instead, she felt lighter, almost as though someone had pushed a boulder off her chest that she hadn't even known was there. Hadn't she just been thinking that her relationship with Jason had become more of a habit than a romance? Maybe it was all for the best. Maybe she would wake up tomorrow and be glad he was gone.

Maybe, maybe, maybe, Emily mocked herself. Maybe no matter how glad you are to see the back end of Jason the way he left hurts like hell. Maybe you should just stop thinking about it and concentrate on getting through tonight. But it was easier to give herself the advice than to take it. Emily felt a longing to talk to someone—to talk to Zach—about the whole mess. If only he was here so she could just put her head on his shoulder and feel his strong arms around her, making her feel safe and protected. If only she could hear his deep voice in her ear telling her that everything was okay.

Emily sighed through her newly glossy red lips and then tried not to sneeze as the wardrobe mistress dusted her nose with a light touch of powder. On the other hand, though, it was a good thing her best friend *wasn't* here to see her in this crazy outfit because Zach would never let her live it down. He'd tease her about it until the end of time. It would be worse than her pot-bellied pig tea party by far.

Thinking of her best friend made her remember the crazy accusations Jason had made right before they split. Imagine thinking that she was cheating on him with Zach! What an insane idea when Zach was just a sweet, lovable teddy bear who would never

dream of doing anything even remotely improper. Emily was sure the thought of seducing her and having an affair with her behind Jason's back had probably never even entered his head—he was way too busy designing and building his game and the Warrior-Net to entertain designs on his best friend. Wasn't he?

For a moment she remembered the way he'd looked at her when he'd said he preferred his women petite, pale and brunette but then she pushed the thought away. It was just her brain playing tricks on her, trying to see what Jason claimed to have seen when in reality, he was just trying to make an excuse for cheating on her.

"There—finished." The wardrobe mistress's harsh voice shattered Emily's confusing train of thought. "Is not bad," she said, her bushy eyebrows twitching. She stood back, her hands planted on her wide hips and eyed Emily with evident approval. "Not bad at all."

"Really?" Emily put a hesitant hand up to touch her cheek but the mistress slapped it away.

"Don't touch," she warned. "Is almost time for you to go to auction. I have no time to fix. Here—look." Briskly, she spun Emily around to face a full-length oval mirror that was standing in a wooden frame behind her.

"Oh, I..." Emily's voice trailed off as she stared at the stranger in the mirror. It was odd to see her face with so much makeup on it and even odder to see her body dressed in the tight black corset and tiny leather mini. And yet, as strange as it was she didn't look bad. In fact, she looked... "I look *hot*," Emily blurted, running her hands over the swell of her hips and watching in fascination as the woman in the mirror did the same. It was true, no matter how bizarre the clothing choices had seemed, there was no denying she looked like a sex kitten who was ready to take on the world one man at a time.

"Is good," the wardrobe mistress allowed grudgingly.

"Is *fabulous*," Emily corrected her, still staring at her reflection in the mirror. Except for her naughty underwear fetish, she was used to thinking of herself as a nice, normal,

no-nonsense kind of girl—well, aside from her peculiar job, anyway. But that wasn't who she was seeing in the mirror. No, the girl she was seeing in the mirror definitely had a wild side—she was up for anything.

Emily felt a surge of excitement as she looked herself up and down. What this really reminded her of was her favorite fantasy—the one where she dressed up as a submissive slave girl and sat in a bar, sipping a Sex on the Beach and waiting for the right man to come along. She would know him when she saw him because he would be tall and dominant and able to master her completely. He would take her back to his place for the night and force her to submit to all kinds of things—delicious, hot, sexual things that made Emily sweat just to think of them. He might turn her over his knee and spank her. Or he might tie her down and torture her for hours with feathers and ice and whipped cream that he sprayed on her body and licked off with a hot, rough tongue—sensation play, she believed it was called.

Not that she knew a whole lot about BDSM—just what she'd picked up on the Internet here and there. Sometimes she would surf the Web for hours, looking at various online dungeon sites, her breath caught in her throat and her panties soaking wet when she imagined herself in different scenarios. It was her dirty little secret that the darker side of sex turned her on—one she had only shared in a very limited way with Jason. Not that it had done her any good.

She'd told him how she loved the idea of having the thrill of danger while knowing that the man she was with really wasn't a stranger but someone who loved her and would never hurt her. Almost as much as she loved the idea of playing a role that was so completely different from her everyday good-girl self. She'd tried to get Jason to play out the fantasy with her—to pretend he was a stranger and pick her up some Friday night at their local watering hole. But he had thought it was silly and a waste of time. Of course, in the past year or so he'd thought any kind of foreplay was a waste of time, Emily remembered with a slight frown. And since he wouldn't even go for the first part of the fantasy, there was no point in asking him to put on a black leather mask and

demand that she call him Master. Or asking him to spank her or tie her down and cover her with whipped cream and lick it off or any of the hundred other scenarios that she secretly thought of while she touched herself.

She puckered her glossy red lips, blew herself a kiss and sighed. It was ironic that tonight when she was finally dressed up to fulfill her oldest fantasy, she had no man in her life to act it out with. But who really cared? She looked hot—in fact, she was almost turning herself on. Just looking at the way her teacup-sized breasts were spilling out of the lacy top of the corset and the way the hem of her miniskirt was riding up her thighs had her imagining all kinds of things.

Emily could almost feel her Master's hand on her leg—the man from her fantasy. He would be tall and dark and demanding and he wouldn't take no for an answer. His fingers would travel up her inner thigh, making her breath come short as he murmured in her ear, telling her all the dirty, delicious things he was going to do to her.

"Is this what you want?" she could almost hear him say. "Spread your legs wider, baby, let me pet that sweet little cunt."

God, she was really turning herself on here! Emily didn't know if it was because her emotions were already close to the surface because of the traumatic breakup she'd just been through or just the fact that the fantasy was such a powerful one. Whatever the reason, she could feel her pussy getting wet and ripe under the black silk panties she was wearing as the naughty thoughts went on and on inside her head.

"Bend over," whispered the man in her fantasy in a low, commanding voice. "You've been a bad girl, Emily and you're going to have to be punished."

"Yes, Master," she could imagine herself saying as she bowed submissively at the waist, baring her backside to him, making herself vulnerable for whatever punishment he decided was necessary.

His warm hands would pet her ass, sliding over the smooth leather of the miniskirt before unzipping it with a low purring sound. Emily could almost feel the cool rush of

air on her naked flesh as he forced her to open her legs, spreading her pussy lips in the process so he could see her wet pink inner cunt.

*"Such a pretty little pussy,"* he would growl softly in her ear as he loomed over her, making her feel small and helpless and hot with his strength and dominance. He would slide two thick fingers into her, opening her, testing her. *"So wet,"* he'd murmur. *"Are you wet for me, Emily? Wet because you want me to fuck you?"*

*"Yes!"* she could see herself gasping in a high, breathless voice. *"Yes, please. Oh Master..."*

"Is time," the wardrobe mistress practically shouted, making Emily jump and shattering her fantasy. "They tell me you are next for auction." She grabbed Emily by the elbow and pulled her to the small wooden door marked Stage.

"Oh, but I don't think... Shouldn't I be out in the front of the club with the others?" Emily asked in confusion as the mistress opened the door to reveal several other scantily clad young women and a large, scowling bouncer with muscle-bound arms crossed over his beefy chest. "I mean...what would I do up on the stage?"

"You must be up on stage for to bid on," the wardrobe mistress replied confusingly.

"For to bid on what?" Emily asked desperately. The other girls dressed in slinky outfits were staring at her now with curiosity. The bouncer just looked pissed but maybe that was his natural expression.

"For to bid on *you*. Now go!" The mistress gave her a shove through the door, her eyebrows doing the scary caterpillar thing again.

"To bid on *me*? But I don't understand. I think there's been some mistake – wait!" Emily gasped all in one breath. But she was speaking to the bouncer's broad chest.

"Settle down, honey." His voice held a hint of warning.

"But...what's going on?" Emily asked, still horribly confused.

"Just watch." The bouncer directed her attention around to the large wooden stage to her left. He and Emily and the rest of the girls were shielded from view by the long

burgundy velvet curtain, which was swept back to either side of the stage, but she could plainly see what was happening in the center.

“Sold, to the gentleman up front for five thousand dollars,” a tall man with a booming voice was saying. He was pointing to a beautiful blonde woman who was dressed in a see-through red baby-doll nightgown and wearing a black leather collar around her neck. Emily could plainly see her nipples poking through the thin material and the panties she had on that matched her outfit seemed to be similarly transparent. The cleft of her bare cunt was plainly visible through the transparent crotch—so much so that Emily could tell she shaved.

Behind the tall man and the scantily clad blonde was a folding table lined with a row of instruments that made no sense to Emily’s eyes. There was a selection of whips and paddles and hairbrushes and a few things she couldn’t even name. To the left side of the table there was a single chair and to the right some kind of strange wooden device that looked like a large capital letter X with leather straps dangling from all four points.

*What in the world?* Emily thought, eyeing the strange X-shaped frame anxiously. She had a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach that it wasn’t just a stage prop left over from a previous production. But she couldn’t imagine anyone using it for what it looked like it ought to be used for.

“Come on up here and collect your prize, sir,” the tall man who was acting as auctioneer boomed. “This little lady is primed and ready to go and we can’t wait to see her put on a show. Remember, you only have fifteen minutes to delight your fellow club members and brand your filly.”

Emily watched as a heavysset man dressed in tight leather pants and a black leather mask that hid the top half of his face climbed up the stairs to the stage. He approached the blonde woman wearing the see-through red baby doll and grabbed her by the arm. She shot him an alarmed glance but didn’t try to pull away. Emily was sure he was

going to drag her off the stage, but instead, he pulled her over to the table full of whips and hairbrushes.

"Pick one," he told her in a low, grating voice.

The blonde seemed to know what was going on. With a trembling finger, she pointed to a large wooden hairbrush that was lying in the center of the table.

"That'll do. To start with anyway." The man who had bought her snatched up the brush and turned to face her with a menacing frown. "Very good, little girl," he purred. "Now assume the position."

Horror filled Emily as she watched the blonde girl walk to the end of the table, put her hands flat on its top and bend over so that her pert ass was high in the air. Surely the masked man with the hairbrush wasn't going to do what she thought he was going to do, was he?

Her uncertainty came to an abrupt end when the masked man brought back his arm and spanked the blonde girl's bottom with the back of the brush making a hard, flat, slapping sound. The girl gasped and wiggled but her hands never left the top of the table even as the second blow fell, and the third and the fourth.

"Get ready, you're up next." The bouncer's voice in her ear jerked Emily out of her horrified contemplation of the bizarre spanking that was happening on stage. Suddenly, she realized what he was saying.

"I'm what? I am not!" she protested. "I can't be!"

The bouncer gave her a dangerous frown and dug out a small piece of folded paper from the front pocket of his skin-tight jeans.

"Your name's Emily Cline?" he demanded.

"Well, yes, but —"

"And you were sent here by Gretta DeVille?"

Emily nodded. "Yes, but —"

"No buts." The bouncer gripped her by her upper arm as though she might try to get away. "You came, you're stayin'. No backing out – the boss's orders."

"Well, I want to speak to your boss because I never agreed to –" A low moan from the stage interrupted Emily's tirade and she turned her head to see that the spanking was over and the masked man and the blonde girl were currently engaged in a new activity.

The blonde's thin red panties were pushed down to mid-thigh and the man was behind her, his tight black pants wide open to reveal a surprisingly large cock. A cock that he was currently ramming into the blonde's shaved pussy as hard as he could. Emily could hear the *slap-slap* of flesh against flesh as he buried his shaft to the hilt in the hapless blonde who had thrown back her head and was panting and moaning in time to his thrusts. Her pussy was pink and swollen-looking, stretched wide to accommodate the thick shaft currently skewering her with abandon.

The watching crowd was going wild, shouting encouragement and suggestions at the tops of their lungs as they watched the blonde girl get fucked right on stage. The noise was so loud it hurt Emily's head – or maybe it was the sight she was currently witnessing that was giving her a sudden headache.

"Oh my God!" she murmured under her breath, her eyes growing wide. "I can't believe they're actually..." She trailed off, unable to finish the thought, even to herself.

"Believe it, honey." The bouncer gave her a shark-like grin. "And get ready. 'Cause like I said, you're next."



## Chapter Four

“Zach, I need you!” Emily’s words rang in his head as Zach pushed his way through the crowd at the base of the wooden stage. He cursed himself again for missing her call. He’d been wearing his gaming headset so that he could hear his team members and opponents and still keep his hands free to game. When he’d finally noticed the missed call message blinking on his cell, Emily’s call was over an hour old. The emotion in her voice had kicked his protective instincts into overdrive. Emily had a bubbly personality and she wasn’t one of those girls who lost it at the drop of a hat. So for her to sound that upset – well, something had to be wrong. Very damn wrong.

Zach had assigned control of his team to another gamer, grabbed his keys and jumped in his car. All the way to Club E he cursed himself for letting Emily go alone. What if she’d been mugged or hurt? What if she was in trouble and he was too late to save her? He should have warned her more strongly to be careful. He should have put off the online startup and insisted on going with her. *Should have been there for her*, he told himself angrily. *Should have been by her side. Please let her be all right. Please.*

When he finally got to Club E, he was immensely relieved to find that she had, in fact, arrived safely – at least her name was checked off on the arrival list. But when he demanded to see her, the bouncer at the front door had gotten nasty. Emily was backstage getting ready and no one was to see the girls until the bidding started, he said. Zach didn’t like the sound of that but the bouncer refused to explain further. Things might have come to blows if the club’s owner hadn’t come out and asked what was going on. With some quick talking and by showing his platinum Visa, Zach was let into the club. But he wasn’t allowed to join the auction, which was already in progress, until a scary Russian woman with unbelievable eyebrows made him change his clothes and put on a black leather mask. It seemed bizarre that the people running the auction

had a ton of black leather clothes in all different sizes but with the amount of money that was being thrown around, it probably seemed like an incidental expense.

Currently he was wearing a pair of tight leather pants, a black leather vest that left his arms and upper chest bare, and the mask, presumably to preserve his anonymity. Looking around, he could see that the men in the crowd were all wearing them and most of them were wearing black leather clothes as well. What the hell was this Rustler's Roundup about, anyway? And why did he have to prove he had a fifty-thousand dollar limit on his card to get in the front door? Zach didn't care what they were selling or how much money he had to burn, there was nothing they could put up on that stage that would make him bid that kind of money to own it.

That was what he thought, anyway—until he saw Emily stagger out in an outfit even more bizarre than his own. An outfit that had him instantly hard and throbbing in his pants.

Her luscious firm breasts were pressed up and out by a tight black corset and the black leather skirt she had on was so short Zach could see the black garters and panties she had on under it. It made him think of the black panties he'd been fantasizing about seeing her in earlier and he was filled with a mixture of instant lust and jealous rage that the other men in the room were seeing her like this.

*Mine!* The protective, possessive voice in his head was almost loud enough to drown out the start of the bidding. Almost but not quite.

"What am I bid for this pretty young thing? Tight little ass, long silky hair and just look at those tits—fit just right in the palm of your hand! Come on, gentlemen, you know you want a piece of this. Let's start the bidding at one thousand dollars. One thousand and who'll give me two?"

From the way she had tottered onstage in the ridiculously high heels strapped to her tiny feet it was clear someone had pushed her, forcing her to get out on the wooden stage. There was a deer-in-the-headlights look in her wide gray-green eyes that

squeezed his heart like a fist. Clearly she had no idea how she'd gotten on stage or what was going on. And just as clearly she was about to find out the hard way.

"Five thousand dollars!" a man to Zach's left shouted. He was built like a brick wall and looked capable of breaking Emily in half with one hand. Behind his black leather mask there was a greedy look in his small, close-set eyes.

"Five thousand and who'll make it six?" the auctioneer barked. "Come on now, it's not much to pay for fifteen minutes on the stage with this lovely little slave. Ya'll know the rules—there are no rules! Because tonight at the Rustler's Roundup, *anything* goes!"

"Six thousand," Zach heard himself shouting, horrified that he'd been so caught up in looking at her outfit he'd missed some of the bidding. There was no way he was letting anyone else lay a hand on Emily.

"Seven," the man with the small, piggy eyes countered.

"Eight," Zach yelled, before the auctioneer could even acknowledge the counter bid.

"Nine," the man responded. Clearly he was as intent on having Emily as Zach was—this was turning into an all-out bidding war. "Might as well give up, buddy," he told Zach with a sneer. "I've had my eye on that sweet little ass from the minute she came out on stage and I'm gonna fuck her good and hard as soon as I win this bid."

Zach saw red. "Ten," he shouted before turning to glare at the other bidder. "That's the love of my life up there, asshole. You think I'm giving up, you got another think coming. So just keep on bidding—I'll top you every time."

"The love of your life, huh?" The man sneered again. "So what—the only way you could get a chance to bone her was to bid on her here? That's pretty sad, man."

"What's sad is how I'm going to fuck you up if you don't shut your mouth," Zach growled. He normally wasn't the violent type but the way this asshole was talking about Emily—as though she were a piece of meat or a common prostitute—was pushing his normally easy-going temper to the limit. "I'm not here to 'bone' her," he

continued. "I'm here to save her—her crazy boss sent her to this thing. She had no idea she was coming over here to be auctioned off."

"Even better—fresh meat." The man grinned, showing yellow horse-like teeth. "But I'll tell you what, buddy—doesn't matter if she knows why she's up there or not—*somebody's* gonna fuck her before the night is through. Doesn't matter how much you pay—they won't let her get off stage until she gets a proper punishment, Roundup style."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Zach demanded. "What kind of a sick—"

"Twelve thousand going once. Twelve thousand going twice..." The auctioneer's blaring voice broke into their conversation and Zach realized with horror that while he'd been fighting with the man beside him, someone else had been bidding on Emily.

"Thirteen thousand," he yelled hastily, waving his hand in the air to get the auctioneer's attention. "I bid thirteen!"

"Thirteen, I hear thirteen," the auctioneer boomed, much to Zach's relief. "Would anyone care to make it fourteen? Come on, gentlemen, fourteen thousand for this hot little filly and worth every penny. Fourteen thousand."

Zach waited, his heart in his throat. He was prepared to go to the limit of his credit card if he had to but he wanted Emily off the stage and out of this nightmare as soon as possible. The man with the piggy eyes and yellow teeth opened his mouth and then closed it again when he got a look at Zach's face.

"You're serious, huh? You're really gonna keep going? You know most of the girls up there don't go for more than four or five though. Keep waiting and you might find yourself a bargain."

"I don't want a 'bargain'," Zach growled. "I came here for Emily and I'm not leaving without her. I don't give a damn what it costs."

The man sighed and shrugged his beefy shoulders. "Suit yourself. I can see you're too hot to get your hands on her to let anyone else fuck her. Too bad though—she's a fine piece of ass and those tits—"

“One more word and I’ll knock your teeth down your throat.” Zach took a step forward. “Emily’s not like that and I’m not going to stand here and let you talk shit about her.”

“Fine, Romeo.” The man smirked. “Keep defending your girl’s honor. We’ll see how fine and upstanding you are once you win the bid and get on stage.”

Zach opened his mouth to reply but just then the auctioneer blared, “Sold for thirteen thousand to the gentleman up front.” He nodded at Zach. “Come claim your prize, friend. After a price like that, we’re expecting to see some serious action at this auction.” He laughed raucously at his own lame joke as he gestured for Zach to come around and climb onstage. Practically running for the wooden steps at the side of the stage, Zach took them two at a time and was at Emily’s side in a heartbeat.

“Em?” he asked, reaching for her. But she pulled back, a wild look in her eyes.

“Who...what?” She looked dazed and frightened...and utterly amazing in the black leather outfit. Zach was uneasily aware that he was still more than half hard, a mixture of lust and protectiveness swirling inside him as he took her by the shoulders and pulled her gently forward.

“Em, it’s just me,” he murmured, bending down to meet her eyes. “It’s Zach. I got your message and came to get you out of here.”

“Zach?” She gave him a wild-eyed look and then relief washed over her face. “Oh thank God! For a minute, in the mask and those clothes, I didn’t even recognize you.”

“I could say the same thing about you,” he said dryly. “How did this happen?”

“It was Jason. I caught him...caught him cheating on me. And with his boss’s wife of all people! And in my bed – the one my grandma left me.” Her eyes began to fill with tears.

Zach pulled her close and hugged her, trying not to notice that he could practically see her nipples in the tight corset she was wearing, which bared the tops of her breasts and a whole lot more. “So you caught him cheating and decided to come to this thing anyway?”

"I didn't think I had a choice—I didn't want to lose my job. Of course if I had known that Ms. DeVille was sending me here to be auctioned off—"

"Okay, enough chitchat, you two." The auctioneer broke into their conversation and Zach realized that he'd been so wrapped up in protecting and soothing Emily that he'd forgotten they were up on a stage.

"Sorry," he said stiffly. "My friend got up here by mistake but I'll take her home now so you can go on with your, uh, auction." Keeping an arm around Emily's slight shoulders, he turned for the steps only to be stopped by the auctioneer's hand on his arm.

"Oh no, buddy—you're not going anywhere. Not until you give this little filly the punishment she deserves."

"She doesn't deserve *any* kind of punishment," Zach growled. "I told you—she got here by mistake, damn it."

"Doesn't matter how she got up here, my friend. You still have to pay." The auctioneer frowned.

"Of course I'll pay," Zach said stiffly. "I bid on her—I'll pay what I promised. But I need to take her home now, she's been through a lot."

"Very touching, but just paying the bid money isn't getting you off this stage. You have to perform first—that's the Roundup way." The auctioneer waved his hand to a table full of strange-looking implements impatiently. "Look, pick whatever you want from the table and use it on her before you fuck her. Just make it quick—the natives are getting restless." He nodded at the crowd of leather-dressed men in front of the stage who were beginning to shout and boo.

"What are you talking about?" Zach had been so focused on Emily he'd barely registered anything else on the wooden stage. Now he looked with confusion and horror at the array of whips, floggers, paddles, and hairbrushes, not to mention the large black X-shaped device to one side of the table. There were buckles at all four of its

corners. *To strap her in*, he thought numbly. *While I punish her. God, what the hell is wrong with these people?*

"Look buddy, why are you here anyway if you don't want to put on a show? Everybody knows the Rustler's Roundup is about spanking and sex—why else would you come?"

"I came here for Emily," Zach ground out, keeping an arm around his best friend protectively. "And I'll be damned if I'll hurt her just so you and the rest of those perverted bastards can get off."

"Oh, you'll hurt her all right. Hurt her and fuck her nice and hard. Or you're going to get some serious hurting yourself," the auctioneer snarled. Looking offstage, he called to someone behind the velvet curtain. "Hey, Carl—gotta little problem here. The gentleman doesn't want to make good on his bid."

"I told you I'd pay," Zach protested as the huge, beefy security guard he'd had a problem with earlier emerged onstage. He was quickly followed by two other guards who were, if possible, even bigger and uglier than he was.

"Oh, you'll pay all right," the auctioneer promised, a nasty smile on his face. "You'll pay Roundup style if you don't get on with punishing your girl *right now*. I'm not kidding, champ—you're not the first bidder we've ever had that's reluctant to perform and you won't be the last. We know how to deal with your kind."

Zach could hardly believe his ears. The situation he and Emily were in had suddenly become exponentially worse—they were now in a punish-or-perish scenario he never would have dreamed up in his wildest daydreams or his kinkiest nightmares. He eyed the three beefy security guards and they stared back, one of them cracking his knuckles meaningfully. Zach knew their type—they were just like the jocks who liked to push people around in high school. He was a lot bigger and stronger now and he was plenty muscular as well but there was no way he could take all three of these guys at once. Still, he had to try. Emily's honor was on the line and he wasn't about to hurt her just because they threatened him.

"What's it gonna be, buddy?" the bouncer called Carl asked in a flat voice. "You gonna punish the pretty little lady or do we rip you a new asshole?"

*Shit*, Zach thought to himself with resignation. *Gonna get pounded here*. But he was determined not to back down. He took a step forward, his hands clenched into fists at his sides...only to be pulled back by Emily's small hand on his arm.

"Zach, no," she whispered urgently. "Don't do this – don't fight because of me."

"I don't have a choice, Em," he said through clenched teeth, his eyes never leaving the beefy trio. "I can't...can't do what they're saying to you just to avoid fighting. I'm going to wade in and try to surprise them. While I do, you make a run for it."

"I can't," she protested. "Even if I got off the stage, there's no way I'd get anywhere near the exit. That crowd is *angry*, Zach. They...they expect you to do something to me – that's how they do it here, apparently."

Zach risked a quick glance at the crowd of black leather-clad men milling around the base of the stage and realized she was right. There were more boos and catcalls now, men yelling for him to get on with it, to punish the girl he'd bid on like he was supposed to. "This place is crazy," he muttered, glaring at the crowd while still trying to keep an eye on the three ugly bouncers.

"I know," Emily said in a low voice. "But it looks like we're not going to get out of here until we do what they say. I think...think we'd better give them what they want, Zach."

"You can't be serious." He looked down at her, completely losing focus on anything or anyone else. She looked so incredibly hot in the tight corset and short black leather miniskirt—it was like something she might have worn in one of his fantasies. But no matter how hot she looked, he wasn't prepared to act on his urges right here on stage. And he *definitely* wasn't going to hurt her in any way.

"I *am* serious." Her green-gray eyes pleaded with him. "Look, Zach—all they want is a show. Can't you just pretend to...to spank me or something?"



"Spank her!" yelled a voice from the crowd, as though in response to Emily's tentative question. "Put her over your knee and give her an old-fashioned whoppin'!"

Zach started to shake his head but then reconsidered. Maybe Emily was right—maybe they could bluff their way out of this. Although how they would fake the second part of the "punishment" was beyond him. Still, first things first—right now he had to do something to keep the crowd and the bouncers from tearing them both apart.

Looking to the side of the table bearing the implements, he saw a single straight-backed chair. Taking the words from the unknown audience member as inspiration, he clamped a hand on Emily's upper arm and pulled her toward it.

"Here," he said, sitting down and pulling her close. "I guess we don't have a choice."

"I guess not." Emily came to him willingly and sat on his lap.

"I don't want to hurt you." Zach looked her in the eyes. "That's the last thing I want, Em."

She shook her head, her cheeks glowing pink. "Do what you have to do. You-you might have to spank me hard to put on a good show. I have a feeling the crowd is going to be twice as pissed off if they figure out you're holding back."

"Damn it!" Zach felt himself tighten up inside. "Fine. But I can't do anything with you like this. Here." Before Emily could protest he flipped her over his knee so that her ass was in the air and her long golden brown hair was hanging down almost to the floor of the stage. It was a humiliating position but there was nothing else he could do—he only prayed she would forgive him for this when it was all over. In the meantime, he couldn't help but stare at the mouthwatering sight before him. The tight black miniskirt was riding up, showing the lacy black garters and the tops of Emily's upper thighs. God, if it went just an inch or two farther he'd be able to tell if she had on panties or a thong under there... Zach shifted uncomfortably, aware that he was completely hard inside the black leather pants now. Could Emily feel his cock pressing against her flat stomach? He sure as hell hoped not.

"Very good, I see you're finally coming to your senses." The voice of the auctioneer made Zach look up from his contemplation of his best friend's perfect ass.

"I don't seem to have any other option," he growled, giving them man a hard look.

"No, you don't." The auctioneer smiled genially. Now that Zach was prepared to follow his orders, he seemed a whole lot happier. *Smug bastard*. "So which paddle would you like? Or do you want one of the riding crops?" the auctioneer continued.

Zach looked with dismay at the array of implements on the table beside him. There was no way he was hitting the woman he loved with any of that. The whips and paddles would leave marks on her pale skin, even through the leather skirt, he was sure. Even the hairbrushes looked hard and cruel under the merciless glare of the stage lights. "I'm not using any of that," he said, shaking his head. "My hand is good enough." He gave Emily a swat on the behind to prove his point and she let out a muffled little gasp.

The auctioneer frowned. "I'm afraid that won't do at all—unless you're going to spank her bare, of course."

"I don't—" Zach began.

"Do it!" Emily interrupted him. She looked up from her prone position, trying to brush her long hair out of her eyes. "Just...do it and get it over with, Zach."

"You heard the little lady." The auctioneer nodded at Emily's round behind, still encased in the ridiculously short miniskirt. "Why do you think there's a zipper up the back? It's not a fashion statement, my friend."

"I'm not your *friend*," Zach growled but he was already reaching for the silver tab at the bottom hem of her skirt. "Are you sure about this, Em?" he asked, just loud enough for her to hear.

"Yes." She looked up again. Her eyes were bright—with shame or unshed tears, he couldn't tell. "Just...just do it, Zach. We can talk about it later. Right now we have to get out of here."

"All right." There really was nothing else he *could* do. Grasping the silver tab, he pulled firmly, unzipping the skirt and revealing the rounded globes of her ass encased in wispy black panties.

"Take those off," the auctioneer directed and this time Zach didn't protest. He just looked down at Emily who nodded.

"Do it." Her cheeks were a fiery red and he didn't think it was from all the blood rushing to her head. This was a humiliating experience for her — the best thing he could do was get it over and done with quickly so they could put it behind them.

Grabbing the top of the silky black panties, Zach pulled. To his horror, instead of coming down Emily's thighs, the thin strings that crossed her hips snapped and he was left holding a scrap of black fabric in his hand. He looked at it stupidly for a moment and then hastily shoved it into the side pocket of his tight leather pants. *Hiding the evidence*, he thought wildly.

"Well, that's one way to do it." The auctioneer was smirking. "Guess you're more eager to get a look at that hot little ass than you let on, buddy."

"Shut up." Zach could feel his own cheeks heating now as the crowd in front of the stage shouted and hollered. Apparently they thought they were finally getting the show they'd been demanding.

Zach's eyes were drawn inevitably to bare mounds of Emily's pert little bottom. Hardly knowing what he was doing, he cupped her carefully, his large hand spanning her ass easily. God, her skin was so silky and soft. She was naked from the waist down, except for the black garters that framed her perfect flesh and he could see almost everything. In fact, when she spread her legs just a little, he was sure he could see the mound of her pussy between her thighs. To make matter worse she was squirming in his lap, her pelvis and abdomen rubbing mercilessly against the hard ridge of his cock. Zach closed his eyes briefly and fought the urge to slide his hand down between her inner thighs and cup her soft little cunt instead of her ass. Damn it, he was about to explode here!

It was Emily who broke him out of the lustful trance he'd somehow fallen into. "Spank me, Zach," she begged breathlessly, thrusting her ass up into his hand, as though urging him to action. "Come on – do it!"

Feeling like he was on autopilot, Zach did as he was told. Bringing his hand down, he gave Emily's ass a sharp slap that made her gasp and wiggle even harder against him.

"That's right, buddy – give it to her!" someone in the audience yelled. "Spank that ass."

Hardly knowing what he was doing, Zach did. And again and again. On his lap, Emily moaned and struggled against him. He wasn't sure if it was an act or not. He was trying not to hurt her but as she'd said, they had to make this look real, so he couldn't fake it completely. The sound of his palm connecting with her bare, vulnerable ass seemed to ring in his ears. *Smack...smack...smack!* Zach wanted to stop but the crowd was going wild and he was afraid to think about what they had to do next. What *he* had to do next.

He might have gone on spanking her all night if the auctioneer hadn't tapped him on the shoulder. "That's enough, buddy. Time for the rest of the show now," he muttered.

Zach froze, his hand raised above Emily's ass. He noticed for the first time that the pale, perfect globes of her behind were now a fiery, glowing red. A bolt of shame went through him. How much had he hurt her? He'd thought he was trying to be careful but just look at the state of her skin!

"Emily? Em?" Quickly he turned her over to look at her face. He was horrified to see tears shining in her big, gray-green eyes. "Oh, God – I'm sorry. So sorry!" he almost moaned, pulling her to him.

Emily put her arms around his neck and rested her head on his shoulder. Zach could feel her trembling in his arms and felt as if his heart were going to burst. "It's okay – I told you not to fake it," she whispered.

"I-I didn't know I was hitting you that hard. God, Em, I'm so sorry. I'm just so damn wound up." He felt like a monster.

"We both are." She pulled back and gave him a lingering kiss on the cheek. "Don't worry about it," she breathed in his ear. "We're just doing what we have to in order to get out of here."

"I didn't want to hurt you. I—"

"Time for round two," the auctioneer broke in, frowning at both of them. "This is all very touching but I don't have all night. There are still five little fillies waiting to be auctioned off."

"Fine—we'll be happy to leave now," Zach said without much hope.

"Nice try, friend. But you still have the second part of the punishment to go. Would you liked to strap the little lady to the Saint Andrew's Cross or do you prefer to do her standing over the table? Unless you'd like to fuck her right there in the chair, of course."

Zach felt his fraying temper snap. "You son of a bitch! I'm not going to—"

"Zach, we *have* to," Emily interrupted him. "There's no choice—not if we want to get out of here in one piece."

He looked down at her, frowning. "Em, I don't think I can fake this."

"Then don't." Her cheeks were pink with embarrassment as she said it but there was an air of suppressed excitement under her shame that surprised him. He'd seen her like this once before, Zach recalled—when she'd played the lead in their senior class play. She'd had a terrible case of stage fright right before the play had started but she'd been excited too. He could still recall her flushed face and the way her breathing had been shallow and agitated. Her bright eyes and disheveled hair only added to the picture. Was this somehow...turning her on? Surely not. Zach told himself he was crazy for even thinking such a thing.

"What are you saying, Em?" he asked in a low voice, looking into her eyes. "Are you saying you want me to *fuck* you?" He was sorry to use such blunt language but

there was no other way to say it—it wasn't like the crowd down at the base of the stage was waiting for them to make sweet, tender love—they wanted to see it rough. *Roundup style*, Zach thought to himself darkly.

She looked down and bit her lower lip. "I-I want you to do what you have to for us to get out of here." Her voice trembled but he was no longer sure if it was with terror...or excitement.

"I don't have a condom," he pointed out.

"Don't worry about that. Jason and I were always safe and besides I-I'm on the Pill and I trust you," she insisted but her eyes were still down at her lap where she was twisting her hands together in obvious agitation.

"Em, look at me." Zach lifted her chin, forcing her to meet his gaze. If he was going to do this, he needed all the cards out on the table. "It's not like I haven't thought about this—fantasized about it," he said, trying to keep his voice low and even.

Her eyes widened. "You have?"

"How could I not?" he said simply. "You're beautiful and sweet and perfect—you're everything I want. But I don't want you like this. I don't...don't want to hurt you any more than I already have."

"Zach, please, I'll be all right." She glanced at the crowd again where there were some obvious signs of impatience—boos and catcalls and voices shouting for them to hurry up and finish. *To hurry up and fuck*, Zach thought grimly. He could see that Emily wasn't getting his point.

"You're not ready—not wet," he said bluntly. "There's no way you could be. And I don't want...don't want to force myself inside you."

Emily's eyes widened again and her cheeks got even pinker. "Oh, I-I see what you mean. But I-I don't think it's going to be a problem."

"How could it not be a problem?" he demanded. "Look, Em, I—"

"Here." She grabbed his hand suddenly and pushed it under the hem of the short black miniskirt. It wasn't hard to do since the back of the skirt was still unzipped up to her waist.

Zach would have resisted her sudden move, but before his brain could get the message that he was doing something incredibly inappropriate, his fingertips came in contact with her warm, wet slit.

"God," he breathed as his fingers slipped into her slick folds. "Did they make you use some kind of lubricant or —"

"No, that's all me." She was biting her lower lip again.

"I don't understand. Why..." Zach couldn't think of a way to finish his sentence — his mind was reeling. Had the spanking he'd given her turned her on? Or was it this whole bizarre situation somehow? He couldn't help remembering again how excited she'd gotten when she acted in the senior play. Did she have some kind of fantasy about being watched?

"I'll explain later." Emily's cheeks were positively flaming, her thighs clamped together around his hand. "For now all you need to know is that it's okay. You can...you should be able to...to enter me without hurting me. Do you understand?"

Zach wanted to say that he didn't understand anything. How could Emily get so hot and wet from what they had just gone through? From what he'd just done to her? And how could she be sitting on his lap in a crowded auditorium letting him slide his fingers into her soft little cunt? But he couldn't put his thoughts into words. Instead he just nodded.

"Yeah...I guess so. How...how do you want to do this?" he asked in a low voice.

Emily looked down and twisted her fingers together. "I-I don't want to be strapped to that weird X-shaped thing. And I don't...don't want to have to watch all those men watching me while we...while you..."

"While I fuck you," Zach said in a low voice.

“Uh-huh.” Emily nodded and nibbled her lower lip.

“Then we should do it just like this—in the chair.” She was already sitting on his lap. Zach withdrew his fingers reluctantly from between her thighs and moved to position her so that she was straddling him, her back to the audience of rowdy, leather clad men. “Is this all right?” he asked softly.

Emily nodded. “I-I guess so. God, I can’t believe we have to do this!”

Zach felt his heart tighten like a fist in his chest. Those certainly weren’t the words he’d imagined Emily saying when they made love in his fantasies but it looked like reality wasn’t going to be nearly as pretty as his dreams. “Just doing what we have to in order to get out of here,” he said, a little more roughly than he’d intended. “I know you don’t want to do this with me and I’m sorry, Em—more sorry than I can say.”

“Zach, no...” she protested. “It’s not like—”

“Look, buddy, you’ve had enough time to feel her up. It’s time.” The auctioneer’s impatient voice interrupted her.

“He’s right. We...we need to get this over with.” Emily looked up at him, her eyes full of some emotion Zach was afraid must be regret.

“Fine.” He took a deep breath. “You, uh, might have to take me out,” he said, hoping his voice didn’t betray his embarrassment. “This is kind of an awkward position and these damn pants are really tight.”

“I noticed.” She gave him a little half-smile as she reached for the button and zipper of the black leather pants. “I’ve, uh, never seen you look so rough before. I’d be afraid to meet you in a dark alley dressed like this if I didn’t know you.”

Zach realized that she was trying to lighten the mood but it didn’t help much. He couldn’t get over the fact that he was finally getting to make love to the girl of his dreams, to the woman he’d loved for years, and she didn’t really want to be doing it. God, if only he’d had time to prepare her the way he wanted to, to go down on her and taste her sweet, ripe pussy instead of just fucking her the way they were about to do.



Then, everything else was swept from his mind by the feeling of Emily's small, cool fingers encircling his rigid cock.

"God, Em!" He gave a soft hiss of protest and pleasure as she pulled him free of the confining leather pants. Despite his inner turmoil he was still hard as a rock from touching her and being so close to her. He still wanted Emily, even if he knew she didn't want him. *At least I don't have to worry about being able to perform*, he thought dryly.

"Wow." She looked down between their legs, her eyes widening. "You're, uh, really large, Zach. I had no idea."

"Sorry." He shrugged apologetically. He'd always been well equipped, even back in high school, but it wasn't exactly something you talked to your best friend about—if your best friend was a girl, anyway.

"I, uh..." Emily shook her head, still staring. "I've never been with anyone this... I mean you're *really* big."

"Do you think it'll be a problem? I don't want to hurt you any more than I already have." He looked at her anxiously.

"I-I don't *think* so." But her voice sounded doubtful.

"Hurry up and shove it in her, already." Carl the bouncer was frowning over Zach's shoulder at Emily who blushed and looked away hurriedly.

"God," she whispered, her voice trembling. "This is horrible. So *embarrassing*."

Zach could see that she was on the verge of tears. She'd been distracted for a minute, talking to him, but thanks to the asshole bouncer, she was back in the moment. The situation was too much for her to bear and who could blame her? She was about to be fucked by a man she really didn't want in front of a room full of horny strangers. What could he do to make this if not easier, then at least bearable for her?

"Em," he said in a commanding tone. "Em, look at me."

Slowly she raised her head. "Yes?"

"Look in my eyes. I want you to concentrate on me," Zach told her firmly. "It's just you and me in this whole room – no one else. Understand?"

"I-I guess so." She met his eyes as he'd commanded and seemed to find strength in what she saw there. "Yes, I understand," she said in a more confident voice.

"Good." Zach slid his hands under her thighs and lifted her, holding her so that she was suspended right over his hard cock. "Now take me in your hand," he said, his eyes never leaving Emily's green-gray ones. "And put the head of my cock against your pussy."

She dropped her eyes for a moment, biting her lower lip again. "I've never heard you talk that way."

"I've never had to," Zach pointed out. "I'm sorry if I scared you. We don't have time to do this the way I'd like to."

"What...what way is that?" she asked softly, her eyes flicking up to his again as she pressed the head of his cock against her slick entrance.

"Long and slow," Zach told her, his voice slightly hoarse with passion. "If we had more time I'd make you come at least twice before we did this."

"You would?" Her gray-green eyes were wide.

"Hell, yeah. I'd go down on you and eat your sweet little pussy until you moaned and screamed and came all over my face if we had time." God, every instinct he had was telling him to thrust into her hard and fast, to fill her to the hilt and claim her as his. But he wanted to be gentle, didn't want to hurt her.

"Zach!" Emily moaned as the head of his cock breached her entrance and began its slow slide toward the end of her channel. "God, I...I never knew you felt like that. That you wanted me like that."

"I do, though. I've wanted you from the first minute I saw you." He was dismally aware that he was spilling all his secrets, telling her all the thoughts and fantasies he'd hidden so carefully for so many years. But somehow he couldn't help it – the feel of her

tight pussy around his cock was too much to bear. Even if Emily didn't love him the way he loved her, she deserved to know how he felt.

"Oh!" she gasped as he slid deeper into her. "Oh, Zach...*God!*"

"Am I hurting you?" It would kill him to stop now but he would if he had to. His thick shaft was buried halfway inside her and he could still pull out if it was too much.

"No, not hurting," she whispered, her fingers digging into his shoulders. "Just...stretching a little. But that's okay as long as you go slow."

"As slow as you want, sweetheart." Zach didn't know where the endearment came from—he'd always just called his best friend "Em". But somehow he couldn't stop the words from spilling out as he slid deeper and deeper into her. "You're so beautiful," he told her as he pressed another thick inch of his cock into her tight slit. "I love the way you look in that outfit—incredibly hot."

"Thank you." She bit her lower lip and looked down between their legs. "Are... Do you think you're almost in? I-I don't know how much more I can take."

"Almost there," Zach promised her. "Almost all the way inside your hot little pussy."

Emily's cheeks were flushed—with passion or pain, he couldn't tell—and her eyes were still bright. "God, Zach...I never knew you could talk like that."

"There's a lot about me you don't know," he growled, thinking of the secret love he'd hidden from her for years. Just then, he felt the head of his cock nudge the very end of her channel. "Do you feel that, Em?" he growled. "Feel me all the way inside you? Filling you up?"

"Yes," she moaned. "God, yes, Zach. You're in me so *deep*."

"And now I'm about to *fuck* you. Are you ready?" he demanded. "Ready to feel my cock sliding in and out of your tight little cunt, sweetheart?" He knew he was probably ruining any chance he had of having a long-term romantic relationship with Emily,

knew he was probably scaring her off forever. But somehow the harsh, dominant words just wouldn't stop coming out.

Emily's eyes widened and she nodded. "Y-yes. I think so."

"Good, because here it comes." With those words, Zach pulled almost all the way out of her and then thrust back home. He was slow at first, grasping her firm ass in both hands and sliding her up and down on his cock.

Emily moaned. "Zach, what...why...?"

"Making sure they can tell we're not faking it," he gritted out. "There can't be any question if we want to get out of here. This way they can see me sliding into you."

"Oh God!" She buried her head in his shoulder for a moment. "This is so...so embarrassing. Letting everyone see us...us do this."

"You mean letting everyone see us fuck?" He rolled his hips up, giving her another deep thrust to emphasize his words.

"Ah! Y-yes, I guess so," she gasped.

"Don't think about them," Zach told her. "Keep your focus on me. You and I are the only ones in the room now, Em. Just remember that, all right?"

"Yes, all right." Emily moaned as the delicious friction built between them. Zach hoped she would say something if what they were doing started hurting her because he was too far gone to guess at her emotions. All he could do was enjoy the one and only time he would make love to the woman he had craved for so long—even though he knew it was wrong.

He began to quicken his rhythm. Maybe it was the desperate situation they found themselves in or maybe it was just the fact that he'd been waiting so long to do this but Zach found he couldn't help loving the feel of her warm, wet pussy wrapped around the shaft of his cock like a velvet glove. Couldn't help loving the soft little whimpers and moans he forced out of her with each deep thrust. Emily was clinging to him, her fingernails biting into his bare shoulders, her mouth half open and her eyes half lidded

as he fucked her. He wished she would join his motion—that she would give some indication that, if she wasn't enjoying it, at least she wasn't hating it. But it seemed to be all she could do to just hold on to him as he opened her with his cock.

"Zach," she moaned, calling his name as she always did in his fantasies. "Zach, God." Her eyes fluttered closed but he didn't want that.

"Look at me," he ordered, giving a particularly deep thrust. "This is me inside you. Me fucking you, Em. And you have no idea how long I've wanted to do this or how good you feel wrapped around my cock."

"Really?" She met his gaze as he had demanded, staring at him uncertainly.

"Damn straight." Zach quickened his pace even more. "You're so tight and soft and wet. I can't wait to come deep in your pussy and fill you up."

"You're going to come in me?" Her fingers tightened on his shoulders. "Inside me?"

"That's what I said." Zach knew he should be a gentleman and offer to pull out, but he had waited for this moment for far too long. There was no way he was going to be able to stop at that crucial juncture. And besides, he wanted to fill Emily with his cum, wanted to know that just once, he'd owned her completely, the way he had always longed to. He knew that after tonight she'd probably never want to see him again, but for right now he had her, had her completely, and he was going to keep her as long as he could.

Which wouldn't be much longer...he could feel the orgasm building at the base of his balls, the urgent pressure to come and fill her completely. Emily seemed to be reaching some kind of a peak too. She was moaning loudly now, her eyes fixed on Zach's as he plowed into her. There was a desperate intimacy in their gray-green depths, a look of need mingled with fear and something else he couldn't read. This was nothing like what he'd imagined for their first time—there was nothing gentle or soft about it. But somehow it seemed to be working for both of them—at least Zach knew it was sure as hell working for him.

Taking one hand from her hip, he pressed his fingers between their bodies and slid two fingers down to the place they were joined. Then he found the hard little nub of her clit and worked it, matching the rhythm of his fingers to the movements of his hips. He didn't know if she could come or not during such a stressful, forced situation, but he was going to try to help her if he could.

To his delight, Emily's moaned rose in pitch and her nails dug into his shoulder hard. God, he was going to have marks there tomorrow – not that he minded.

"Zach!" she gasped. "Oh God! Now – *now*."

Suddenly he felt her spasming around him, felt the tight velvet sheath that encased him grow even tighter and he knew she was coming. He also knew this would be his one and only chance to have her. Hell, he'd fucked her and forced her to come in front of a room full of strangers – there was no way anyone could forgive that, not even a sweet girl like Em. But just this once, she was his. His to love, his to cherish, his to fuck.

With a low groan, Zach buried himself to the hilt in her tight cunt and came.

## Chapter Five

Emily couldn't believe what they had done. Two days after their escape from the Rustler's Roundup she was still pacing her apartment, trying to wrap her head around the idea that she had made love to her best friend. No—the idea that she'd fucked her best friend. No, that wasn't right either. *Zach fucked me – not the other way around*, she admitted to herself. Just the thought of how masterful he'd been, of his hot words and those long, slow strokes of his cock deep inside her as he'd taken her, claimed her as his, made a heated blush stain her cheeks. It was a side of her best friend she'd never seen before—a hot, dominant alpha male who wasn't afraid to take what he wanted and damn the consequences.

Who could have imagined sweet, gentle Zach could be like that? From the moment he'd turned her over his knee for a spanking to the second he finished inside her—after making sure she came first—the whole experience had been completely surreal. Emily still wasn't exactly sure the whole thing hadn't been a dream. But there were two very real clues that it had all been completely real—first, she still had the leather corset and miniskirt outfit as well as the hooker heels they'd forced her to wear at the Rustler's Roundup. And second, Zach wasn't returning her calls.

Emily didn't know what to think about that. Sure, their parting that night had been awkward to say the least. Zach had seen her to her car, mumbled some kind of apology and then beat a hasty retreat. But Emily hadn't thought anything of it at the time. She'd still been in shock after everything she'd been through—first Jason cheating, then being auctioned off, and then having sex with her best friend. It took awhile to process the whole thing and by the time she did, Zach was long gone. She'd never expected him not to take her calls, though. Usually whenever she called he picked up or got back to her right away if he missed it. But after dozens of unanswered voicemail messages she was

forced to admit something—her best friend was avoiding her. The only question now was why? And Emily was afraid she knew the answer.

*He thinks I'm a freak. Thinks I'm some kind of pervert for getting turned on when he spanked me,* she thought miserably, pacing the floor of her newly cleaned out bedroom. Sure, Zach had said a lot of things about how he had always wanted her, but that didn't mean he wouldn't be disgusted or at least put off when he had a chance to think about her reaction to the spanking later. But how could he know he was fulfilling her secret fantasy just by doing what they had been forced to do at the Roundup? And how could Emily explain to him that she wasn't a weird masochistic pain slut who got off on being hurt and dominated when apparently she kind of was?

And anyway, it wasn't just the spanking that had turned her on—it was the fact that it was Zach doing the spanking. Emily was sure she couldn't have gotten off on being punished by a total stranger but she trusted her friend and knew he wouldn't go too far—which had enabled her to let go in the heat of the moment the way nothing else could have. But how could she explain that to Zach?

*What am I supposed to tell him—that it was all a mistake, a one-time thing, a misunderstanding? Because it wasn't was it? I really did feel those emotions—I was scared to death but at the same time I was so turned on I thought I was going to melt. But how can I explain that without sounding like a total pervert?*

Emily shook her head as she taped up the last box. She was in the process of moving since she couldn't afford the rent on this apartment by herself and she didn't want to be here anyway—not after what she'd seen her fiancé doing in this room with another woman. Jason's things were already boxed up and outside the door and he was supposed to be coming for them later that day. He'd had the nerve to beg her to take him back but Emily had refused in no uncertain terms. Cheating was the one thing she couldn't forgive and besides, she wasn't foolish enough to believe he wouldn't do it again. *Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice...I don't think so,* she thought grimly, looking at his side of the empty, stripped bed.



The breakup and sudden move should have been extremely painful but Emily found that she was too preoccupied with the situation between her and Zach to worry about it. It made her wonder if her love for Jason had been dying away so gradually that she didn't notice it was dead until she'd already buried it. At any rate, she seemed to have done all the crying she was going to do on the night of the Rustler's Roundup and she had no more tears to spare for her cheating ex-fiancé.

All she could think about now was Zach. Did he still care about her at all? And how did she feel about him? Emily knew the answer to that question too—as crazy as it seemed after all these years, she was having feelings for her best friend that were a lot more than friendly. But it wasn't just the hot, unbridled sex they'd had that was fueling her emotions—it was the memory of what he'd said, and the way he'd looked when he said it. He'd told her that he wanted to make love to her long and slow, that he wanted to go down on her, that he thought about her all the time. Was it possible he still felt that way, despite the way she'd gotten turned on by the crazy situation and weird things they'd been forced to do? Or was he avoiding her in the hope that if they didn't talk about it they could pretend it had ever happened?

Emily knew the only way to find out was to ask—but did she really have the nerve to show up at Zach's front door and demand to talk about what they had gone through together? She was desperately afraid that he didn't feel for her the way she was very definitely beginning to feel for him. Had she waited too late to find out that she cared for him as more than a friend?

*Stop being such a coward, she scolded herself. This is Zach we're talking about – not some jerk you met in a bar and had a one-night stand with. Even if he doesn't feel the way you do it's not like he's going to kick you out of his house. He obviously cares for you, he paid thirteen thousand dollars to get you out of the Roundup auction. And how she was ever going to pay that back, Emily had no idea. But...maybe she could use her debt to her best friend as an excuse to go see him. At any rate, it was better than showing up at his door and demanding to talk about the hot sex they'd had with no precursor at all. Just go over*

*there and feel him out – what's the worst that could happen?* she asked herself. Of course she knew the answer to that too—she was just full of answers today. Zach could tell her that he no longer had anything but friendly feelings for her. But if that was the case, she'd have to deal with it. Even the worst would be better than not knowing.

Mind made up, Emily hopped in the shower. She wanted to look her best when she saw Zach again—just in case he decided he *did* have feelings for her after all.

Zach paced in front of the massive flat-screen TV that dominated his gaming room. He'd bought the set with his first real check from Warriors of Oblivion and it was hooked up to his work computer. He'd spent hours sitting in front of it, testing the prototype of the online version for bugs, often with Emily right beside him to offer input and advice. He knew he ought to be on it right now, gaming with the rest of his crew and getting feedback from players around the world but somehow he just couldn't make himself log on.

*It's over.* He looked at his cell phone where the *missed call* message was blinking up from the view screen. Emily had been calling and calling him but he was too much of a coward to pick up—because he knew what she was going to say. *"How could you, Zach?"* he imagined her asking, tears filling her beautiful gray-green eyes. *"How could you do that to me? You hurt and humiliated me. I thought we were friends."*

"God, why was I so rough? Why couldn't I have been a little more gentle about the whole thing?" Zach pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes and sank down on the black leather sofa that sat in front of the flat screen. He'd managed to make himself take a shower that morning but that was as far as he'd gotten toward having any kind of a normal day. He was wearing a pair of old jeans and nothing else because he'd lost interest in dressing after he put them on. His whole head was filled with Emily and what they'd done—no, what *he* had done to *her*, Zach admitted to himself.

He could still see the dazed look in Emily's eyes as he'd led her out of the Roundup. She'd been limping too, as though she was in serious pain. God, she'd said that he was

bigger than she was used to—why hadn't he been gentler with her? The fact that they were basically being forced to have sex didn't excuse his dominant words or the rough way he'd fucked her.

Zach had tried to tell himself that she had enjoyed herself too, that she'd come for him, but really, could he be sure about that? Maybe she'd just been acting for the benefit of the crowd—anything to get them out of there. The bright-eyed, flushed and tousled Emily who he'd had sex with on stage during the Roundup couldn't have been more different than the shell-shocked victim he'd led out of the perverted night club afterward. He'd asked her over and over if she was all right but she'd answered him in monosyllables. In fact, he'd been afraid to let her drive home but she'd insisted she would be okay and had gotten into her car without any assistance so he'd had no choice but to let her go. He'd walked away from her car with a heavy heart, knowing their friendship was most likely at an end.

That was why he was avoiding answering her calls, Zach admitted to himself. He didn't want to hear her say that they were through. Didn't want to admit that the best and most important relationship of his life was over. He knew it was completely unrealistic but he couldn't help feeling that if he could avoid hearing her actually say the words, it wasn't true. Not yet, anyway.

*Can't avoid it forever.* No, he couldn't. Emily was nothing if not persistent and sooner or later she was going to show up and demand to talk to him. *Ought to just call her or answer the next time she calls,* Zach told himself miserably. It would be less painful over the phone than in person. Or would it? It was like saying it would be less painful to be stabbed than shot—either way it was going to hurt a hell of a lot.

He was just getting up to drag himself to the kitchen and get a pot of coffee started when the doorbell rang. It *had* to be her and for a minute, Zach actually considered pretending not to be home. The cowardly impulse made him mad at himself. *Man up and face her,* he told the little voice that was suggesting he could slip out the back and Emily would never see him leave. *Might as well get it over with.*

Taking a deep breath, he went to the front door and opened it wide. Sure enough, standing on his front porch, wrapped in a black trench coat he'd bought her during a particularly wet and nasty winter day the year before, was Emily.

"Hello, Zach," she said in a soft voice, looking up at him. "I came because we need to talk."

Emily searched his face for any kind of emotion but Zach's eyes were flat and hard as he let her into the house. His shoulders were tense and his jaw was clenched—a sure sign he was upset, but his face gave away nothing. God, was he really that angry that she'd come to visit him? It almost made her want to turn right back around and leave but Emily had never been a quitter. Squaring her shoulders, she pushed past him and headed for the gaming room. It was where they spent most of their time hanging out—other than the kitchen, of course—and she definitely wasn't hungry right now. Her stomach was too full of butterflies to even think of eating.

Zach followed her silently and stood with his arms crossed over his broad bare chest as she seated herself on the edge of the black leather sofa. Despite his tousled hair and half-dressed state, he looked absolutely amazing. How had she never noticed how incredible his body was before? She'd known that he had gotten buff after high school but seeing the muscular expanse of smooth, bare skin really drove the point home.

The fact that he was half naked, silent and brooding made him seem almost dangerous—just liked he'd been the night at the Roundup when he was wearing the black leather pants and vest. Dangerous and dominant. It was enough to send a hot flare of desire straight through her if Emily had been sure that he felt the same way about her that she did about him. But since that was by no means a certainty, she kept her mouth shut.

The flat screen was off for once, she noted as she settled herself, so at least she hadn't interrupted him in the middle of work. That was good—wasn't it? But another

look at her former best friend's face told her that nothing was good between them – and probably wouldn't ever be again.

"Um..." She cleared her throat, uncertain how to begin. "I don't know why you're not returning my calls but we need to talk. I owe you a lot of money and I'm not sure how I'm going to pay you back."

"What?" Zach let out a disbelieving bark of laughter. "What are you talking about?"

"The thirteen-thousand dollars you paid to...to get me out of trouble. Which, by the way, I really appreciate. I mean, I know I might not have said so that night but I was kind of in shock so –"

"In shock. Right." Zach's deep voice was bitter. "Can't say I blame you after what I did to you."

"After what you... Zach, what are you talking about?" She looked up at him, frowning.

"I hurt you, Em. Don't try to deny it." He ran both hands through his hair, his expression grim. "I was way too rough. I mean, we were forced into the situation we were in but that's no excuse for the way I acted."

"Zach..." Emily shook her head. Where to begin? What could she say that would convince him he hadn't hurt or frightened her? "You did what you had to do to get us out of there," she reminded him.

"I could have been a hell of a lot more gentle while I was doing it, though."

"You *were* gentle," Emily protested. "I mean you...you um, slid into me really slowly." She could feel her cheeks getting hot as she spoke – this wasn't a conversation she'd ever expected to have with her best friend.

"Yeah but once I was inside you I really pounded you. And I didn't even ask if you wanted me to, uh, to pull out. I just..." Zach shook his head and Emily saw that his cheeks were red too.

“Zach, no.” She reached up and tugged at his hand. Reluctantly, he allowed her to pull him down on the couch beside her. “You didn’t hurt me—honestly you didn’t,” she told him earnestly. “I mean, my behind was a little tender after the spanking and yes, I was a little sore after we...”

“After I fucked you,” he said bitterly.

“Yes.” Emily swallowed hard. His harsh tone and dark mood were reminding her again of how dominant and aggressive he’d been the night at the Roundup. She felt another bolt of desire sizzle through her. Could it be that he was upset just because he’d thought he hurt her? He hadn’t mentioned a thing about how she’d gotten excited from the spanking, only that he thought he’d spanked and fucked her too hard. Was he upset because he still cared and thought she was mad at him? Suddenly she had an idea.

“Look.” She stood up from the couch and began untying the sash of the black trench coat. “I’ll prove that you didn’t hurt me. I’ll let you examine me right here and now.”

“Em, you don’t...” Zach’s protests trailed off as she opened the coat to reveal what she had on underneath.

It wasn’t the leather miniskirt and corset—Emily had considered wearing them and then decided they were too obvious. Besides, she didn’t want to be humiliated if he declared that he was only interested in continuing their friendship. Instead, she’d opted for something that could be considered simply flirty—although it was certainly sexier than her usual everyday attire.

Under her coat she was wearing a gauzy pale pink gown with a deep V-neck and a hem that ended just above her knees. What made the dress sexy—and the reason she’d never worn it out in public—was the fact that the material was almost see-through. Emily had ordered it online for a party and had never worn it for just that reason—in fact, she’d considered it a waste of money until today. Now, seeing the way Zach’s dark blue eyes traveled hungrily up and down her barely concealed body, she decided it might be the best investment she’d ever made.

She knew he could see the outline of the lacy white bra and panties she was wearing under the light material—it was one of her favorite sets. Innocent and demure, her underwear still screamed sex, especially since the bra was only a half cup. The bottom edge of it came right up under her areolas and stopped there. Only a thin boarder of strategically placed white lace covered her nipples and it was so small that if she moved the wrong way or even took a deep breath, she was liable to flash someone.

The panties of the set matched the bra—the back was a thong and the front was a small vee of delicate white lace that barely covered the slit of her pussy. Emily had made sure to shave very thoroughly before slipping into the tiny scrap of material and she knew that if Zach got a good look at her he'd be able to see everything through the thin lace.

"You don't have to," he said, finishing his thought in a strangled voice. But Emily wasn't giving up.

"I need you to see you didn't hurt me. Here—see?" she asked, pulling up the back of the pale pink dress to reveal her ass. The night after Zach had whipped her it *had* been a little tender and pink but her skin was back to its normal silky pale tone now.

"I..." Zach seemed mesmerized by the sight of her mostly bare ass and Emily felt a surge of triumph. Whatever else he might think about her, it was clear he still found her desirable.

"See for yourself," she said, lifting his large hand and placing it on her bottom. God, his touch felt good—warm and perfect against her skin. "Don't I look fine to you?"

"More than fine." Zach's voice was almost a growl as he cupped her ass. He looked up at her, his blue eyes hooded. "So you're honestly not mad at me?"

"How could I be? You saved me, Zach." Emily pressed back against his hand, rubbing herself like a cat against him. "Not to mention you gave me one of the most incredible sexual experiences of my life."

"You liked that? What we did? What I did to you?" He raised an eyebrow at her in disbelief.

Emily felt her cheeks getting hot but there was no point in denying it. "Yes," she murmured, nodding. "I...yes."

"What did you like about it?" Zach looked at her intently. "Was it being on stage with everyone looking at you? Because I remember from the year you did the senior play —"

"No!" Emily shook her head. "I mean—that part...that almost ruined it for me. But when you told me to look at you, to pretend like we were the only two people in the room...well, that made a lot of difference."

"Okay." Zach nodded. "I've been so busy torturing myself about hurting you that I nearly forgot, but as I recall you were, um, excited, before I told you that. Or maybe *ready* is a better word." He frowned. "Why was that?"

"I...um..." Emily blushed and stammered, no sure how to say it. Damn it, this was what she'd been worried about all along, that he would find out how the spanking and domination had turned her on and think she was a pervert or a freak. "It..."

"It was this, wasn't it?" Zach drew back his hand and gave her a sharp slap on her bare ass cheek.

Emily jumped and a soft cry escaped her. "Y-yes. Part of it," she admitted.

"And what was the other part?" Zach's eyes were half lidded with desire. "You were so damn *wet*, Em. Why was that?"

"I..." She bit her lower lip, trying to think how to explain it. "It was a combination of things, I think. See for a long time I've had this, um, this fantasy, I guess you could call it. About being...being dominated." She looked down at the carpet, unable to meet his eyes, and talked quickly, trying to get it all out. "You...you looked so tall and dark and dangerous. And you were so...you really took charge of the situation and...and of me. So when you turned me over your knee and spanked me..." She shook her head, unable to go on.



"Come here." Taking her by the wrist, Zach pulled her gently forward until she was standing between his thighs. "This is something you've been keeping inside a long time, isn't it?"

There was no use denying it. Emily nodded. "Yes."

"And I'm guessing Jason wasn't interested?"

She frowned. "The only kinky sex that turned him on was cheating, apparently."

"He's a fool," Zach said. "But I can't help being glad you caught him at it. Are you two—?"

"I kicked him out," Emily said flatly. "And he's not coming back."

"Good." Zach nodded approvingly. "So you actually *liked* it when I put you over my knee and spanked you?"

"I...it...I know it sounds sick," she said desperately.

"Not at all." Zach ran a proprietary hand over her ass. "Although it would have been nice to know earlier. Might have saved me a few sleepless nights."

"So...so you don't think I'm a pervert?" Emily felt a rush of relief.

Zach grinned, a touch of his old humor returning to those deep blue eyes. "Nope. As long as you don't think I'm an abusive bastard."

"How could I think that about you?"

"Because I hurt you," he said simply.

Emily sighed. Not this again! "But you *didn't*. You can see for yourself there isn't a mark on me." She nodded down to where his large hand was still cupping her ass.

Zach's eyes narrowed. "I don't know about that. Maybe I should make a more detailed inspection. What do you think, Em?"

Emily nibbled her lower lip. "Maybe...maybe you should."

"All right then." Moving quickly, he turned her over his knee in exactly the same way he had at the Roundup. Emily felt her breath catch in her throat as she found herself suddenly prone with her bare and vulnerable bottom high in the air. And

instead of just cupping her ass, Zach was now actively caressing it. She moaned softly as his long fingers traced her curves. God, she could feel herself melting inside—she only hoped he wouldn't stop.

She got her wish as her best friend continued to stroke and fondle her naked behind with his big, warm hand. After a long moment, Zach spoke again in a low voice.

"I guess you're doing okay. But this wasn't the only place I hurt you, Em."

"I wasn't hurt so much as just a little sore...but in a good way," she reminded him breathlessly.

"And where exactly were you sore?" His voice was soft but there was definitely an edge of steel to it—a dominant tone that made Emily squirm with fearful anticipation.

"Lower down," she whispered, not wanting to actually *say* where.

"Here?" His fingers slipped lower, tracing the thin line of lace that led down between her legs and making her shiver as they brushed lightly over the scrap of material that covered her mound.

"Yes....God, yes," Emily moaned softly. "But...but not just on the outside."

"Where were you sore, sweetheart?" Zach's fingers were stroking her relentlessly now, outlining her swollen cunt lips and tracing the slit of her pussy through the thin white lace. Emily could feel how wet she was getting and wondered if her panties were transparent with her moisture. Could Zach see how hot and turned on she was getting? Could he feel her wet heat through the delicate material?

"In...inside," she whispered. "Where you..."

"Where I put my cock in you?" he finished for her. At the same time he slid the thin panel of lace to one side and slipped two thick fingers deep inside her. "Here, in your tight little cunt?"

His hot, dirty words as much as the two long fingers fucking her, made Emily moan with need. "God, yes, Zach. There—right there!" she gasped as he thrust even deeper.

"So you liked it when I fucked you? Liked the feel of me inside you?"

"Yes! I-I couldn't help it," she gasped as he withdrew and began circling her clit with his fingertips.

"Just like you can't help it now." The blunt pads of his fingertips slid over her slippery folds, teasing her in just the right way.

"Uh-huh." Emily bit her lip and writhed in his lap. Who knew her sweet best friend could be so naughty? She'd had a glimpse of his dark, dominant side the night of the Roundup but now she was getting a much closer look and liking what she saw immensely.

"Do you remember what I said to you before I fucked you, Em?" he asked in that low voice that sent shivers down her spine. "About what I wanted to do to you?"

"You-you said you wanted to-to get me ready. To make me come," she whispered.

"I told you I wanted to go down on you—to taste you." Suddenly he flipped her over and stood her on her feet again. Emily grabbed his shoulders, wobbling a little—her knees were weak from the way he'd been touching and stroking her.

"I remember," she murmured, looking into his eyes.

"Good. Because that's what I'm going to do to you right now, sweetheart. But first, take off that dress." His demanding tone brooked no refusals.

"All...all right." Scarcely able to believe she was doing it, Emily slipped out of the gauzy pink dress and let it pool in a heap of fabric at her feet. Zach helped her step out of it and then she stood before him in nothing but her barely there white lace bra and panties.

He drew in a breath. "God, you're incredible, Em. You have no idea how often I've fantasized about you in outfits just like this. Ever since that time you did your laundry at my house."

"You have?" Grinning wickedly, she bent down, flashing him with her nipples.

Zach growled and pulled her closer. "Damn straight. And now I intend to make fantasy a reality." He bracketed her hips with his large hands, his thumbs hooked into

the slender side straps of her panties. "Tell me now if you want me to stop, Em," he said, looking up at her seriously. "I don't want to do something we'll both regret later."

"I could never regret anything we did together," she murmured, running her fingers through his wild black hair. "And that includes what happened the other night."

"I'm glad to hear that," he murmured, tugging the panties down her hips. Then he pulled her close and pressed his face to juncture of her thighs. Emily bit back a gasp as she felt his hot breath against her bare pussy. "God, you smell so good down here," he growled, nuzzling her gently. "Can't wait to spread you open and taste you."

"Zach!" she moaned but he was already tonguing her open, exploring her slit with warm wet kisses and licks that made her knees feel all weak and rubbery. She nearly collapsed when she felt the tip of his tongue delve deeper, to lave the hard little button of her clit. But Zach caught her just in time and lowered her to the black leather couch.

"Just relax, Em," he murmured, positioning her so that one of her feet was resting against the back of the couch and the other was flat on the floor. "Relax and let me taste your sweet pussy."

"Oh God, Zach!" she gasped as he lowered his head to lick her once more. There was an undeniable hunger in his deep blue eyes that made her feel like something had melted inside her. This wasn't just something he'd recently had the urge to do—it was obviously the fulfillment of a long held and dearly cherished fantasy. Just the idea that Zach thought about her like this—that he'd wanted her for years—made her feel special and cherished in a way she'd never felt with Jason. Not to mention she felt like a sex goddess when Zach gave her that look—like she was some unobtainable angel he'd never expected to get to touch.

She'd expected him to dive back in but Zach took a moment to spread her reverently with his thumbs and drink in the sight of her pussy, naked and open for him. "Beautiful," he whispered, looking up at her. "God, Em, you're beautiful here—I always knew you would be."

"You...you've wondered what my...what I looked like there?" She couldn't help blushing as she asked.

He nodded seriously. "Of course I've wondered—wondered and wanted and wished. And now I'm finally going to get what I've wanted for so long—you." The low possessive growl in his voice as he spoke sent a shiver down Emily's spine. But it was a good shiver and she could feel herself getting even hotter and wetter as he held her open for his loving inspection.

"Zach, please..." she whispered, squirming a little. It was wonderful to be so admired but she was feeling a little exposed under his intense scrutiny.

"Sorry," he murmured. "I've just waited so long for this—I want to enjoy it." Then he lowered his head and gave her a long, loving kiss—almost as though he was kissing her mouth. Which was something they hadn't done yet, Emily realized. She made a mental note to fix that and then the sweet sensation of Zach's tongue circling her clit blew away every other thought in her head like cobwebs.

"God," she gasped as he lapped gently at her slippery folds. She wasn't sure where he'd learned this skill but he certainly knew what he was doing. Before she knew it, Emily had both hands buried in his thick black hair and was pressing her hips up to meet him.

Zach seemed to enjoy her moaning and writhing because he slid his hands under her ass and lifted her higher even as he pressed his tongue deep into her slick, wet entrance. It was as though he couldn't get enough of her, her scent, her taste, the feel of her thighs wrapped around his head—every action he took seemed to beg for more. It was almost as if he was desperate to make her come. When he looked up for a moment, his mouth wet and shiny with her juices, his words seemed to confirm that thought.

"Come for me, Em," he rasped, his deep voice hoarse with emotion. "I need to feel you come for me—need to know you want this as much as I do."

"I *do* want it, Zach. I swear I do," Emily assured him throatily. She was amazed at how uninhibited she felt with him. With Jason, this particular act had always been a

little uncomfortable—something her ex did because he felt like he had to in order to make her happy. With Zach, it was completely different. He'd admitted to fantasizing about this, had told Emily that he wanted to taste her. And besides all that, she was comfortable with him in ways she'd never been with another man. Under his new, dominant demeanor he was still Zach—her best friend and go-to guy and she knew she could trust him with her life, as well as her pleasure.

Zach seemed determined to show her that her trust in him wasn't misplaced. As she bucked her hips up to him again, he enveloped as much of her pussy as he could at once and pressed the flat of his tongue hard against her throbbing clit. Then he held still as she moved against his mouth, the frantic motion of her hips driving her higher and higher.

"God...God!" Emily moaned as she felt the pleasure cresting inside her. She'd thought that the orgasm Zach had given her the night of the Rustler's Roundup had been the most intense of her life but this one was even better. A warm tide of sensation was washing over her like an ocean wave, flooding every part of her with a tingling light that started in the center of her body and shot outward like electricity.

The pleasure ebbed slowly but at last she collapsed, going limp against the couch. She felt like a rag doll but there was still some tension lurking inside her—the desire for more. She couldn't help remembering how it had felt to have Zach inside her the first time they'd made love, how deliciously deep and hard and thick he'd felt inside her. God, she wanted more of that—wanted more of him.

"I want you, Em." His voice was a hoarse growl and his eyes were hooded as he looked at her.

"I want you, too." She put out her arms for him, ready to draw him down on the couch and have him in her right there and then but Zach shook his head.

"I wish you could see how beautiful you look right now. How incredibly lovely you are when you come."

Emily smiled. "And I wish you could see how hot you are when you get that dominant look in your eyes and start talking dirty."

Zach looked thoughtful. "I think both our wishes can be arranged. Hold on." He got off the couch, much to Emily's disappointment, and began fiddling with the open laptop that sat on a stand beside the huge flat screen TV. Just as she was about to ask what he was doing, the flat screen flickered and Emily was treated to the sight of herself lying half naked on the couch with her legs spread and her hair tousled.

"Oh my God!" she gasped, pressing her knees together and putting an arm over her chest to shield her barely covered breasts. "How did you—?"

"Webcam," Zach explained, grinning. "But don't worry, it's just hooked up to the flat screen. We're not live on the internet or anything and it's not recording."

"Well, that's good." Emily frowned uncertainly as she watched herself on the flat screen—God, she looked like some kind of a porn star, wearing only her half-cup bra and lying on the black leather couch.

"If you don't like it I can turn it off," Zach offered. "I just thought you might like to watch while I make love to you. While I *fuck* you, sweetheart."

Emily caught her breath at his hot words. The dark, dangerous look was back in his eyes and she could see from the bulge in his jeans how much he wanted her. "No," she said, when Zach moved over to the laptop and began to disable the webcam. "No, don't. I-I think I like it."

"All right then." He came back to the couch and sat beside her, pulling her into his lap. "You know, it occurs to me I haven't gotten a chance to kiss you yet," he growled, tangling the fingers of one hand in her hair. "Which is something I've wanted to do since high school."

"I was just thinking the same thing," Emily whispered. And then he took her mouth in a fierce, hungry kiss. She could taste her own juices on his lips and his hands were everywhere, palming her breasts, pinching her nipples and stroking down her trembling abdomen to cup her slippery cunt. It was even hotter when Zach pulled back

for a moment and murmured in her ear that she should look, should watch them on the screen as he touched her.

Daring to look at the flat screen again, Emily bit her lip at the hot sight of her best friend and lover touching her so intimately. His big hands looked amazing as they stroked over her body, caressing every inch of her skin with delicious intimacy.

"You like that, sweetheart?" Zach asked softly, twisting her nipples with one hand as he thrust two long fingers deep in her pussy with the other. "Like to watch me touch you?"

"God, yes," Emily groaned, unable to help herself. The sight was undeniably hot—it was like she was staring in her very own erotic movie and the fact that her costar was the man she trusted and cared for most in the world didn't hurt the situation either.

"And do you want to watch me fuck you?" Zach growled, his fingers still stroking in and out of her.

"More than anything," Emily told him. "But...I want to try something first. May I?" She never would have thought twice about doing whatever she wanted with the old Zach but this new, dominant man was a different story.

He frowned. "That depends. Does it mean I have to stop touching you?"

Emily shivered with delight. "Only for a minute," she promised. "And only because I want to touch *you*. Just lean back against the couch and let me show you."

Reluctantly, Zach leaned back as she'd asked, his hands by his sides. "This better not take long—I need to be inside you," he said, giving her a hot look.

"You will be—in more ways than one." With that, Emily leaned over and attacked the fly of his jeans. She got them unfastened and unzipped without much trouble and soon Zach's hard, throbbing length was in her hand. *Still can't believe he's so big*, she thought, eyeing his shaft with a mixture of apprehension and delight. She'd barely gotten a chance to touch him the night of the Roundup—now she wanted to explore. And from the look on Zach's face, he wasn't about to stop her.



He groaned softly as she wrapped her fingers around his cock and began to stroke. She watched, fascinated, at her image on the TV as she worked him. God, this was hot—Zach had his head thrown back and the strong cords of his neck were standing out as he fought to hold still under her gentle touch. His hands were fisted at his sides and his broad chest was moving rapidly, his breathing ragged—and all because she was touching him.

*Me, I'm doing that to him. Making him so hot he can barely sit still.* Emily had a surge of satisfaction at the way she was affecting him. Why hadn't she ever seen the erotic possibilities of her best friend before? *Maybe because I wouldn't let myself see,* she thought. After all, if she'd allowed herself to think of Zach in a sexual way, there was no way she could have stayed with Jason as long as she had. Not that she wanted to be thinking of her cheating ex right now. At the moment, she was more interested in experimenting sexually on her best friend and new lover. After all, if just *touching* Zach made him so hot, what would happen if she did more?

Leaning down, Emily lapped gently at the broad, mushroom-shaped head of the cock grasped firmly in her hand. She was rewarded with a low groan from Zach and when she looked up at the flat screen she was treated to the incredibly erotic sight of her licking her best friend's shaft. God, she'd never felt so hot and uninhibited before—it was almost like being with Zach had unlocked a part of her she hadn't known she had. Even her kinkiest fantasies didn't come close to what she was experiencing right here and now, in a room where she'd spent hours and hours just hanging around. Suddenly Zach's gaming room was a NC17 studio and she was the star—it was almost more than she could stand.

Apparently it was more than Zach could stand too because when she took as much of him into her mouth as she could, he tugged gently at her hair.

"No, sweetheart—stop." His deep voice was ragged. "Can't...can't take much more of that."

"Was I doing it wrong?" Emily look up, concerned.

But Zach shook his head. "You were doing it just right—that's the problem. You keep that up and I'll be coming in your mouth instead of your hot little pussy."

Emily felt a warm, sexual flush start at the tops of her breasts and climb up her neck and cheeks. "God, Zach, when you talk like that... I never knew you could be so...so dirty."

"Do you like it?" He pulled her closer and kissed her again.

"Oh yes," Emily admitted breathlessly. "A *lot*. But you've always been so sweet and sensitive..."

"Sweet and sensitive is all right for friends but we're more than that now. Aren't we?" His blue eyes searched hers and she had a feeling a great deal was riding on her answer.

"Yes," she whispered, leaning forward to kiss him again. "A *lot* more."

"Good, because now I'm going to fuck you." He gave her that smoldering look again before rearranging their positions on the couch. "Like this, sweetheart," he said, getting her onto her hands and knees and spreading her legs.

"Why?" Emily asked, looking over her shoulder at him. Not that she minded—she felt deliciously vulnerable with her ass in the air and Zach looming over her from behind. But she wanted to know what he was doing.

"So you can watch me slide into you." His voice was rough—dominant. "So you can watch me take you hard and long, Em."

"Oh," was all she could manage as he grasped her hips firmly and pressed the tip of his cock to her slippery entrance. She watched their images on the flat screen in fascination as he slid deeper into her cunt.

"Trying to go slow," Zach told her in a harsh voice and Emily realized how hard it must be for him to hold back. "Let me know if I'm hurting you."

"Doesn't hurt at all," she assured him, pressing her hips back to him to take more of him inside and prove she was telling the truth. "Feels...feels amazing."

"All right then." Apparently reassured, he pressed harder, sliding home at last.

Emily moaned as she felt the broad head of his cock bump against the end of her channel. "God, Zach, you're in me so deep!"

"Gonna get deeper in a minute, sweetheart," he assured her. "Now watch us—I want you to watch while I slide my cock in and out of your sweet, tight cunt and fuck you."

She moaned again and then gasped at the sight of his thick shaft, slippery with her juices, sliding slowly out of her wet, open pussy. Then Zach re-entered her with a slow, deep, deliberate thrust that sent another thrill of delicious sensation along her spine. Emily cried out her pleasure, arching her back like a cat, watching herself and Zach on the flat screen as they made love. She'd never experienced anything this hot before, had never imagined watching herself being taken, but somehow it was more arousing than anything she could have dreamt up. She was loving every minute of it and Zach seemed to know that.

"You like this, Em?" he rasped as he stroked in and out of her. "Like to watch me fuck your sweet cunt? Like to watch me slide in and out of you?"

"God, yes," she moaned. "You know I do." Her eyes were riveted to the screen, flickering back and forth between the sight of Zach's thick shaft stretching her open and the intense look in his eyes. He looked incredibly sexy as he thrust into her, his big hands bracketing her hips and a look of pure concentration on his face as he worked her hard.

Emily looked pretty sexy herself, she acknowledged, as she watched. Her back was arched, her breasts hanging down like ripe fruit as she tilted her pelvis back to get more of him inside her. But just as she felt the pleasure building inside her again, Zach pulled out.

"What...Why did you do that?" She looked at him in confusion but Zach was already flipping her over onto her back.

"Don't want to finish like that," he explained as he lowered himself onto her. "Want to finish face to face, looking into your eyes, sweetheart."

"You...you do?" Emily bit her lower lip and looked up at him as he entered her once more. She couldn't help the moan that escaped her as the head of his cock bottomed out inside her.

Zach nodded, his eyes intense. "I want to watch you come. Want to look in your eyes when I come inside you."

"God, yes, Zach." She pulled him down for a hungry kiss as he began stroking into her again. This position was much more intimate and she wrapped her legs around his narrow hips and drew him into her with pleasure. Watching on the flat screen was nice but Zach was right—there was no substitute for looking into your lover's eyes when you were so intimately joined. Not to mention the fact that the new angle was pressing her clit against his pubic bone and sending showers of tingling sparks throughout her entire body every time he thrust.

It didn't take long for her pleasure to reach a peak. Emily came, the warm tide of sensation washing over her once more as she moaned out her best friend's name. She could feel her inner muscles contracting all around him, milking him hard as though begging him to fill her with his cum.

Obviously, Zach was eager to give her what she wanted. "God, Em," he groaned as he thrust. "Love the feel of you wrapped around me. Love to come inside you."

"Do it," she urged him, looking into his eyes. "Come in me, Zach. Take me. *Own* me." She didn't know where the words came from but they seemed to drive her best friend and lover right over the edge. With a low groan, Zach's sank his shaft to the hilt inside her and she felt him grow, if possible, even thicker for a moment as he began to come.

The moment seemed to last forever, the two of them locked together, neither one able to look away. Emily's legs were wrapped around his waist, her fingernails digging into his broad bare back as she gasped his name. Zach's big body was flush against her

own, his weight pressing her down into the leather cushions beneath her, but she didn't care a bit. She liked the feel of him on top of her, inside her, and wished it would never end.

At last, however, Zach seemed to be concerned that he was crushing her because he rolled off and pulled her up to sit beside him on the couch. Emily murmured her discontent—she'd wanted to keep him in her a little while longer—but sat on his lap willingly enough when he patted his knees.

"That was amazing." Zach cradled her in his arms and kissed her.

"Better than amazing." Emily sighed contentedly. "Especially since it was with you."

"You really mean that?" Zach looked at her uncertainly.

"Of course I do. And that goes for the first time too. I mean, I want you to know that I really *was* into it at the Roundup. It was hot because you were fulfilling a fantasy of mine—one I'd had for ages."

Zach looked at her seriously. "Was it just the fantasy then, Em? Just that and nothing more?"

She knew immediately what he was talking about. "Do you honestly think," she said, looking into his eyes, "that I could have let go and let myself actually enjoy what we did at that crazy club if I'd been doing it with a complete stranger?"

"I don't know—it was your fantasy," Zach pointed out.

"Well, I couldn't have." Emily frowned. "And what's more, I couldn't have enjoyed it with anyone but *you*. You made the difference, Zach. It was so scary being on stage with all those weird, creepy men shouting at me. But because you were with me I felt safe—safe enough to let go and let myself enjoy something that would have totally traumatized me otherwise."

"I'm glad to hear you say that because it meant a lot to me too—and it wasn't just making a fantasy come true, although God knows I've spent enough time wishing this

would happen. That we'd get together I mean. But, Em..." Zach tilted her chin so that they were eye to eye. "I don't know how to say this so I'm just going to say it. I love you. I have from the minute you walked into my life and asked for help with your algebra homework. I've just never had the guts to say it before."

"Oh, Zach." She put her arms around his neck. "You have no idea how it makes me feel to hear you say that."

"No, I don't." He looked at her a little anxiously. "You mind telling me?"

Emily kissed him. "You really don't know how I feel, after what we just did?"

"I'd prefer to have it spelled out. Come on, Em—you're driving me crazy."

She grinned and kissed him again. "I love you too, you big idiot. I think I have for the longest time, I just couldn't see it."

"Whew." Zach looked relieved. "I was worried for a minute there that I'd made a fool of myself. That you just wanted to be friends with benefits or something."

"Oh, I want all the benefits." Emily nipped at his neck playfully. "And I hope we'll still be friends. But I want more too—I want the whole package, Zach."

His face broke into a wide grin. "You don't know how long I've waited for this—for you."

She kissed him lightly on the nose. "And was it worth the wait?"

"More than worth it."

"Good." Emily sighed. "I wish I could stay here all day canoodling with you but I can't."

"Canoodling?" Zach raised an eyebrow and she giggled.

"Yes, or whatever you want to call it. But I have to go finish packing—I have to be out of my apartment in two days and I still haven't found a new place to stay. Guess I'll be going home to Mom and Dad for awhile."

"Don't do that—come stay here with me. Live with me, Em."

She looked at him uncertainly. "I don't know, Zach—I don't want to intrude."

"Are you kidding me? I've been waiting for you for years—now that I've finally got you I want you as close as possible." He hugged her tight. "C'mon, it'll be fun. We can stay up all night, just like we used to before you got your crazy job."

Emily smiled. "I *do* love our all-night gaming sessions."

"Gaming wasn't exactly what I had in mind when I said we'd stay up all night." Zach gave her a hot look that made her shiver.

"Are you really sure?"

"Positively positive," he reassured her.

"All right but we might have to go easy on the all-nighters," Emily warned. "I do still have to go to work every morning."

"What?" Zach frowned. "You're not seriously still working for Ms. DeVille, are you? After she sent you to be put up for auction like a side of beef?"

"I have to pay the bills somehow," Emily said defensively. "I know she's crazy but I'll be more careful from now on. Besides, Zach, how can I live without a job? I still owe you thirteen thousand dollars."

"You don't owe me a cent," he said sternly. "So forget that right now."

"I can't forget it." Emily frowned stubbornly. "I always pay my debts."

Zach arched an eyebrow at her. "Well you're not paying this one back—especially not working for that crazy woman. You call and give her your notice today."

Emily put a hand on her hip. "Listen, buddy, just because I like to be dominated in the bedroom doesn't mean I'll let you boss me around anywhere else. I *have* to have a job."

"And you will have one—running Posh Party Planners." Zach braved the dark look she was giving him and kissed her. "It's time you got it up and running. And before you protest anymore, I'm not giving you a loan for the startup—this is an *investment* and I know I'll see a big return on it."

Emily nibbled her bottom lip. "Zach, really...I can't let you. You already spent so much money on me at the Rustler's Roundup."

He looked at her seriously. "Em, if that was what it took to finally get us together, it was worth every cent. I would have spent every penny I owned to be more than your friend."

"Oh, Zach." Emily felt her eyes fill with tears. She blinked them away and tried to smile. "You are. So much more."

"So you'll quit DeVille and get started with Posh?" he asked, stroking her hair.

Emily snuggled against him. "I shouldn't but...all right."

"Good. And you'll never have to plan another pot-bellied pig birthday or poodle wedding if you don't want to."

"Sounds good to me." Emily sighed contentedly. It felt so right to have Zach's strong arms wrapped around her and know that he loved her so much—as much as she loved him. "Why did it take me so long to see you were the one?" she murmured against his chest.

"I don't know—maybe because I never threw you over my knee and spanked you before—not to mention the hot sex afterward." His voice was an amused rumble in her ear.

"Maybe." She wiggled against him, feeling naughty. "Might be something you'll have to repeat sometime."

"Sometime might be now if you're not careful." Zach's big hands were already stroking all over her body. "I don't think I'm ever going to get used to having you naked in my arms."

"You're just going to have to." Emily grinned up at him. "I'm a nudist—didn't you know? Now that we're together I fully intend to run around the house nude all the time."



He groaned. "I'll never get any work done ever again—how am I going to pay for the ring?"

"What ring?" Emily looked at him cautiously.

"The one you're going to pick out as soon as you want to. No rush," Zach said hurriedly but there was a look of hope in his eyes. "I, uh, promised myself that if I ever got you, I wouldn't be an idiot like Jason and refuse to commit. This may be a little early but...I want to marry you, Em. Maybe not right away but soon."

Emily felt like her heart was going to burst. Zach's declaration was sudden but she had an idea that it wasn't a new idea for him. Again, this was something he'd thought and dreamed about for years—the two of them, married, together forever. And as crazy as the idea might have seemed to her even a few days ago, now it felt so right and perfect she could hardly express it, even to herself. This was Zach, her best friend and now her lover asking her to spend the rest of their lives together. It was the best idea Emily had heard in a long time.

"Well?" He was looking at her anxiously. "What do you say? Don't leave me hanging here, Em."

She grinned. "I say yes."

"Yes to being engaged or yes to being married?"

"Yes to all of it." She laughed and threw her arms around his neck. "Yes to you and me and spending our lives together and having lots of beautiful babies. Yes to the whole girly mess."

"It's not *that* girly," he protested. "I'm part of it too. Although I don't mind the beautiful babies part—especially making them." He gave her a searing kiss that made Emily tingle all the way down to her toes.

"God, Zach," she gasped when he let her breathe. "I can't believe just a few days ago I was lecturing you on how to be more dominant. You certainly don't need any lessons now."

"I'll be happy to give a few, though." He kissed her neck. "Lessons...punishment...spankings...whatever you want. Whatever you *need*, Em."

She straddled his hips, facing him as she had that fateful night at the Rustler's Roundup. "All I need is *you*. And now that I have you, I'm never letting you go."

Zach's only answer was another hot kiss. It looked like they were going to be more than friends for a long, long time and that was exactly the way Emily wanted it.

*The End*

## About the Author

Evangeline Anderson is a registered MRI tech who would rather be writing. And she is nerdy enough to have a bumper sticker that says "I'd rather be writing." Honk if you see her! She is thirty-something and lives in Florida with a husband, a son and two cats. She had been writing erotic fiction for her own gratification for a number of years before it occurred to her to try to get paid for it. To her delight, she found that it was actually possible to get money for having a dirty mind and she has been writing paranormal and sci-fi erotica steadily ever since.

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

### *Tell Us What You Think*

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at [Comments@EllorasCave.com](mailto:Comments@EllorasCave.com).

Also by **Evangeline Anderson**

A Spanking for Valentine

Broken Boundaries

Ceremony of Three

Charlie's Bargain

Deal With the Devil

Defiled

For Her Pleasure

Full Exposure *with Lena Matthews*

Kidnapped for Christmas

Kristen's Addiction

Madeline's Mates

Masks

Planet X

Pledge Slave

Punishing Tabitha

Red and the Wolf

Season's Spankings

Secret Thirst

Sex with Strangers

Sin Eater

Taming the Beast

The Man in the Black Leather Mask

Willing Submission



Discover for yourself why readers can't get enough of the multiple award-winning publisher Ellora's Cave. Whether you prefer e-books or paperbacks, be sure to visit EC on the web at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com) for an erotic reading experience that will leave you breathless.

**[www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com)**