

The background of the cover features a man and a woman on a beach. The man, on the left, is shirtless and looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The woman, on the right, has voluminous curly hair and is looking off to the side. The ocean and a bright sun with rays are visible in the background.

MARILYN LEE

*Betrayed
by
Love*

Red RoseTM Publishing

Betrayed By Love

By

Marilyn Lee



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Chapter One

I've never believed in love at first sight. I've always believed that to truly love someone, you have to actually know that person. So how can you love someone you don't know? I've always believed the only thing you can know about a person at first sight, is that you like the way he or she looks. Although the word for that also begins with an L, it's lust not love. To me, love at first sight just does not happen. End of story and discussion. Then I fell in love, when I least expected it and with the last man in the world I would have chosen. One look into his warm brown eyes and I knew I was in for the heartbreak of my life.

Before I fell so hard, I was relatively satisfied with my life. Although I was a 30-year old single BBWW, big, beautiful, black woman, I'd never had any problem attracting the men of my choice. I'd often been told I had beautiful eyes, an amazing smile, and an ass that wouldn't quit. I've always been confident in the fact that the only difference between slender women and me is I just happened to have a lot more curves. I worked out several times a week to make sure that didn't change.

At the time disaster struck, I wasn't in an exclusive relationship. However, I did have a great relationship with two handsome friends with benefits. I could call on either James or Pete when I wanted a man in my bed—with no strings attached. And they both knew I was available to perform the same service for them. It was a relationship that suited all three of us. But before you get the wrong idea, I never slept with them at the same time and we always practiced safe sex. We were horny—not irresponsible or crazy.

So when a good friend called to tell me she was madly in love and deliriously happy, I was thrilled for her. Jen and I had shared our best and worst times through high school and college with each other. Although Jen was a Tyra Banks look-a-like, she had a knack for picking the wrong man—over and over again. As a consequence, she was forever getting her heart broken.

After college, I accepted a job on the West Coast. Jen stayed on the East Coast. Although we made it a point to talk to each other at least once a month, we rarely saw each other after college. Once my parents moved to L.A. to be near me, there was no pressing need to return to Philly.

Jen and I have always shared a lust for tall, handsome hunks with brown eyes and ebony skin. So when she told me Jarrod was perfect in every way, I envisioned her with some tall, dark, Morris Chestnut-like hunk. Imagine my

surprise when she told me this Jarrod was not only 15 years older than her, but that he was also white and a grandfather to boot!

With all the well-hung brothers around who would love to be her man, what had possessed her to fall for this Jarrod? Granted forty wasn't ancient, but when you're twenty-five, it's on the south side of town. Jen married him four weeks after meeting him. Hello! How the hell can you fall in love with someone in such a short time? What could the two of them possibly have in common? Granted she hinted more than once that they had what she called an intriguing sexual relationship. Good sex would keep them together for a year or two. Then what? She'd have her heart broken again. I personally thought she'd lost her mind, but she sounded very happy. So I was happy for her—even though she cheated me out of the chance to be maid of honor by eloping with him!

As teens, Jen and I used to spend countless hours every summer discussing our weddings in great detail. That fact left me confident that eloping was his idea. As far as I was concerned, if this Jarrod didn't care enough to allow her to have her dream wedding, where her family and friends got to see her on her special day, he probably wasn't that perfect. I hate to admit it, but after their elopement, I was forever waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Nine months after their marriage, she had twins, a boy and a girl, Cal and Carla. I intended to return home to meet the twins and Jarrod but things got crazy

at work. Somehow all my plans to return to Philly had to be put on hold. The weeks turned into months and then years.

Still, each time we talked, Jen sounded happier than ever. Finally, when she told me she and Jarrod were going to have a party to celebrate the twins' fifth birthday, I made firm plans to return home. At the last minute, work precluded my attending the party but I finally decided I was missing way too much of Jen's kids lives.

If you're wondering what all this has to do with my not believing in love at first sight until it happened to me, I'm getting there.

So I made sure things were running smoothly at the drug company where I was regional manager, and went to spend the last two weeks in July at home in Philly. Even though I no longer had any close relatives living in or around the area, I still considered Philly home to such an extent that I celebrated all the Philadelphia sports teams' highs and mourned their lows.

Jen met me at Philly International Airport. The moment I saw her, I knew she really was in love. She'd always been beautiful. Married life clearly agreed with her because now she looked absolutely stunning. Her eyes shone and she looked ready to burst with happiness. After all the jerks who had hurt her, she'd obviously finally picked a winner. As we hugged, I was so thrilled for her that I burst into tears.

She laughed when I admitted the reason for my tears and wiped them away.
“And that’s just why I’ve always considered you my BFF.”

I nodded. “Best friends forever. You know it, girl.”

“Oh, Lin, I can’t wait for you to meet Jarrod.”

The pictures I’d seen of him had not impressed me. Still I smiled. “I can’t wait to meet him either.” Even as I smiled, I was bracing myself not to show my dismay when I met this Jarrod, who I privately thought of as Jen’s old fogey.

“But first, let me show you the newest pictures of my babies.”

Before I could nod, she whipped out her wallet and showed me several pictures of two adorable kids with short, curly light brown hair, beautiful brown eyes, and skin the color of heavily creamed coffee.

I dutifully gawked and oohed at each picture as if I was seeing them for the first time. I pretended I didn’t have a photo album full of pictures of them and as if their latest photos didn’t adorn my desktop and laptop computers as wallpaper. “They grow more gorgeous with each picture, Jen,” I told her truthfully.

She grinned, nodded, and put her wallet away. “Yes, they do. And Jarrod and I feel so lucky to be their parents. “

“I’m sure you do. I’m so sorry I missed their birthday.”

“Me too, but I’m just glad you’re finally here.”

I glanced around. “I’m surprised you didn’t bring them with you.”

She grimaced. —I would have, but they're spending three weeks in Florida with Jarrod's daughter, Mollie. She has a seven-year old daughter, Lillie, who loves to play big sister to the twins. They've only been gone two days and I already miss them," she said as we went to collect my luggage.

Okay, call me old-fashioned, but I thought forty-five was a little young to have a seven-year-old granddaughter.

Jen glanced at me, saw the look on my face, and laughed. "Jarrod's granddaughter Lillie is adopted."

"Oh. And how old is his daughter, Mollie? You did say Jarrod's forty-five. Didn't you?"

She laughed again. "Yes. He's the sexiest, sweetest, and most-considerate forty five year-old ever."

I smiled, while privately thinking that she had it really bad. Jarrod was average at best. It still amazed me that Jen had given up an opportunity to meet and marry Mr. Tall, Dark, and Ebony to marry him so soon after meeting him.

"As you must have guessed, he was twenty when Mollie was born. And Lillie is actually the niece of Mollie's hubby, who is ten years older than she is. When Lillie's parents died, Mollie and her husband, Tim adopted her."

I widened my smile, hoping my eyes weren't glazing over.

Jen grinned. "Too much information?"

I gave her a wide-eyed look. “I didn’t say that.”

Jen laughed. “You didn’t have to.”

“There’s my luggage,” I said, heading toward the luggage carousel.

Jen grimaced when she lifted one of my suitcases. “What’s in here? All your wealth?”

I shrugged. “Sue me, I come bearing gifts for the twins, you, and Jarrod.”

She grinned. “I knew there was a reason I was so fond of you.”

I laughed.

We spent the hour-long drive to her house catching up on each other’s latest news.

“What do you think?” she asked as she parked her car in the driveway of a large two-story single family home in a quiet, tree-lined cul-de-sac.

“It looks perfect. You know I like big houses,” I reminded her.

She glanced at the empty parking space adjoining hers and frowned. “Jarrod must have had to make a quick run. Let’s go in.”

We carried my bags inside. The foyer was large with a lovely gilded mirror above an antique table. I glanced around. “Lovely.”

Jen smiled. “Thanks. Do you want to change?”

I’d traveled in a pair of comfortable sweats and preferred a long soak later to a quick shower now. I shook my head. “Not at the moment.”

“Great. We’ll leave the bags here in the foyer and Jarrod will take them up to your room when he gets home.”

I glanced around again and linked my arm through hers. “Tour?”

“I thought you’ never ask.”



Forty minutes after the tour of the house, we were both seated on the reclining leather sofa in the family room relaxing when we heard a vehicle in the driveway.

Jen caught her breath and shot to her feet, her eyes shining. “Jarrod’s back. Excuse me.”

I watched in surprise as she ran from the room with all the eagerness of a new bride who’d been separated from her husband for months instead of a few hours. Several minutes later, she appeared in the doorway. A few strands of hair trailed around her face and she had the happy look of a woman who had been thoroughly kissed.

Behind her stood a tall, broad shouldered man with short brown hair, liberally sprinkled with gray at the temples. As he followed Jen into the room, I noted that he had a friendly smile and seemed very fit.

Okay. He had an interesting face and a very nice pair of shoulders. Clearly he was capable of generating a second look, but I couldn’t see anything about him

that would account for Jen saying she'd fallen in love with him at first sight. If I were going to fall for a white man, he'd be a hard-bodied hunk who reeked of sex appeal and was at least fifteen years younger than this Jarrod, and had dark hair and eyes and a very distinct tan. And, he sure as hell would not be a divorced grandfather.

Jen turned to slip her arm around his waist, smiling briefly up at him before she tore her gaze away from his long enough to introduce us. "Lin, this is Jarrod. Jarrod, this is Linea Hills. You've heard me talk about her."

He nodded. "Yes. I have. It's nice to finally meet you." He stepped around Jen and extended his hand.

I smiled, stood up, looked up into the warmest, smiling brown eyes I'd ever seen, and fell instantly in love. At least, I decided later that's what had happened to me. At the time, I was just aware of my heart hammering, trying to swallow a sudden lump in my throat, and struggling to keep my knees from knocking. In that instance, I completely understood how Jen had fallen so hard for him so quickly. He had an undeniable magnetism that seemed to reach out and wrap itself around my pounding heart.

When I placed my hand in his, I felt this incredible electric jolt sizzle all through me—from the top of my head, which felt as if it were about to explode,

down to the tips of my toes. I felt warm all over—even as a chill danced down my spine.

I'd never felt anything like that before. For a moment, after he'd released my hand, I saw his lips moving, but I couldn't hear because of the roaring in my ears. Then I gave myself a mental shake and forced myself to concentrate on what he was saying.

“...delighted you're here at last.”

I blinked. What had I missed? I cast a quick, guilty look at Jen, pasted a smile on my own face, and turned back to look at Jarrod. “Well...it's great to finally be here...” And meet you. I think.

Jen leaned against him. “We left Lin's bags in the hall, hon.”

The slow, intimate smile he turned on her, sent a jealous wave washing over me. “I'm on it.” He nodded at me and left the room.

It was all I could do not to turn and stare after him. I sank back onto the sofa, the muscles in my stomach knotting up.

Jen sat beside me. “So?”

“So?” I blinked. “So what?”

She nudged me. “Oh, come on. So what do you think of my Jarrod?”

How could I answer that? Even though I hadn't quite figured out at that point that I'd fallen for my best friend's hubby, I knew I had the hots for him—big

time. And that was a no-no. I could hardly lament to her the fact that my biggest problem with him was that he was her Jarrod.

“Lin? What’s wrong? Why are you looking like that? Did you suddenly remember you left your range on or something?”

I forced a smile to my face while struggling to come up with something innocent to say. I couldn’t very well admit that I felt as if a bolt of lightning had hit me the moment Jarrod engulfed my hand in his. The thought of him touching other, more sensitive parts of me...No! Stop, it, Jen. Do not go there! “I...I...”

She nodded, grinning. “He does kind of take your breath away. Doesn’t he?”

I stared at her, my cheeks burning.

She went on. “The first time Jarrod and I met, I felt as if I’d been struck by lightning.” Her grin turned into a satisfied smile. “He said he felt the same way. We both knew right away we were in love. We ended up in bed on our first date.”

I thought it better not to point out that such impulsive behavior had probably contributed to her past hurts.

She sighed. “Making love with him was the most incredible experience of my life. It was only topped by having the twins.”

Still unnerved by my reaction to Jarrod, I spoke without thinking. “He...he seems very...”

“What?”

“Ah...exciting...” I admitted.

Her smile wavered and her eyes widened. “You agree with me?”

Oh, hell! What now? I moistened my lips and decided to be semi-truthful. “Now that I’ve finally met him, I can see where the twins get the other half of their good looks.”

Her shoulders relaxed. Her smile returned. “Our babies are gorgeous. Aren’t they?”

I nodded. “Yes, they are.”

Of course she viewed that admission as an invitation to whip out a photo album. We spent the next half hour talking about the twins. I didn’t mind because she really loved talking about them and it gave me time to regroup. By the time Jarrod returned to the living room, I felt better able to pretend that just the sight of him didn’t rock my world on its axis.

I was painfully aware of everything about him from the sound of his warm voice to the sexy way he walked. His slow smile aroused me, as did the way his thigh muscles rippled when he walked. But even under the lust eating me up, I couldn’t help appreciating the adoring look in his eyes whenever he looked at Jen. Damn but she was one lucky woman.

While I was happy for her, I knew it was going to be a very long two weeks. I sighed. I had to come up with a valid excuse to leave early.



Lying in bed later that night, each time I closed my eyes I imagined Jarrod making love to Jen and wished it was me. I bolted up in the dark bedroom, shaking. I sat on the side of the bed, hugging myself as if that would chase away the desire for Jen's man. Jen's man. She'd finally met a decent man who made her happy. As one of her oldest friends, her best friend, I needed to be happy for her—not jealous of her.

After all her past hurts, she deserved to be happy. I would be happy for her. I turned on the light and got up. Moving across the room to the vanity, I stared at my reflection.

A pair of dark eyes, full of lustful need and defiance stared back at me. I think that's when I knew I wasn't nearly as nice as I'd always given myself credit for being. There was a nasty, jealous streak in me that I'd never known I possessed. I didn't like or trust that part of myself to do the right thing. I needed to get back to L.A. ASAP before I did something I'd regret for which Jen could never forgive me.

“Get rid of that nasty jealousy and don't even think about trying to turn his handsome head.”

I grimaced. Dream on, girl. As if you have a hope in hell of attracting him when he clearly only has eyes for Jen. Go back to bed and in a few days you'll have to find an excuse to take your selfish, greedy ass back to L.A.

I woke tired and frustrated the next morning. After a long, warm shower, I was tempted to dress in one of the silk pantsuits that clung to my ample curves and highlighted all my assets—as I did when I was on the hunt.

But you're not on the hunt, I reminded my rebellious reflection. And you're not going to be on the hunt while you're here.

I turned away from the vanity and chose my outfit for the day—with friendship in mind. I dressed in a pair of baggy pink and black sweats and a pair of pink running shoes.

Then, drawn by the heavenly aroma filling the air, I made my way down to the kitchen. Jen had taken after her mother who'd had the rep of the best cook in our entire neighborhood.

My stomach growled in appreciation as I neared the kitchen.

"Girl, whatever you're cooking is making my mouth water." I stepped into the kitchen and froze.

Jarrold, wearing only a pair of hip-hugging jeans and with his incredible shoulders bare and on display, stood at the range. The only physical flaw I noted

was his rather flat ass. His other attributes were more than sufficient to carry the day.

I clenched my hands at my sides as I imagined unbuttoning his jeans. It would be heavenly to slide down his zipper and then slowly push the pants down over his taut ass and lean hips. Then I'd kneel before him and greedily take his dangling cock between my lips and suck it until he erupted in my mouth.

Then I'd rise, swirl him around, grab his hips and as he fondled my breasts and told me how he'd known he had to fuck me the moment he saw me, I'd impale myself on his hard cock. I'd do it slowly so that by the time he was balls deep in me, my juices would coat every inch of him.

Then, while we fucked like sex-starved rabbits, we'd fill the air with lustful moans of pleasure. Once he'd made me come, he'd wrestle me down to the floor and fuck my flooded tunnel like a man savoring the best pussy he'd ever had.

When his orgasm came, he'd clutch me tight, call out my name, and pump jets of cum directly into my unprotected pussy. Only after we'd fucked like that a few times and I'd allowed him to plunder my ass as well, would he understand the true meaning of the term brown sugar.

I was brought out of my reverie when he turned from the range. "Lin! Ah...good morning."

I felt my face burning with embarrassment. As a chill of shame engulfed me, I forced myself to look in his eyes instead of allowing my gaze to feast on his bare chest with the sprinkling of hair that must tickle Jen's nose when they...I bit my lip and gave him what I hoped was a casual smile that concealed my forbidden interest. "Good morning, Jarrod. Sorry. I thought Jen was cooking."

"It's all right. She was tired so I told her to stay in bed while I prepared breakfast." He glanced over his shoulder at the range. "We're watching our weight and cholesterol so it's an egg whites only omelet with turkey bacon bits, green and red peppers, and crushed garlic bread. Does that sound appealing? If not, I can whip up something else for you."

I stared at him in silence, imagining his mouth descending onto my lips whipping up my desire. And then of course satisfying it.

"Lin? Do you fancy something else? Jen and the kids love my pancakes and I make some mean home fries, if I do say so myself."

I'd never been less interested in food in my life. "What you're cooking smells delicious."

"Good." He flashed me a warm smile and gestured toward the island behind him. "Come in and have a seat."

Even though I knew it wasn't a good idea, I sat at one of the stools pulled up to the island.

He turned back to the range.

I stared at his shoulders. I thought I saw a hint of nail marks trailing down his back and disappearing into the waistband of his jeans. I had a sudden, erotic image of him lying naked on top of a nude Jen, fucking her as she moaned in passion and raked her nails down his back to his ass. Lucky Jen to have him lying between her legs with his cock buried to the hilt in her pussy. My pussy ached in jealous protest.

Stop it, Lin. Stop it now! Frightened by the depths of my licentious thoughts, I forced myself to look away. Realizing that wasn't enough, I rose, my heart racing. I had to get away from him immediately.

He turned to look at me. "Is something wrong, Lin?"

Something was very wrong. An ugly inner part of me was warring with the Lin who had hurt with and suffered through so much with Jen through her years of emotional and sexual frustration. How could I feel such a deep, totally encompassing level of sexual attraction for the man who had finally made my best friend so happy?

"I forgot something in my room. I'll be right back."

He nodded. "Don't be long. The omelet's almost done."

"Okay."

Turning and fleeing from the kitchen, I hurried up the steps to the guestroom. Inside with the bedroom door close, I stood shaking. Tears filled my eyes and I slid down the door to the carpet. I wrapped my arms around myself and closed my eyes. Get a grip, Lin. You have to get a grip. You can't be jealous of her. You have to be happy for her. You have to. You cannot lust for him this way. You can't. It's just not right.

I sucked in a deep breath, wiped my eyes, and stood up. I washed my face and reapplied my makeup before I returned to an empty kitchen. A round, covered plate lay on a warming tray on top of the island. Beside it was a cup of coffee, a glass of orange juice, and a scrawled note.

I hope you don't mind but Jen and I are having breakfast together. I'll come along to clean up after you later. Jarrod.

I'd never been so relieved to eat alone in my life. The omelet was delicious, as was the fresh-squeezed juice. Still I only ate half of the omelet.

I drank the orange juice and coffee before I scraped the remnants of my plate in the garbage disposal, placed my cutlery in the dishpan, and went to stretch out on one of the lounge chairs encircling the in-ground pool in their huge backyard.

I must have dozed off. Because the next thing I knew when I stirred, I found Jen lying on the lounge beside me. She wore a halter-top that showcased her

cleavage and a pair of shorts, and two-inch heels that highlighted her long, slender legs.

I stretched and smothered a yawn. "You look great, Jen" I told her.

She smiled. "You mean even after having twins?"

I shook my head. "No. You just look good."

"Thanks, Lin. You've always been one of my biggest cheerleaders." She tilted her head. "What's with the overdressing? Slip on a bikini and we'll go for a swim."

"I'm full-figured," I reminded her.

She shrugged. "So?"

"So, I don't do bikinis." I brushed a hand over my breasts and thighs. "There's too much of me for a bikini to contain."

She laughed. "Ain't it the truth? But, as you very well know, Lin, discerning men like women with lots of curves."

I bit back the urge to ask her if Jarrod was one of them. Thankfully, I'd never suffered from a lack of sufficient male interest. I smiled. "Well, there certainly is a lot of me to like."

She nodded. "So why not showcase your body?"

I stared at her. "To who? There doesn't seem to be anyone but the two of us here."

"I asked Jarrod to let us spend the rest of the day alone."

Normally that would sound perfectly reasonable, but I found my guilt coloring everything. “Why?”

“I thought you’d be more comfortable.”

I swallowed quickly. “Really?” I should have left it there, but I couldn’t. “Why should I be more comfortable without him around?”

She was silent for several moments before she looked directly into my eyes.

As I met her gaze, a wave of shame engulfed me. Why? She clearly knew of my lust for Jarrod. We were, after all, best friends. I wanted to look away from her, but I couldn’t. During our long relationship, we’d had few secrets or areas off limits for discussion.

I sighed. “I don’t know what to say, Jen.”

“So, it’s true? I haven’t misread your interest in Jarrod?”

Chapter Two

How the hell was I supposed to answer that without allowing her to see just how shallow and self-centered I'd discovered I was? "Jen...I...oh, Jen..."

Jen leaned over and touched my arm. "It's okay, Lin. Believe me, I know the kind of effect Jarrod has on the opposite sex. On the surface, he seems ordinary, but he has an animal like magnetism that reaches out and sweeps you off your feet, and leaves you lost in a fog of lust and need when you least expect it."

I shook my head and stared down at my hands. "Jen..."

"Anyway, he's gone for the day. So if you want to go put that bikini on, we can swim or just sit out here and sunbathe."

And just that quickly, without forcing me to vocalize my lust, she let me know she understood and didn't seem to think any less of me. I had to blink back tears at her graciousness.

"I didn't bring a bikini, but I did bring a few bathing suits. " I rose and started to walk away. Then I turned back to face her. "I'm sorry," I told her. "I don't understand what's happening, but I'm sorry."

She shook her head. “You don’t have to apologize, Lin. I know I can trust you with him.”

Unfortunately I wasn’t so sure of that. “You didn’t tell him...he doesn’t know...does he?”

She shook her head. “He has no conceit and has no idea of the effect he has on women.”

That was a relief. I turned and went up to my room to change into a one-piece bathing suit.

We spent the afternoon swimming and sunbathing. Between dozing and swimming, she asked about my love life. “Are you content with your situation?”

“My situation? My job?”

“No. Your personal life.”

I shrugged. “Well, I was.” Until I’d met Jarrod.

There was silence for a few moments.

I turned to meet her gaze and just as we’d done other countless times, we burst into spontaneous, shared laughter.

When we’d sobered enough to wipe the tears from our cheeks, I sighed. “I have to leave, Jen.”

She nodded. “I know, but not for a few days. Stay at least a week, Lin.”

I shook my head. “I don’t want to endanger our friendship. I need to go ASAP, Jen.”

“Are you planning to make a play for Jarrod?”

“No! Of course not.”

She shrugged. “Then I can’t see why our relationship would be endangered. I understand that being around him will be unpleasant, but I’ll get him to spend as much time away from home as possible while you’re here.”

“Jen—”

“Besides, if you stay for the full two weeks as you promised, you’ll not only get to spend two weekends at our place at the shore, but you’ll also get to meet Grant.”

“Who’s Grant?”

“He’s Jarrod’s cousin.”

I stared at her. If she was going to turn into a matchmaker...

Her lips twitched. “I know what you’re thinking.”

“Really?”

“Yes. You’re thinking you’re not interested in a blind date.”

Despite the effect Jarrod had on me, I had no desire to have Jen or anyone else assume that my preference had switched to white males. It hadn’t. “So why would I want to meet this Grant?”

“He and Jarrod are first cousins.”

“And?”

“And he’s a single, very successful and well-paid executive.”

I arched a brow.

“You two should have a lot in common. You work for a drug company and he’s the vice-president in charge of expansion for a large insurance company.”

“Sounds so impressive that he shouldn’t need any help getting a date on his own.”

“Believe me he doesn’t need any help getting a date.”

“I don’t need any help getting a date either,” I reminded her.

“You know I know that, Lin.”

“Then I’m not sure why we’re having this discussion.”

She shrugged. “I’ve missed you. I guess I’m desperate to keep you here for as long as possible.”

I smiled at her. “You are an amazing woman and friend and despite the situation I’m delighted you finally found your Mr. Right.”

“You’ll find yours too, Lin.”

The only problem was my Mr. Right belonged to her. Not that I could admit that. So I nodded. “I know. I just hope I find him before I’m too old to really enjoy him.”

That triggered another round of laughter. When it was over, I allowed her to convince me to stay at least a week. “But I’m not interested in meeting this Grant,” I warned.

“Why not?”

“Because I’m not.”

“He travels a lot and that’s the biggest reason he’s not seeing anyone special.”

“Hmm.” I glanced at my watch. “I’d better go change.”

“Put on something slinky and clingy.”

“Are you and I having dinner alone?”

“No. Jarrod is having dinner with us.”

“Then why would I dress in a slinky and clingy outfit?”

She shrugged. “You know how it is.”

I frowned. “I know how what is?”

“How things are with men.”

I tensed. That almost sounded like the old, insecure Jen. “I thought you were happy with Jarrod.”

“I am very happy with him.”

“Then?”

“But let’s face it, Lin. He’s a man.”

He certainly was. “And?” I encouraged.

“And for all his devotion, he’s still a man. He likes being in the company of beautiful women he can ogle.”

I arched a brow. “And that doesn’t bother you?”

She shook her head. “No. Why should it?”

“Okay, what the heck am I missing, Jen?”

“Nothing. We just have an agreement we’re both happy with. He gets to stare in appreciation at beautiful women and I get to stare at handsome men. As you know we bought a place down at the shore a few years ago and we spend most weekends down there.”

“When we have the kids with us, we’re the normal Mommy and Daddy. When they’re visiting various relatives during the weekends, we let our hair down.”

I bit my lip. “Do I want to know just how much you two let your hair down, Jen?”

“It’s nothing too outrageous. He spends his time staring at pretty, nearly half-naked women, while I get to gaze at handsome hunks. The last time we were at the shore without the twins, there was this ebony delight strolling down the beach who had a long cock with a big pink head.”

I prefer my men with dark skin and big dicks. Her description caught my attention. “How do you know the size of his goods?”

She made fanning motions with her hand. “I could see it hanging below his shorts. And I do mean shorts. He knew he was partially exposed and didn’t care. When he turned to smile at me, I could see the outline of his balls. Talk about tall, dark, and well-hung.”

I blinked at her.

She laughed. “Oh, there’s no need to look at me like that. At night, when it really counts, Jarrod and I look to each other for sexual satisfaction and emotional fulfillment. When push comes to shove, he’s the man I want lying between my legs when I need to be loved and mine is the name he groans when he comes.”

I continued to stare at her. This was her idea of an intriguing sexual relationship? Ogling strangers in plain view of each other? That wasn’t my idea of a good relationship.

“It works for us, Lin.”

I nodded. “You both look happy so I’m sure it does.” But it was a little too unique for my taste. While I knew men would be men, I didn’t want any man of mine openly and blatantly checking out another woman’s goods while I looked on in approval.

“Trust me. It does.”

I flashed her a quick smile. "Great."

"Yes. Now go put on something sexy and scandalous that will get him so hot and bothered he'll rip off my clothes and ravish me the moment we're alone in our bedroom. You tease the hell out of him and he'll please the hell out of me."

"Be serious, Jen."

She gave me a wide-eyed stare. "I'm very serious. Wear something where your breasts are almost popping out of your bra and that barely covers your ass. He likes women with big asses."

Well, I could certainly lay claim to having a big ass. "If you two have that type of understanding, why did you seem upset yesterday when you realized I was...attracted to him?"

"I wasn't sure I wanted to admit we sometimes like to flirt with other people." She sighed. "Some of our friends are a little too judgmental. They think we're risking our marriage and relationship just because we like to flirt a little with other people."

Now where would they get such an idea? "Flirt?"

She shrugged. "Okay... ogle them. That's one of the things that keep our marriage fresh and exciting."

I wondered just how much excitement they craved. "Have you two ever done more than just flirt with other people?"

She shook her head. “Absolutely not! Neither of us would cheat. We love each other too much for that.”

“And you’re not afraid things will get out of hand for either one of you and go beyond flirting?”

“No. We’re very happy together and we happen to still be in love.”

How long would their love last if they kept asking for trouble by openly flirting with other people? “Well...I guess if it works for you two.”

“It does.”

I shrugged. “Then who am I to judge?”

She smiled. “I knew you’d understand.”

I neither understood nor agreed, but decided my job was to be her friend, not try to impose my values on her. “I’d better go shower and change.”

She rose. “Me too.” Jen slipped her arm through mine and we went inside together.

While in the shower, I thought of our conversation and allowed my thoughts to turn to Jarrod. I closed my eyes and pretended I was with him as I removed the shower head from its casing and pretended the water jet was his hand on my clit. I fingered myself until I felt a nice buzz but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t come. I decided it served me right for allowing my imagination to get out of hand.

When I emerged from the bathroom, Jen stood near the open closet door of the guest bedroom holding up a low-cut mauve dress for my inspection.

I studied the dress. It fell just below my knees, but had a slit that extended from below the knee to mid-thigh. In her other hand she held a pair of three-inch heels. “Wear these and you’ll have him hyperventilating,” she told me.

The thought of Jarrod getting aroused when looking at me in that outfit sent a tingle of delight through me. I moistened my lips. “What are you going to wear?”

She glanced down at herself. “Just what I have on now.”

She wore loose-fitting, knee-length shorts and a faded white cotton blouse and flip-flops. “And you expect me to wear a dress that shows my cleavage and thighs?”

She nodded eagerly. “Yes. Tonight is going to be about you looking sexy enough to turn him on and get him real hot for me.”

I stared at her. Couldn’t he get hot for her without help? If he couldn’t, just how perfect was their marriage, and how long would it be before it fell apart and Jen was left broken hearted again?

“Oh, don’t look so worried, Lin. It’s just a game that we both enjoy playing. You don’t need to get worked up about this. It’s not as if we’re real swingers who go around sleeping with anyone else.”

I think that's when I began to view Jen in a totally different light. She seemed determined to use my attraction to her man to her own advantage—without a moment's concern for how I felt. That knowledge saddened and angered me a little. "And who's to say you two won't graduate to that point?"

"I do, because we both take our vows very seriously."

I nodded. "Okay. Great."

"Good." She placed the dress on the bed and put the heels on the floor. "When you're ready, we'll be waiting for you in the dining room with the lights low."

"With the lights low? Why?"

"So you can make your grand, sexy entrance." She blew me a kiss. "Don't keep us waiting too long, Lin."



When Grant West returned home from a business trip, his sense of tired satisfaction gave way to wariness when he listened to the message from Jen. "Grant? It's Jen. Call me when you can."

Lately Jen had been making rather a nuisance of herself insisting she had a friend he should meet. Although his busy work schedule sometimes made forming meaningful relationships difficult, he hadn't yet reached the point where he needed or wanted help getting a date.

But he supposed he should call her and get it over with. He took a quick shower and then sat with a cold beer in his hand as he called.

“Grant! How did your trip go?”

He smiled. She might be a matchmaker, but she was a considerate one. “It went well. How are you, Jarrod, and the kids?”

“We’re all fine.”

“Great. What can I do for you, Jen?”

“She’s here, Grant, but I’m not sure for how long so it would be great if you could get a flight as soon as possible and fly out here.”

“I’m sure you’ll have a great visit with her, Jen, but my schedule won’t allow me to visit.”

“Grant—”

“Listen. I have to run. Tell Jarrod I’ll call him soon.”

He hung up before she could protest. Even as he sat finishing his beer he knew he hadn’t heard the last from her. Jen was nothing if not persistent. But it would be a cold day in hell before he allowed her to set him up on a blind date.



After Jen left, I stared down at the outfit, then sank onto the side of the bed to decide what to do. I found it difficult to accept the fact that she wanted and

expected me to not only flirt with Jarrod, but to actually try to arouse him. But she had clearly been serious. Or she wouldn't have bothered to pick out my outfit.

So what was I supposed to do? Realizing I'd lost track of time, I decided it was time to get dressed or I'd be making a late, grand, sexy entrance. Sighing, I rose and picked the dress up and moved over to the vanity mirror. Held in front of my body, it looked good. How would Jarrod react when he saw me in this?

Turning away from the mirror, I decided there was only one way to find out. Forty minutes later, I left the guest bedroom. Standing at the top of the stairs and looking down into the dimly lit foyer, I heard the faint strains of smooth jazz drifting from the living room.

I hesitated and then made my way down the stairs. Outside the open living room door, I paused to take a deep breath and glance down at myself. Here goes nothing.

I walked into the dimly lit living room. Jen, seated on the loveseat sipping a drink, stared at me in surprise.

Jarrod, dressed in a pair of dark dress pants with a short-sleeved shirt, stood at the window. He turned. He cast a quick look over my outfit before he raised his lids.

Our gazes met and locked.

I saw relief in his eyes.

Some of my tension melted away. My shoulders relaxed. Although I knew Jen was disappointed, I knew I'd done the right thing. Clearly Jarrod had not been looking forward to my slinking into the room trying to arouse him. As for Jen, she'd probably thank me later—as Jarrod had already done with his eyes.

Jarrod smiled. "There you are, Lin. Would you like a drink?"

I cast a quick look at Jen who was staring at me as if she felt betrayed. Imagine that. A woman who felt betrayed because her friend didn't come on to her man. I nodded. "I'd like bottled water if you have it."

He nodded and moved over to the bar along one wall of the living room.

I moved into the room and sat beside Jen.

She stared at the comfortable silk sweat suit I wore. "What happened to the dress I picked out for you?"

I spoke in a low voice. "I'm not going to try to arouse your husband, Jen."

"Why not? You think you can take him from me?"

I blinked at the anger I heard in her voice. She spoke almost as if I had a habit of taking or trying to take her men from her. As if I would—even if I'd been able to. Recalling her many past hurts, I schooled myself to speak in a calm voice that concealed by growing resentment. "No, I don't think I can take him from you."

"Good. Because you can't. I hope you know that."

We stared at each other in a stilted silence. I think I was a breath away from asking her if she were doing crack when she abruptly shook her head and sucked in a quick breath. “I’m sorry, Lin! I had no reason to talk to you like that.”

“No you didn’t,” I told her coldly.

“I’m sorry,” she said again.

I didn’t respond. For some things a simple I’m sorry just didn’t get the job done.

She reached over to give me a quick hug.

I relented and we embraced, releasing each other as Jarrod crossed the room with my drink.

After I’d taken a few sips of my bottled water, we moved to the dining room. The large room was lit by candlelight as well. Despite the hug Jen and I had exchanged, dinner was an uncomfortable meal. Jen was a great cook, but I was a little too pissed at what I viewed as her attempt to use me. She seemed resentful, which left Jarrod practically talking to himself.

During the long meal, I frequently looked up to find both Jen and Jarrod looking at me. Then I’d realize one of them had spoken to me and I hadn’t responded. But how the hell was I supposed to concentrate after the shock Jen had given me? And how did I know how Jarrod really felt? What if he too wanted and

expected me to provide the evening's entertainment? Did he always stand around cooking breakfast bare-chested? Or had that been for my benefit?

Jen frowned. "Lin? Are you all right?"

I blinked and forced a smile to my face. "I'm sorry. My mind wandered. What did you say?"

"I asked if you'd stay long enough to meet Grant."

"Grant? Who's Grant?"

"Jarrod's cousin."

I glanced at Jarrod in time to see him lower his eyelids to conceal his expression.

I shook my head. What the hell was going on with these two? Whatever it was, I decided I didn't want to be involved. And I had zero interest in meeting Jarrod's cousin or any other man Jen might want to introduce me to.

"Lin?"

I shrugged. "Let's take it one day at a time."

"Ok." She smiled. "Would you like another drink?"

"No. Thanks." I took a sip of water and pushed my food around the plate with my fork. "What's on tap for tomorrow, Jen?"

"I have a job interview in the morning so you and Jarrod can spend the day getting to know each other."

Yeah—as soon as hell froze over. I smiled and picked up my fork, my decision made.

When Jen suggested we go sit on the patio for after dinner drinks, I rubbed my temples. “I have the headache from hell. I need an early night.” I stood up. “Good night.”

Jarrold rose. “Good night.”

Jen gave me a pleading look, which I ignored, and quickly left the room.

In the guestroom, I packed my suitcase, undressed, and got into bed. I couldn’t sleep. I felt like such a fool. For the first time I realized that I didn’t know Jen anymore. Had I ever really known her? How could I not have known she was so kinky?

In the past when she’d lost a lover to another woman she’d considered a friend, I’d always taken her side and assumed the other women were shameless hussies who got off on stealing other women’s men. But how many times had Jen played the game with the women in question she’d tried to play with me? Was that the secret of her bad luck in love? Did she throw her men at her friends and then cry when they caught them?

After lying sleepless for what felt like hours, I looked at the clock radio on the night table. 12:40 and I was still wide awake. Rising, I put on my bathing suit and then pulled the sweats back on over it. Quietly leaving the guestroom, I crept

down the hallway and stairs to the side door. I opened it quietly and slipped outside.

Noting the swing on the side porch, I realized I should have left the house by the backdoor. About to turn and go back inside, I saw the porch swing move.

Oh no.

Jarrold, dressed in a pair of shorts and a tee shirt, rose.

My first instinct was to rush back into the house before I found myself fantasizing about him fucking me on the swing or out by the pool. I half turned.

“Wait a minute, Lin.”

I turned back to face him, but shook my head. “I didn’t know you were out here.”

“I know that. I like to come out here to sit on the swing when I need to think.”

“Then I’ll leave you to it because it’s not a good idea for us to be out here alone like this.” I pointed over my shoulder. “I should go back inside and—”

“In a moment.”

“I don’t think—”

“Clearly, we need to talk.”

“I don’t really think we have anything to say to each other.”

He raked a hand through his hair. “Have I done something to offend you?”

“Well, of course...” I paused. Had he actually offended me? I shook my head.
“No, but I just don’t think we should be alone.”

He sighed. “Let me make something perfectly clear to you before you go back inside.”

Uncertain if he were about to come on to me, I started to back away.
“What’s that?”

“Not only do I love Jen, but I’m also in love with her.”

Then why the dangerous games? “Really?”

He nodded. “Absolutely, and at the risk of sounding crude and offending you, I think you should know that I have zero sexual interest in you.”

I stopped and stared at him. Hell. He sounded as if he meant every word of that. But if that were true... “What?”

“If you’re worried that I have seduction on my mind, you’re worrying needlessly. I’m not interested in flirting with or bedding you, Lin.”

I frowned. Okay, I was relieved to hear that, but did he have to sound as if I must be delusional to even think he could possibly find me attractive? He sure knew how to wound a woman’s ego. “You were in the kitchen bare-chested this morning,” I pointed out, pissed because he’d made me feel unattractive. “And—”

He shrugged. “I expected you to sleep late. I was going to take Jen her breakfast in bed and leave yours on the warmer. Trust me. I wasn’t trying to entice or seduce you.”

I wasn’t sure I believed him. After all, hadn’t Jen said he liked to ogle other women? “What about the little game you and Jen play? You were going to flirt—had I cooperated.”

He nodded. “Yes, I was, but not because I have any sexual interest in you.”

Wasn’t he the gallant one? “Then why would you have flirted with me?”

He sighed. “To please Jen.”

“And what if I’d taken you seriously and expected you to do more than flirt?”

“Jen assured me you wouldn’t want or expect anymore than that. That’s the only reason I reluctantly agreed.” He shook his head. “She likes me to pretend I’m sexually aroused by other women.”

“Why? That’s not normal. Why would she want you to be attracted to other women?”

“She doesn’t want me to really be attracted to them. She just wants me to pretend I am.”

I stared at him.

He shrugged. “It turns her on and makes our sex life even better when she feels that she’s managed to keep me in her arms—despite my supposed attraction to other women. Maybe I shouldn’t, but I sometimes play along.”

It sounded like they were both kinky and that their marriage was dysfunctional. I gave him a weary look.

“I assure you, I’ve never wanted to be with anyone else and I’ve never been unfaithful to her. I love her. So you have absolutely nothing to worry about with me.”

Well damn, did he have to sound so firm? While I was glad he loved Jen and was happy with her, I guess my ego took a hit. Maybe he didn’t like big asses as much as Jen thought he did.

“Well, I’m glad you’re devoted to her. After her history, she needs and deserves your devotion,” I said.

“She has it. I just wish...”

“What?”

“That she didn’t need outside stimulus to keep our relationship as fresh and exciting for her as it is for me.”

I heard genuine regret in his voice and maybe a need for reassurance. “I know she loves you.”

“I know that too, but—” He shrugged. “Anyway, did you want to sit on the swing? If you do, please be my guest. I’m going inside.”

“Actually, I’d intended to have a swim, but I came out the wrong door.”

“Well good night.”

“About tomorrow...”

He stared at me. “What about it?”

“Jen said she had a job interview tomorrow.”

“And?”

“And I really don’t think it would be a good idea for us to be here alone.”

“Fine. Do you want me to disappear and leave you here or do you have plans to go out?”

“Actually, I think I should probably hang out at the airport trying to catch a flight back to L.A.”

He shook his head. “There’s no need to do that. Jen has been looking forward to your visit for a long time and I promise you have nothing to fear from me.”

But then he seemed to have no idea how attracted I was to him. Not that I was about to admit that to him. It was bad enough Jen knew. “I appreciate that, but—”

“Please. Don’t leave on my account. I’ll make myself scarce while you’re here. Stay and let her enjoy your visit. You’ll hardly know I’m here.”

That wasn’t likely when just the thought of being near him made me want to lose myself in erotic fantasies of our fucking like the proverbial bunnies. “Thanks. I’ll think about it. Good night.”

“Good night.”

Chapter Three

I remained where I was and didn't turn to stare at him as he walked away. I sat on the swing. It was a beautiful moonlit night. I closed my eyes and enjoyed the motion of the swing. Soon my eyelids fluttered and I dozed off.

I stood in the shower with my eyes closed as I moved my hips in time with the soft jazz filling the bathroom from the shower radio. I loved the feeling of warm water washing the slick bath oil from my skin. The only thing nicer would be to share the shower with an appreciative lover.

I heard the bathroom door open. A smile spread across my face. "Come join me, lover," I invited, cupping my hands over my breasts in anticipation of other hands there.

The shower door opened and closed, and then I felt a hard naked body slowly pressed against mine. Oh, very nice. I sighed as I suggestively rubbed my ass against his groin.

He groaned.

My smile turned into a grin as I felt his cock stirring against my ass. "Someone's getting horny," I teased.

He slipped his arms around my waist.

I leaned back against him.

He easily bore my weight while he slid his hands down over my belly to my thighs. He eased my legs apart before he cupped a hand over my wet pussy.

Oh, yes. Yes.

He rubbed his thumb over my clit.

I shivered with pleasure. “Oh...lover that feels so good.”

He nibbled at my neck and slipped two fingers inside me.

“Oh...yes. Yes, lover,” I moaned. “Make me hotter for you.”

His warm, insistent lips brushed along my neck while he gently finger fucked me.

That was nice but I wanted more. I reached down to push his fingers farther inside me.

He responded by thrusting them deeper.

“Oh...yes...” I pinched my nipples and widened my stance. I could feel his hard cock nestled between my nether cheeks and I needed to feel it thrusting up into my aching pussy. “I need you inside me.” When he made no move to accommodate my wishes, I reached between my legs to grip his cock.

It was hard, thick, and dripping pre-cum—in other words, ideal. I was in the mood for a long, leisurely shower fuck. I bent my knees and pressed the head

against the bottom of my slit. "Slide it in me slowly, lover," I instructed. "I want to savor every inch going in."

He had other ideas. Sucking the side of my neck, he gripped my waist and thrust his hips forward.

I gasped in delight as his cock head pushed past my wet outer lips and powered up into my pussy. "Oh, hell, yeah! Give it all to me, lover."

He jerked my hips back, sending his cock deeper inside me.

I moaned and rotated my ass against his groin. "Give me every inch."

He complied. When he was firmly inside me, he gripped my hips and fucked me with hard, rough thrusts.

"Oh, yes. That's it...you're giving it to me just as I like it," I moaned, loving the way he filled me. His cock felt so good slicing in and out of my pussy I thought I was in heaven.

He slid his big hands up my body to massage my breasts. He did it slowly, as if he really enjoyed palming them.

"Oh...you feel so good inside me...so good." The combination of the warm water and the hard cock powering into me provided a wonderful thrill. There are few things more delicious than having a hard, thick cock inside me while my body is wet with traces of bath oil.

"I'm almost there. Make me come, lover."

He slid his hands down my body, over my belly. Gliding his palm lower, he fucked me deeper and rubbed his thumb over my clit.

I moaned softly, feeling the muscles of my stomach rippling. I tightened myself around his cock.

He responded by fucking me faster and deeper.

I could feel the tension in his body and knew each upward thrust of his hot shaft drove us both closer to coming. I was only moments away from release...just a few more thrusts and I'd blow apart and come rivers over his cock.

"Harder...deeper...fuck me," I moaned. "I'm so close...so close...oh...God...dig it in deeper...harder...hurt me, lover...take my pussy and make it yours...all yours...only yours...oh, hell yeah!"

Tightening his grip on my hips, he slammed his groin against me, making my ass jiggle and my toes curl. I reached back to slide my hands over his tush. I loved feeling the taut muscles in his ass clench and unclench as he fucked me with all the passion and furor of a man possessed. A man possessed by the need to shoot his cum up into my unprotected pussy.

"Fuck me harder, lover, and then fill me with your seed!" I moaned, feeling my inner thighs shake as they did when I was close to a really powerful orgasm. Then he hit my g-spot, pinched my nipples, and flicked my clit.

I shuddered and blew apart into tiny, very happy pieces, my entire body shaking with the intensity of my release.

He wrapped his arms around my waist and fucked me into a frenzy until he groaned against the side of my neck, and blasted his seed into my receptive pussy.

I had to reach out to grip the grab bars inside the shower to remain on my feet. I felt his hand gripping the bar beside mine as he continued coming in me. Sheer, delicious wonder.

Feeling sated by my powerful climax, I moaned softly and peeled myself off his cock. I turned and leaned my forehead against the shower door, breathing hard as the water continued to cascade over us.



I was ready to dry off and climb into bed to sleep. I soon discovered he had other ideas.

He turned me around and positioned me against the shower door.

I kept my eyes closed, wanting to enjoy the sweet after effects of our first fuck before we both had to face the consequences of having fucked without protection. I also wanted to savor the delight of knowing I was full of his cum.

Even as I told myself I wouldn't allow this to happen again without protection, he leaned close and kissed me gently.

I parted my lips, eager to have him French kiss me.

He placed his hands on the shower door and leaned into me.

“Oh...yes...yes.”

Crushing my breasts against his chest, he swept his tongue between my lips and into my mouth, deepening the kiss.

Unable to resist the sweet heat rising in my belly and making my pussy ache for his cock again, I ran my hands down his back. Even though his ass was on the flat side, it was nice enough.

I parted his cheeks so I could finger his tight asshole.

“Shit!” He dragged his mouth from mine. Reaching between our bodies, he gripped his cock.

I tensed and then trembled with need.

“Give it to me,” I whispered.

He obliged, pushing the head of his shaft into me.

“Oh...God!” I shuddered. “Give it all to me, lover. “

He obeyed, driving his hard length up into me with one wicked movement.

My belly rippling with pleasure, I tightened my hands on his ass. I ground my hips against his so I could feel every inch of the hot, thick dick fucking me.

He bent his head and sucked the tip of my left breast into his mouth.

I dug my nails into his ass, humping myself on him. “Do it to me,” I encouraged.

As he fucked me, he flicked the rough edge of his tongue around my nipple.

Oh, hell, yeah. I fucked myself on his naked cock. “Oh...God...yes...yes...fuck me, lover. Fuck me hard and fast...fuck me.”

He dragged his mouth from my left breast, which allowed him to feast on my right breast. As he sucked me, he continued sliding in and out of my drenched pussy with hard, short strokes.

Nice. So damned nice. He pushed me to the point of orgasm quickly. I moaned and came all over his thrusting cock.

He came several moments later, jetting his seed deep into me again. Then he leaned against me with his lips brushing my neck.

I stroked my hands over his hair.

He lifted his head.

Feeling totally sated, I opened my eyes. My smile froze as I found myself staring into Jarrod’s brown eyes. Jen’s Jarrod’s brown eyes. His cock was still in me.

“Oh, my God!” I jerked away from him. “What are you doing?”

He jerked me back against him, cupping his hands over my ass. “What does it feel like I’m doing? I’m about to fuck you again.”

“No! We can’t!”

“Of course we can.” Smiling down at me, he reached between our bodies to brush his finger against my clit and wet slit.

“Oh...please...no.”

“Once more won’t matter,” he said and thrust his cock back into me.

“No!” I tried to pull away but he held me close and fucked me hard and deep with such heat and passion that my thighs shook. Before I could stop myself, I was clutching him close and was soon fucking him back. If Jen couldn’t keep him happy, then I would.

I squeezed my pussy around him until he groaned and came. Then I held him close, stroking my hands over his back and ass.

He kissed my neck and finally pulled out of me. “What the hell are we going to do about Jen?”

I sat up abruptly, my cheeks burning with heat and guilt. I glanced wildly around. I was still outside sitting on the porch swing. My heart pounded and I was wet. I took a slow, deep breath. Oh, God. This was not going to work. I had to get back to L.A. or at least out from under the same roof with Jarrod before I did something completely unforgivable.

I rose and hurried back into the house. Rushing up to the guest room, I lay tossing in bed for what felt like hours before I finally fell asleep, only to dream

about Jarrod and I fucking like bunnies on the kitchen counter over and over until Jen walked in and caught us—just as he pulled out of me.

Feeling betrayed by my thoughts, I got out of bed, took a cool shower and then sat in the chair by the window until I started nodding. Only then did I climb back into bed. Oh, God, please don't let me have anymore erotic dreams of Jarrod. Please.



A knock on the door woke me in the morning.

I groaned in protest, rolled onto my back, and reluctantly sat up. “Yes?”

The guest bedroom door opened.

Jen, dressed in a dark pantsuit with a pretty pink silk blouse, waltzed into the room, carrying a tray. “Morning, Lin.”

I felt as if I'd just closed my eyes. I glanced at the bedside clock. 7:08. “Morning, already?” I groaned.

“Yep.” She sat the tray on the nightstand. “I'm off to my job interview.”

“Are things okay, Jen?”

“Yes. Why do you ask?”

“I thought you didn't need to work.”

“I don’t. I love being a full time Mom, but the twins will be starting kindergarten in the fall. There won’t be any need for me to be home all day while they’re in school.”

“Oh.”

“Jarrod has some errands to run so you’ll be going solo until I return.” She sat on the side of the bed. “So you’ll stay?”

Recalling that erotic fantasy and dream of the previous night, I knew what I had to do, for the sake of my friendship with Jen and for the sake of my self-esteem. But I didn’t want to cast a pall over her job interview. I smiled.

She sighed in relief, clearly misinterpreting my smile.

I felt guilty but remained silent. If she only knew how I lusted for Jarrod, she’d be only too happy to see me go.

She rose. “Great. Then I’ll see you later.” She nodded at the tray. “Eat, have a lazy morning, and we’ll make plans when I return.”

I nodded. “Sounds like a plan. Good luck with the interview.”

“Thanks, I’m so nervous I’ll need it.”

“I’m sure you’ll do fine, so go impress the hell out of your interviewer.”

“I will.” She flashed me a confident smile before leaving the bedroom.

I ate breakfast before I got up to shower and put on a sleeveless white sheath dress with sandals. After making a few phone calls, I spent the morning

lying by the pool. It took an effort, but I refused to allow my thoughts to dwell on Jarrod.

Jen returned just after eleven, looking radiant.

I smiled. "The interview went well?"

She nodded. "It went very well. I got the job."

"Way to go, girl."

She smiled, kicked off her heels, and stretched out on the lounge beside mine. "Thanks."

"Tell me about it," I said.

"It's only a part time job, which is all I want. When I got pregnant, Jarrod and I agreed I'd be a stay at home mom until the kids were about ten. My hours will be 10-2, which will allow me to see them off to school and be home when they get out of school."

"Sounds perfect, Jen."

"It is."

"When do you start?"

"In two weeks. Until then I plan to enjoy my last days of laziness." She unbuttoned her blouse and settled against her lounge. "So, what do you want to do for the rest of the day?"

I sighed and sat up. "How about lunch out?"

“You’re on.”

She changed into shorts and a sleeveless top, and we went to the mall to have lunch.



“You know we’ll be heading down to the shore on Friday, but how do you want to spend the next few days until then, Lin?” she asked while we lingered over coffee.

I shrugged. “Don’t feel you have to entertain me. I have my ebook reader loaded with books by my favorite authors. I’ll be perfectly content to lie around the pool reading until Friday.”

“Sounds like a plan. What time do you want to head to the shore on Friday?”

I sipped my coffee before I responded. “I have a flight back to L.A. Friday night.”

She blinked. “What? Why?”

I couldn’t bring myself to tell her about my fantasy. I shrugged. “I just think it’s best if I leave, Jen.”

“Will it make any difference if I promise not to ask you to tease Jarrod again?”

If I didn’t go, I just might discover I liked the idea of teasing him. And that was not going to happen. I shook my head.

“I didn’t mean to...I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable, Lin.”

I nodded. “I know that.”

“I wish you’d change your mind.”

“I can’t, Jen.”

“Why not?”

“I just can’t.”

She sighed. “Okay. So we’ll just have to make the best of the days we have left.”

Her quick acceptance of my decision surprised and pleased me. Maybe we could enjoy the next few days and we’d still be friends when I returned home.



We spent the rest of the day shopping. I’m a bit of a shoe fanatic. I’ve rarely seen a pair of heels I could resist. I bought two pair of soft leather pumps, one in black and one in dark brown. Jen bought an exquisite pair of three-inch leather heels that made her long legs look even longer and lovelier.

We returned to Jen’s house just before six. Noting Jarrod’s car in the driveway, I steeled myself. The moment Jen opened the door, we were met with a heavenly aroma of simmering beef.

I stared at her. “Holy hell. He can cook?”

“Among other things.” She gave me a knowing wink.

I smiled, but secretly dreaded the thought of another long evening spent trying to make conversation with the two of them. But the evening went surprisingly well. Jen and Jarrod both went out of their way to make me feel comfortable. By the time we settled down to have coffee in the living room, I felt relaxed enough to laugh when Jen talked about some of our college exploits.

After a nightcap, I left them alone, cuddling on the loveseat and went up to the guestroom. I slept well that night and when I woke the next morning, Jarrod had gone to work and Jen and I made breakfast.

I smiled, looking forward to a day of girl talk.

We had a lazy afternoon swimming and talking about old boyfriends as we lay by the pool.

“Do you remember Tommy Connors?” she asked.

A picture of a skinny, shy blond with warm brown eyes danced into my head. I nodded. “Yes. We shared an English class together.”

“You know he had a thing for you, Lin.”

“You think? He never asked me out.”

“I think he was too shy and you were going out with Mark Howard.”

I shrugged. “Well, you snooze, you lose.”

“Would you have gone out with him if he had asked you?”

“I don’t know,” I admitted. In high school I’d been more open to dating across racial lines than I later became.

“If you met each other again and he asked you out, would you go?”

What would he look like now? He’d almost certainly be bulkier and would probably be on the hunky side. “What brings on these questions about Tommy?” I sat up, frowning. “Have you seen him?”

“No. I was just wondering if you’d go out with him if he asked.”

I lay back down, closing my eyes. “Probably not,” I said.

“Why not?”

“No offense, Jen, but I’m happy dating black men.”

“So was I—until I met and fell for Jarrod.”

But despite my lust for Jarrod, I still preferred black men. “I say to each his own. Love whoever your heart falls for, but I can’t see settling down with anyone but a tall, dark, well-hung, handsome black man.”

“What if you meet one who is tall, well-hung, handsome, but not so black?”

I opened my eyes and turned to look at her. “As in Caucasian?”

“Maybe.”

“That’s not going to happen, Jen.” I closed my eyes, willing her to drop the subject.

She did, surprising me.

We dozed for awhile, then I started dinner while she spent half an hour on the phone talking to the twins.

When Jarrod came home, we had dinner and drinks on the patio.

The drinks mellowed me. I watched Jen and Jarrod slow dance twice before he asked me to dance to a faster tune.

I agreed. Of course he couldn't really dance, but no one was perfect.

I had another drink and then went to bed. Thankfully I slept soundly all night.

Chapter Four

By dinner on Wednesday night, I was at the point of reconsidering my decision to return to L.A. early when I came down to dinner and found a fourth place set. An exquisite lace cloth graced the table, along with beautiful candles and sparkling crystal.

Jen, dressed in a simple, but chic, low-cut black dress, looked stunning. She looked up from lighting candles to smile at me. “Lin, you look great.”

I glanced down at the mauve colored, two-piece silk dress I wore. The bodice cupped my breasts while the loose skirt twirled around my calves as I moved in my three-inch black heels. The dress had what I considered a slimming effect. I pivoted. “You like?”

“Yes.” She nodded toward the door where I still stood. “Jarrod has a drink waiting for you in the living room.”

I glanced at the fourth place setting. Recalling our conversation about Tommy Conner, I hesitated. It might be interesting to see what kind of man he’d become. “Who’s joining us?”

“Grant.”

I frowned; almost disappointed it wasn't Tommy Conner. "Grant? Grant who?"

"Jarrod's cousin. The one you have to meet."

The one I had no desire to meet. Great. "I'm not interested in a blind date, Jen. You know that."

"It's not a date, blind or otherwise."

"Isn't it?" I challenged. I've never had a problem landing my own dates and got annoyed when people felt the need to play matchmaker on my behalf.

"He's here for dinner—period." She finished lighting the candles before she crossed the room to link an arm through mine. "He's just here because he loves Jarrod's cooking."

I squinted at her. "Really?"

"Okay, that's not the only reason he's here, but this is not a date—unless, of course, you want it to be."

"I don't."

"Don't you? Aren't you even a little tired of that 'friends with benefits' nonsense?"

"No, or I'd do something about it."

"Oh, come on, Lin. There comes a time in every woman's life when she wants to know a man wants a serious relationship with her that goes beyond sex."

“When I reach that point, I’ll do something about it,” I told her again. “I don’t need help landing a man.”

“I know that. Stop overreacting.” She squeezed my arm. “Let’s go meet Grant.”

“Do I have a choice?”

“No.” She laughed and tugged at my arm. “I promise you’ll like him.”

I gave her a cool look. This stunt would seal things for me. I was definitely going to be on that plane on Friday night flying back to L.A. But for now, I’d have to meet this Grant.

I pulled my arm from hers. “I don’t like this,” I told her.

“Lin—”

I shook my head. “There’s nothing else to say.”

She sighed and turned away.

I followed her into the living room, seething.

Jarrold and the other man occupying the room rose when we entered.

I cast a quick look at Grant then did a double take. The resemblance between the two men was superficial. Grant was a few inches taller. His hair was a much lighter brown and his eyes were an intense and almost startling blue. I guessed he was about ten years younger than Jarrod. He looked as if he’d be at home on the cover of an upscale men’s magazine. Whereas Jarrod was

“interesting,” Grant was handsome with an unmistakable hard-body, but strangely enough, I was hard pressed to keep my gaze from lingering on Jarrod’s face as he introduced Grant.

“Lin, this is my cousin, Grant West. Grant, this is Linea Hills, Jen’s best friend.”

Grant flashed a dazzling white smile my way as his hand closed around mine. “I’m delighted to meet you, Linea. Or may I call you Lin?”

I noted a rather enchanting dimple in his left cheek. He held my hand longer than politeness dictated and he looked directly into my eyes as he spoke.

I swallowed hard, feeling almost as if he were looking directly into my soul and seeing my lustful thoughts. That’s a feeling I didn’t like one bit. “Sure. Everyone calls me Lin.” I flashed him a quick smile and withdrew my hand from his.

“Do they?” Like, Jarrod, he had a warm, deep baritone. “Then maybe I’ll call you Linea.”

“Why?”

He shrugged his broad shoulders. “I’ve never liked being lost in a crowd with other men.”

I blinked at him. “Were we talking about men?”

He arched a brow. “Isn’t that what you meant?”

“No. It wasn’t.”

“I stand corrected. May I call you Linea?”

He possessed the air of a man used to getting everything he wanted from a woman. What had possessed Jen to think I’d be interested in a man who probably viewed himself as God’s gift? I flashed him a cool smile. “Sure...fine. Call me Linea if you like.”

“I do.”

I looked away from his intense gaze and the undeniable intimacy he managed to project into the two words. “Great.” I moved across the room to sit on the loveseat, my heart racing and my cheeks hot. Okay, Lin. Get a grip. You are not going to let some smooth talking ladies’ man get under your skin.

“What would you like to drink, Lin?” Jarrod asked me.

“A Martini,” I said. I glanced at Grant and found his blue gaze locked on me. I forced myself not to look away. If he wanted to stare, let him.

Jarrod nodded and turned to look at Jen. “The usual, hon?”

She nodded and slipped her arm through Grant’s.

He smiled and bent to kiss her cheek before they crossed the room toward the sofa and love seat.

Jen sat on the sofa. “Make yourself comfortable, Grant.”

“Thanks, Jen.”

I stiffened as I watched Grant move past the sofa. He paused by the loveseat.

I moistened my lips and glanced up.

He smiled down at me. “Do you mind, Linea?”

He was handsome and probably very charming. He radiated sex appeal. There were probably few women who would object to sharing a loveseat with him. What did that say about me or how Jarrod had affected me that I felt as if I were one of them?

I smiled again and nodded slowly. “Well, actually, I do—”

“Thanks.” He cut me off and sank down beside me on the loveseat.

He was a big man and I wasn’t a skinny Minnie. I could feel his thigh pressed against mine.

I glanced sideways to find him looking at me.

He smiled at me and deliberately placed his arm along the back of the seat.

Damn him. Although his fingers didn’t touch my bare shoulders, they were only inches away and seemed to radiate heat.

Why was he smiling? What the hell made him think I wanted to share a loveseat with him and have his hard thigh pressed against mine? Okay, Lin. Settle down. How’s he supposed to know you’re lusting after his cousin who just happens to be married to one of your oldest and best friends?

“Here you are, Lin.”

I tore my gaze away from Grant's as Jarrod crossed the room and handed me my drink. "Thanks." I accepted it and took several sips.

"Jen tells me you're visiting from L.A," Grant said.

What was wrong with me? Why did such a simple statement sound like a proposition? I nodded without looking at Grant. "Yes, but I won't be here for much longer." Thank God.

"Oh? When are you leaving?"

I sipped my drink, keeping my gaze on Jarrod and Jen who shared the sofa. "Excuse me?"

"Tell me, Linea, do I offend you in some way?"

I felt like a grouchy teenager as I took another quick sip of my drink. I knew my juvenile behavior had triggered the question. I smiled and turned to face him. "Of course not."

"I'm glad to hear it. Last time I checked I didn't have any unsightly hair growing out of my ears or nose. I took particular care to ensure my breath was as fresh as possible before we met so hopefully that's not a problem for you."

I shook my head. "No. It's not."

"Are my ears too big?"

"Are your ears too...what?" I placed my glass on the table to my right.

“I’m trying to figure out why you’re avoiding looking at me. What about me offends or turns you off? I know L.A. is full of handsome men, but I didn’t think I was so butt ugly I was impossible to look at.”

I had a feeling he knew perfectly well women found him attractive. Nevertheless, his point was well taken. I held up a hand, palm outward. “I’m sorry. It’s not you.”

“Great. So what is it?”

“I didn’t sleep very well last night and I’m a little tired,” I said, feigning a yawn.

“So you don’t think I’m butt ugly?”

I shrugged, smiling suddenly. “Well...not butt ugly...maybe just average ugly.”

He laughed and shifted closer to me on the loveseat until I felt as if I were practically pinned to the side.

Neither his arm nor his fingers actually touched me, but I immediately felt heat rise to my cheeks. I tried to maintain his gaze but finally looked away.

He leaned close and spoke with his lips inches from my ear. “Relax. I rarely bite in public.”

“Don’t flatter yourself,” I shot back in a low voice.

He laughed again.

I ignored him. He could laugh all he liked—as long as he kept his big paws to himself.

Jen wrinkled her nose before bolting off the sofa. “I’d better go take dinner out of the oven.” She looked at Jarrod, who’d also risen to his feet. “Check the table for me, hon.”

He nodded. “Of course.” He looked over to Grant and me. “Give me a few moments and then join us in the dining room.”

I watched in panic as they both left the room, leaving me alone with Grant. Great. Get a grip, Lin. Since when is it a bad thing to be left alone with a handsome man?



I met Grant’s gaze and flashed him a quick smile.

He smiled back.

I blinked. He had a very nice mouth that curved while his smile spread to his eyes. And damn his gaze was intense and very blue. His cologne tickled my nose. I looked at his mouth again, noting his full bottom lip. It looked very...kissable. For the life of me I couldn’t think of a single thing to say. Worse, it was difficult to look away from his mouth.

He arched a brow. “Tactful, aren’t they?”

I laughed and some of my tension dissipated. “Very.”

“Jen tells me you’re not seeing anyone special, Linea.”

He made my name almost sound like a secret caress. Okay, girl. I don’t know what was in that drink but it’s going to your head. “Did she also tell you that was my preference?”

“No, but that’s probably because it went without saying.”

“Oh?”

He nodded. “Having met you, it’s obvious that if you wanted it any other way, you’d have a special man in your life.”

Okay. He definitely had a flair for saying the right thing. But I wanted to make it clear I had no wish to flirt with him or have him flirt with me. “Thanks for the compliment, but I am dating.”

He arched a brow, his gaze resting on my breasts. “I’d be surprised if you weren’t.”

To which response I had no answer.

“So you’re dating, but are you seeing anyone you’re serious about or interested in seeing exclusively?”

“Is that question for me or...the girls, here?” I asked, touching the side of my right breast.

He lifted his gaze to mine, his lips twitching. “I beg your pardon. They...your girls are very...impressive.”

I considered them one of my best assets so it was difficult to be annoyed with him just because he clearly thought so too. “They’re shy,” I told him.

“Really? I’m sure they...and you are used to male compliments and appreciation.”

Damn he made it difficult to not like him.

“So are either of you...three seeing anyone exclusively?”

I shrugged. “Not exclusively, but definitely seriously.” I liked sex as much as the next woman, but I didn’t hop into bed casually.

“Ahhh. Serious enough to preclude your interest in anyone else?”

Damn he was persistent. I nodded and rose. “Yes.”

He stood up and looked down at my breasts. “And do they agree?”

“Yes.” I turned away.

He placed a hand on my arm. “Are you sure they agree?”

I turned back. “What?”

“I could have sworn the right one just whispered my name,”

I stared at him.

He stared back. “And now the left one just made it a chorus. I think they like me and I know I like them.”

What the hell was I suppose to say to that?

Jarrold appeared in the doorway. “Dinner is ready.”

“Great.” I walked across the room without looking at Grant. But I could feel his gaze on me as he followed me from the room and down the hall.

At the dining room door, he touched my arm. “Linea?”

I reluctantly turned to face him.

“I’m sorry,” he said. “I was totally out of line.”

Yes, he had been. So shouldn’t I have been annoyed instead of...excited? I shrugged. “Think nothing of it. The girls do tend to have that effect on men.”

He turned a laugh into a cough and followed me into the dining room.

During the meal that followed, each time I looked up, I found Grant watching me from across the table. Sometimes he smiled. Sometimes he just stared. But he made no particular effort to engage me in conversation. That suited me just fine since he generated conflicting feelings in me.

If only he’d stop staring at me and if I could stop looking to see if he still had that intense blue gaze of his turned in my direction. But I kept peeking and he kept staring throughout the meal.

We had after dinner drinks and coffee out by the pool. With the pool lights reflecting off the water and soft jazz filling the air, I finally relaxed. I was debating whether I’d need a swim after the others went to bed, when Jen struck again.

She rose suddenly, pulling Jarrod to his feet. “Help me take the cups and coffee pot inside, hon.”

“Of course.”

I smothered a sigh as Grant and I were left alone by the pool on loungers, with just a small table between us.

“When are you returning to L.A., again, Linea?”

I turned to find Grant watching me. “I’m not sure.” What? I frowned. Why had I just said that? Early Saturday morning, I’d be back in L.A.

“Then I’d love to buy you lunch or dinner tomorrow.”

I experienced an unmistakable surge of pleasure. I moistened my lips. “I...I’ll see if Jen is available.”

“Why? She’s not invited.”

“Oh. You mean just the two of us?”

“Yes, Linea. Just the two of us...unless you count the girls, who are, of course invited too.”

“Oh.” I digested the idea in silence.

“Which do you prefer? Lunch or dinner?”

“I...” Oh, get a grip, Linea. It’s not like this is the first time you’ve been asked out by a handsome male. “Let’s do lunch.”

“Are you sure you wouldn’t prefer dinner?”

“Why would I prefer dinner?”

He shrugged. “We can’t dance at lunch.”

I wasn't so sure dancing with him would be a good idea. "Let's do lunch."

"Okay. How about I have lunch with you but dinner with them?"

I couldn't help it. I laughed.

He laughed too, but sobered first. "I'm serious. Would they have dinner with me?"

I shook my head. "We're a package deal."

"Maybe if I leaned close and asked them, they'd agree."

The thought triggered another bout of laughter.

"If you keep laughing at me like that, you'll give me a complex."

"Nice try," I said, smiling.

"All right. We'll do lunch. Now that we have that settled, let me show you how much better dinner would have been than lunch."

"Excuse me?"

He rose and stood over me with his hand extended. "Dance with me."

I blinked up at him. "Dance with you? Now?"

"Yes. Now."

"Thanks, but—"

"I wasn't asking you. I was asking them," he said, his gaze lingering on my breasts.

As if they had a mind of their own and liked all the attention they were receiving, I felt my nipples tighten.

I saw a flash of white as he smiled. “We have the perfect music, lighting, and atmosphere. Let’s make the most of them.”

The song playing wasn’t conducive to anything but slow dancing or what my parents would call slow dragging. Did I want to slow dance with him? Hell yeah.

“I don’t bite or grind against unwilling partners, Linea.”

How like a man to offer unwanted assurances.

“Nor do I have wandering hands.”

You are behaving like a silly teenager afraid of being kissed for the first time. Dance with him, already. “I’m glad to hear it,” I said lightly and gave him my hand.

I felt a tingle shoot down my back when his fingers closed around mine before he lifted me to my feet.

I flashed a quick smile at him.

He drew me into his arms.

With his hands resting against my back, I felt as if he’d enfolded me in a warm, sensual cocoon. His chest felt hard against my breasts. I could feel his thighs pressed against me. His cologne filled my senses. Damn but he was nice to be close to.

Feeling my heartbeat increase and my pussy tingle, I moistened my lips. Should I admit he was holding me closer than I liked?

Almost as if he'd read my thoughts, he slipped an arm around my waist, stepped back, and took one of my hands in his. His chest no longer pressed against my breasts.

I released a relieved breath.

"Is this better?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"Good. I wouldn't want to do anything to make you feel uncomfortable with me, Linea."

He had a very warm, sexy voice. I could imagine how sexy it would be to have him whispering soft, intimate things in my ear as he fucked me. Feeling my cheeks burn, I flashed him a quick smile.

His hand tightened around mine as he drew me a little closer.

It was difficult to resist the urge to grind myself against his groin and my breasts against his chest. Get a grip, Linea. You are not some damned alley cat in heat. You're not going to behave like one.

As we danced in silence, my curiosity about him was aroused. Had he ever been married? If no, why not? What kind of women did he prefer? Was he sleeping with anyone? Did he want to sleep with me? Did I want to sleep with him? Of

course I did, but I wouldn't. I already had two casual lovers in my life. I wasn't going to add another one. And I didn't do one night stands.

Despite my resolve, it was hard not to think about sex in such close proximity to his big body. Was he as aware of me physically as I was of him? I couldn't tell. He kept his word. He didn't grind against me or allow his hands to wander over my body.

The only indication he gave of enjoying the dance was the fact that he continued to guide me around several moments after the music ended. He was also slow to release my hand and to drop his arm from my waist. Even then he didn't immediately step back.

That's when I realized my head rested against his shoulder. My cheeks burned. I swallowed and stepped back, not allowing my gaze to rise any farther than the knot in his silk tie.

"Thanks." He managed to infuse an incredible amount of sizzle into the one word.

I had to struggle to keep visions of falling into bed with him at the first opportunity at bay. "Sure," I said, hoping my voice was steadier than it sounded to my sensitive ears.

"Tell the girls I said thanks."

I bit back the urge to suggest he tell them himself—with his hands. I arched a brow. “I will.”

“So do you want to make it dinner tomorrow instead of lunch?”

Wasn’t he the pushy one? I smiled and shook my head. “And before you ask, they agree with me.”

He leaned down to touch his lips against my ear. “Are you sure? I could have sworn they wanted to be alone with me while we danced.”

“You’re delusional or have had too much to drink,” I said, stepping away from him.

He smiled. “Or you and they have gone to my head.”

“Do you always flirt so...outrageously on a first date?”

“I’ll let you know—when we have our first date tomorrow.”

I smiled.

He glanced at his watch. “I have to prepare for an early morning meeting tomorrow so I’d better say goodnight.”

I swallowed a lump of disappointment. Just as I was revving up to trade heated sensual barbs he was ready to leave?

He glanced around. “Can I walk you inside or are you staying out and enjoying the rest of the night?”

What was the point of remaining by the pool once he’d left? “I’ll go inside.”

He held the door open for me and followed me inside. In the side hallway, he turned to look down at me. “What kind of food do you like?”

“I’m a Chinese food fanatic, but I also like to be surprised.”

“Is there any type of food you dislike?”

“I’m willing to try anything as long as it’s not excessively hot and spicy.”

“You don’t like hot and spicy?”

“No. Do you?”

He locked his gaze with mine as he nodded slowly. “Oh, yes.”

His suggestive tone made it plain he wasn’t referring to food. I haven’t been shy since my late teens. I can usually trade sexual innuendos without breaking a sweat. But there was something about Grant that made me feel like a teenager crushing for the first time. Even while I told myself I didn’t like the feeling, I embraced it. Welcomed it. Relished it. Grant West was the kind of man who made a female very happy to be a woman.

I looked away, unable to maintain his gaze.

He brushed his hand against the back of mine. “Sorry,” he said softly. “I promise I’ll behave better tomorrow.”

What was up with him and his unwanted promises? I met his gaze and smiled. “It’s okay—”

“You’re clearly embarrassed.”

“It’s that obvious, huh?”

He nodded. “While I find your shyness charming, I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

“Charming?”

He shrugged. “Actually that’s much more appropriate than the word I’d really like to use, but let’s drop the subject before I’m tempted to say something else inappropriate.”

I nibbled my lip, staring at him. What word did he want to use?

He arched a brow. “If you keep staring at me like that, I can’t be responsible for what I’ll say next,” he warned, his gaze wandering to my breasts.

I gave myself a mental shake and tapped his shoulder. “My eyes are up here, Grant.”

“Sorry.” He flashed me a sexy smile and raised his gaze to mine. “Very nice eyes too.”

“Hmm.”

He glanced at his watch again. “I’m not sure how long my meeting will last tomorrow. Is it okay if I call you mid-morning tomorrow to let you know what time I’ll pick you up?”

“Yes.”

“Great.”

I nodded and waited.

We stood without moving, staring at each other in silence.

As when we danced, I felt my heartbeat quickening. I generally do not kiss on a first date, but I had to struggle not to part my lips and lean forward and engage him in a sensual lip lock he'd remember for weeks. If he wanted to kiss me, I was more than ready.

Apparently he didn't feel as pressing a need to kiss me as I felt to be kissed. He brushed his hand against mine before he stepped back. "I'd better go find Jen and Jarrod to say good night."

I nodded, swallowing a lump of disappointment. No locking lips with him tonight. Had I misread him?

"I'm looking forward to having lunch with you tomorrow."

I smiled.

"Good night, Linea."

"Good night, Grant."

"Girls." He glanced at my breasts, smiled, and then turned away.

Chapter Five

I watched him walk down the hall toward the kitchen. He had a nice ass. He'd look sexy as hell with a pair of tight jeans hanging off his hips and hugging his decidedly unflat ass. Get a grip, Lin or you'll be obsessing over his ass the way he's obsessing over your breasts.

I glanced down at my breasts.

And that would be a bad thing? They seemed to ask.

Smiling, I walked in the opposite direction to the living room.

Jarrold stood at the living room patio doors sipping a drink. He turned when I entered the room.

"Where's Grant?" he asked.

"He's looking for you and Jen to say good night. It quickly became clear you two had no intentions of returning any time soon."

He shrugged. "I'm sorry if you found being left alone with him unpleasant."

"What I find unpleasant is having someone else determine who I should date."

"Understood. Can I get you a drink, Lin?"

I felt hot and confused. I'd started the day fixated on Jarrod. After having spent a few hours with Grant, it was hard to recall how or why I'd found myself weaving romantic fantasies around Jarrod. He was clearly devoted to Jen, which was endearing. He was also very ordinary compared to Grant.

I definitely needed a drink. I nodded and sat on the loveseat. "Yes. Thanks."

"Same as before?"

"Yes."

I watched him pour my drink.

He looked up and met my gaze.

I flashed him a quick, easy smile. It was so good to be able to look at him without having to battle lustful thoughts.

He crossed the room to hand me my drink.

"Thanks."

"You're welcome." He stood near the loveseat. "Do you mind?"

Hours earlier the thought of sharing the loveseat with him would have sent me into a lustful frenzy. "No. I don't."

He sat beside me. "What did you think of Grant?"

"He...he's..." I sipped my drink and moistened my lips before meeting his gaze. "He's...has he ever been married?"

"No."

“Why not?”

“I assume because he’s never met anyone he wanted to marry.”

Either that or he was...“Is he...gay?”

“No! He’s not.”

That was a relief until I thought of an alternative. “Is he bi?”

“Did he strike you as bi, Lin?”

“No,” I admitted. “But—”

“He’s straight.”

Why would a man in his position need to accept a blind date? I frowned. “Is he involved with anyone?”

He shrugged. “He’s single, attractive, successful...do the math, Lin.”

I definitely did not like the sound of that. “If he’s involved with someone, why did you and Jen go out of your way to throw us together?”

“That was Jen’s idea. Not mine.”

I gave him a cool stare. How like a man to weasel out of a difficult situation by blaming it on his woman. “Oh. So you weren’t in favor of our meeting?”

“No, I wasn’t.”

His terse answer surprised and annoyed me. “Why not?”

“You’re both attractive adults. I can’t see how either of you would need or want assistance or interference from me in arranging your personal lives.”

“Oh. That’s what you meant.”

He frowned. “What did you think I meant?”

I shrugged. “Not all men appreciate full-figured women.”

“Full-figured or skinny as a rail, I’m sure you’d have no problem capturing the attention of the man of your choice.”

Oh, he did have a way with words. But then so did Grant. Maybe it ran in the family. “Is he seeing someone special?”

“That’s something you should ask him.”

“I will, but why can’t you—”

“Of course Grant’s not dating anyone special, Lin.”

We both looked up as Jen waltzed into the room.

No longer sure I wanted to depend on Jen’s assurance, I turned my attention back to Jarrod.

But he rose and crossed the room to kiss Jen’s cheek. “Would you like a drink?”

“No thanks. Grant said to say good night, hon,” she told Jarrod.

They sat on the sofa before Jen turned her attention back to me. “Grant told me you two are having lunch tomorrow.”

I nodded.

She smiled. “I knew you’d like him.”

I glanced at Jarrod. “No offense, Jarrod, but I didn’t actually say I liked him.”

He arched a brow, but remained silent.

Jen’s grin widened. “Well, he likes you.”

I sipped my drink, fighting to keep a wide smile from spreading across my face. “Did he tell you that?”

“Not exactly, but he did tell me he planned to reschedule a trip to L.A. tomorrow afternoon to take you to lunch. I think that speaks for itself.”

Strangely enough, so did I. I was even more convinced of that when a beautiful bouquet of flowers arrived later that night as Jen, Jarrod, and I were saying good night in the foyer.

Jen grinned from ear to ear. “He certainly knows how to make an impression. Doesn’t he?”

I nodded. “Yes. He does.”

Jen waved at the flowers. “What does the card say?”

I hesitated, not sure I wanted an audience when I read the card. For all I knew he might have sent the flowers to my breasts. My lips twitched at the thought.

Jarrod looked at Jen. “Why don’t we leave Lin alone to discover what the card says for herself?”

Jen looked as if she were about to protest, but Jarrod slipped an arm around her shoulders and guided her toward the stairs. “Come on.”

Jen grimaced but allowed Jarrod to lead her to the stairs.

I waited until they’d reached the second floor landing before I slowly mounted the stairs. I sat at the vanity in the guest bedroom and reached for the card nestled among the flowers.

Looking forward to tomorrow. GW

He was looking forward to tomorrow? I smiled. So was I. I glanced down. And so were the girls.

I studied my smiling reflection. My eyes sparkled and I could feel excitement coursing through me. After my disastrous introduction to Jarrod, I wasn’t sure how thrilled I wanted to get at the thought of going out with Grant. Normally, I liked the idea of slowly discovering the personality and tastes of a prospective lover. Recalling the games Jen and Jarrod played, and Jarrod’s seeming unwillingness to say if Grant had a special woman in his life filled me with uncertainties. What if Grant liked to play similar games? Or worse, what if he played the game with Jen and Jarrod?

Part of me didn’t want to believe that of him, but I didn’t know him. If Jen, who I’d thought I knew had a kinky nature I’d never suspected, how could I even begin to guess what Grant might be capable of? I shouldn’t care, but I did.

So there was only one way to find out. Still, I hesitated for several minutes before I made my decision. I called the airline to cancel my flight for the following night.

There. It was done. I stared at my reflection again. What now? I had no idea. I'd just take things as they came.



My decision made, I showered and slipped into bed. I lay in the dark recalling that dance out by the pool with Grant before I allowed my thoughts to dwell on him in a more intimate manner.

What would he look like in tight, revealing swimming briefs? Did he have hair on his chest? What did that sexy bottom lip of his feel like in a kiss? What would it taste like? What would it be like to have him French kiss me? What did he look like naked? What would he feel like nude?

Imagining his wide shoulders and big bare chest pressed against my naked breasts sent a rush of moisture pooling inside me. I closed my eyes, imagining his warm hands moving over my naked body. I knew he liked large breasts, but what did he think of a big ass and lots of curves?

Get a grip, Lin. He's taking you to lunch and he spent much of the night staring at you. He obviously liked everything he saw.

Smiling, I rolled onto my stomach, rubbing my pussy against the mattress. I felt hot and horny. And so relieved to be over Jarrod. Clearly I had not been in love with him after all. It had been that age-old lust, which I now felt for Grant, fickle, horny woman that I was. Grant, who wasn't married to my oldest friend, was fair game. I could allow my heart to fill with unmitigated lust without an ounce of guilt.

I woke in the middle of the night with my pussy aching as the remnants of a lusty dream where Grant had worked me up into a sexual frenzy by grinding his hard cock against me as we slow danced. Then when we'd torn our clothes off, I'd been disappointed to find his cock lacking in both girth and length. He'd been a lousy lover who had come within a minute of entering me—leaving me unsatisfied. Then he'd had the gall to roll onto his back and start snoring.

I sighed, rolling onto my back. Don't expect too much of him, Lin. Not all men have big cocks. I'd been fortunate in that all my lovers had possessed nice sized cocks and had been skillful in bed. Sooner or later, I had to encounter a lover who either wasn't good in bed or had a small dick. And I was old enough to know there were more important things in a relationship than the size of a lover's cock.

Besides, you're getting way ahead of yourself, Lin. You two might not even go beyond a first date. Still, it would be a crime for a hunk like Grant to have a small dick.

But that didn't stop me from falling asleep imagining him eating me to a slow, delicious orgasm that made my toes curl and my back arch as I cried out his name.



Jen woke me just after nine the next morning. She breezed into the room carrying a tray. "Time to rise and shine."

I groaned and pulled the sheet over my head. "Go away."

I heard her set the tray on the nightstand before she tugged the sheet from over my head. "Go make yourself decent and then we'll share breakfast."

I'd spent most of the night jolting awake from lustful dreams just as Grant was about to fuck me and now all I wanted was to sleep. "Go away."

"Get up, girl."

I grimaced at her and dragged myself from the bed, and went into the bathroom. When I emerged from a warm shower wearing a large towel, she sat propped up against the headboard sipping a cup of coffee.

I climbed into bed, inhaling the aroma of the dishes she uncovered. We shared a western omelet, a chunk of garlic bread, and a carafe of hot, milky coffee.

"Do you want to talk about Grant?" Jen asked.

I nodded, putting my coffee cup down. "Does he have a special lady in his life?"

“No.”

“I find it hard to believe he’s not seeing anyone.”

She shrugged. “I didn’t say he wasn’t dating. I said he’s not dating anyone special.”

“If he’s already dating, why did he ask me out?”

She gave me a wide-eyed stare. “Excuse me? Aren’t you dating and didn’t you accept his invitation?”

I grimaced. “I hate when you go all logical on me.”

She smiled. “He liked you, but then I knew he would.”

“How?”

“I don’t know. I just knew. Did you like him?”

Jen’s “I just knew” didn’t really work for me but I knew her well enough to know pushing her to be more specific wouldn’t do any good. “He’s...he’s a hunk with a capital H,” I admitted.

She nodded. “He’s almost as hunky as Jarrod.”

Almost? I stared at her. I could see she was serious. And that made me feel better about her relationship with Jarrod. If she thought Jarrod was a bigger hunk than Grant, she was blinded by love with a huge capital L. I didn’t understand or appreciate the game she and Jarrod played, but they seemed happy together.

I smiled and nodded. “Yeah. Almost.”

Just as we finished the carafe of coffee the phone rang. Jen lifted the cordless phone off her waist holster, glanced at the screen, smiled, and passed the phone to me. “Guess who?”

My cheeks flushed and I felt flustered as I took the cordless phone. I pressed the talk button and placed the phone against my ear. “Hello?”

“Hi, Linea. This is Grant.”

“Hi.”

“This meeting is running a little longer than I expected. I don’t foresee being able to pick you up before one o’clock. That means it’ll probably be two before we eat. Is that okay?”

“Yes, but I’m sure I can borrow Jen’s car and meet you somewhere if that will make things easier for you.” I glanced at Jen, who nodded.

“Thanks, but unless you’re dead set against it, I prefer to pick up my dates.”

Call me old-fashioned, but I’m down with a man who wants to treat me like I’m worth expending time and energy over. “Oh. Okay. Fine.”

“Great. I’ll call you when I’m on my way, Linea.”

“Okay.”

“Say hello to the girls for me.”

I smiled and ended the call before I said something impetuous like admitting how much the three of us were looking forward to seeing him again. Actually, there were four of us, if I counted my aching coochie.

Jen took the phone. "What are you going to wear?"

"I'm not sure. It's just lunch."

Jen scrambled off the bed. "It's a first date. You have to dress to impress." She turned around, a frown on her face. "Actually, I think you've already impressed, but let's just make sure you dress to re-impress. What do you have that's sexy as hell and would make him have to pick his jaw up off the floor when he arrives to pick you up?"

I got out of bed, shaking my head. "I don't know that I want to go out of my way to impress him."

"What? Why wouldn't you?"

"For one I live in L.A. He lives here."

Jen parted her lips, seemed to reconsider, and closed her mouth.

I paused, arching a brow. "What?"

She shook her head. "You were about to give me another reason why you don't want to dress to impress him."

What was she holding back? "I'm not interested in a long distance relationship."

“Some men are worth making the effort to keep a long distance relationship going.”

“He’s a hunk, but not so hunky I want to date him from across the country. So I can’t see the point in going out of my way to impress him.”

Jen tilted her head, her eyes squinted. “Do you have that out of your system?”

I frowned at her.

“Good,” she said, as if I’d actually answered her. “Let’s pick out something sexy and low-cut that shows off that rack of yours.”

I rolled my eyes. “The girls don’t like being called a rack.” At least not by another woman. Grant calling them a rack would be a whole different ballgame.

“Whatever.” She laughed and walked to the closet. “You look great in pastels. Did you bring anything bright and colorful with you?”

Since she was clearly on a mission, I decided it would be easier to let her have her way. I joined her at the closet. We spent the next fifteen minutes arguing over what I’d wear.



Grant called again at 12:45. “I know this is a bad way to begin a first date, but this is an important deal and I really can’t break away for at least another hour or so. We’re having a short break now. Please tell me we can do dinner instead.”

I think the disappointment I felt at the thought of not seeing him for several hours instead of fifteen minutes or so, was my first inkling of just how big an impression he'd made on me.

"Ah...sure. We can do dinner or we can cancel if—"

"No. I'll wrap this up and make dinner. I'll call you soon."

"Okay."

An hour and a half later the phone rang again. Jen and I were lying out by the pool after eating a light lunch. Jen glanced at the caller I.D., grinned, and passed the phone to me.

It was clearly Grant. Hopefully he wasn't calling to cancel our date. "Hello?"

"Hi, Linea. It's Grant. The meeting has finally concluded. "

I suppressed a sigh of relief. "Successfully?"

"Yes."

"Congrats."

"Thanks. I feel like I earned it and now deserve a reward."

"How are you going to do that?"

"See you. How else?"

I felt this incredibly wide smile spreading across my face. "If nothing else, you're clearly a man with exquisite taste."

He laughed. "I'd like to pick you up at six o'clock tonight."

“How shall I dress?”

“Nothing too fancy. “

“Casual?”

“Yes, but not sweat suit casual, Linea.”

Damn I liked the way he said my name. “Okay.”

“I’ll see you then.”

“Okay.”

“Until six.”

“Until then.” I ended the call and handed Jen the phone.

To my surprise, she didn’t ask any questions. We talked about everything for the next hour and a half but my upcoming date with Grant.

At four o’clock, I returned to the guest bedroom and spent half an hour soaking in my favorite bath salts. As I did, I made an effort to keep my thoughts off Grant and the coming night.

I spent another half hour trying to decide if I still wanted to wear the outfit Jen and I had finally agreed on earlier. I settled on a two-piece peach silk dress with a scoop-neck bodice that clung to, but completely concealed my breasts. The dress had short sleeves and a swirling skirt that ended just below my calves. I slipped on a pair of two-inch dark mauve sandals, sprayed myself with my favorite scent, and picked up the matching clutch.

Satisfied with my appearance, I left the guestroom twenty minutes before Grant was due to arrive. I came to an abrupt halt in the doorway of the living room. There was no sign of either Jen or Jarrod, but Grant stood looking out onto the patio.

Chapter Six

He must have seen my reflection in the patio doors because he immediately turned. Damn he looked handsome in a dark suit and open-neck white shirt.

Smiling, he quickly crossed the room to stand just inches from me.

“You’re early,” I blurted out.

“I was eager to see you.” He reached down to brush the back of his hand against mine.

A jolt of electricity danced down my spine. I flashed him a quick smile and glanced around the room. “Where are Jen and Jarrod?”

“They’re in the kitchen checking on dinner.”

“Both of them?”

He nodded, a smile curving his lips. “As subtle as ever, huh?”

I laughed. “Super subtle.”

“Would you like a drink?”

Alcohol would only lower my inhibitions and I wasn’t sure I wanted that. “No. Thanks.”

He extended his arm. “Then let’s get the evening started.”

I slipped my arm through his. "Okay. Let's."

As we left the living room, Jen emerged from the kitchen and quickly walked down the hall. "What a handsome pair you two make." She smiled at Grant. "Doesn't Lin look great?"

"Jen!" I shot her a cold look, which she ignored.

Grant nodded. "Yes, she does." He turned to look at me. "Yes, you do."

The look in his eyes left no doubt of his sincerity.

Needless to say, I decided things could only get better after that. When Jen would have rattled on and on, Jarrod joined us in the foyer, cupped a palm under her elbow, and practically dragged her away and into the living room.

Grant grinned at me. "Alone at last."

Feeling flirty as hell, I leaned closed and grinned up at him. "I thought we'd never get rid of her," I whispered.

He laughed and squeezed my arm against his body.

We stared at each other for several moments before I realized I was leaning against him. I straightened and pulled my arm from his.

We walked to his car without speaking. Once we were seated, I asked about his meeting.

"Are you really interested or are you just being polite?" he asked.

"I'm interested," I insisted, even though I really wasn't.

Damn him, he took me at my word. He discussed the difficulty the meeting had presented for the next twenty minutes. After the first five minutes, I realized I was interested and started to ask questions.

By the time he parked in the lot of an upscale seafood restaurant near the Delaware River, some of my nervousness had dissipated.

“I hope you like seafood,” he said, offering me his hand as he opened the passenger door.

“I do,” I gave him my hand. And I like you too.

He stood very close to me and made it impossible for me to alight from the car without brushing against him.

I looked up at him. “You’re as subtle as Jen is. It must run in the family.”

He laughed and slipped an arm around my shoulders.

That felt so nice and natural, I slipped mine around his waist.

Over dinner, I discovered that we were both Philadelphia Phillies fans. He said he tried to attend a number of home games each season when his travel schedule allowed.

“I watch as many games as I can on TV and when they come to play in L.A., I always get tickets for the series,” I told him.

“When are you returning to L.A, Linea?”

I wasn't about to admit that depended on how well our date went. "I'm not sure," I hedged.

"Do you have any plans for the weekend?"

"Jen and I are driving down to the Jersey shore tomorrow morning after breakfast. Jarrod will join us there tomorrow night."

"How long will you be down there?"

"We're planning a long weekend. Jarrod will leave Sunday night, but Jen and I will probably drive back here either Monday night or Tuesday morning."

"What are your plans down there?"

"I don't have any other than lying in the sun, swimming, and reading. We'll probably go to Atlantic City at least one night for a little gambling."

"Sounds relaxing."

I nodded.

"Perhaps we can have dinner when you return."

I smiled and nodded. "I'd like that."

"So would I."

We spent the rest of the meal discussing baseball. Seated over coffee he asked if I wanted to go somewhere to dance. The idea of dancing with him again set off tiny fires in my nether regions, but after my lustful dreams of the night

before, I decided dancing with him wouldn't be wise. I might make a fool of myself by grinding against him like a low-class hoochie mama.

"Thanks, but I probably should pass on that."

He leaned across the table to gaze into my eyes. "Why?"

I blinked. "Why?"

"Yes. Why? It's not like we haven't danced before. You know I can control my hands and the rest of my body."

The problem was I didn't want him to control his hands or any other part of his body. Not that I was about to admit that. "Well—" I began.

"Good. It's settled."

"What? What's settled?"

He grinned at me. "We're going dancing."

"We are?"

"Yes. We are."

My heart had never been broken because I'd always gone out of my way to retain a large measure of control in my love life. Like most women I wanted to fall in love, get married, and have kids. But I wanted those things in my own time and under circumstances of my own choosing. I wasn't sure I wanted a man like Grant in my life. He seemed prepared to take charge of our relationship. I guess I was used to men willing to give and allow me more control.

Nevertheless, Grant had things his way that night. The way he determined we were going to go dancing when I'd already declined his invitation should have been an indicator that he might be trouble. Maybe part of me did know that but didn't care.

While I sat staring at him, wondering why I didn't insist he accept my refusal, he signaled for the check.

"Grant, I'm not in the mood to go danc—"

"We're going dancing." He grinned suddenly, casting a quick glance at my breasts. "Me and the girls have decided. All you have to do is be gracious and get with the program because the decision is made."

I stared at him.

He stared back. "Is something wrong?"

I shook my head. "If you and the girls agreed, who am I to try and stand in your way?"

"That's the spirit. Never try to come between a man and his girls."

"So now they're yours?"

"If not now, they soon will be," he said, his smile vanishing.

I bit back the urge to ask him if there was anything intimate he had I could claim—like his cock.

He suddenly arched a brow and smiled. Almost as if he'd read my mind.

“It’s yours if you want it,” he said softly. “And I hope you do. If you’re not interested, I’ll bet my girls are.”

“I wouldn’t count on that, Grant.”

“Oh, but I am. I can almost feel them hardening.”

My nipples were taut. I swallowed hard and punked out by looking away from his intense blue gaze. I ignored his soft, taunting laughter.

He reached across the table to brush his hand against mine. “I’ll behave for the rest of the night,” he promised.

I shrugged, annoyed at how gauche I felt. I was too old to feel so unsure of him and myself.

He gently squeezed my hand. “I promise.”

“Don’t make promises you can’t keep,” I said, pulling my hand away.

He smiled. “That’s the spirit, Linea. I admire a woman who gives as good as she gets.”

“Ask me if I care.”

He laughed.

I liked the sound of his warm laughter and the way his eyes sparkled when he did.

Less than an hour later, we were dancing slow and close together in a dimly lit lounge called For Lovers Only.

With the combination of his cologne teasing my senses and his palms pressed against my back as he guided me around the room, I felt lost in him. He was sexy as hell and exuded a sensual confidence that infused me with heat and desire. It took all of my willpower not to link my arms around his neck and rub myself against him in a way he'd find impossible to misinterpret. But I managed—barely.

Despite my level of sexual discomfort, he kept his composure. He didn't allow his hands to wander below my waist to my ass nor did he use our slow dance as an excuse to cop a feel.

We shared several dances before we returned to our table. I had a drink. He had bottled water. While I struggled to think of something witty and entertaining to say, he sat staring at me with a small smile playing around his lips—as if my struggles amused him. Damn him.

“Why are you trying so hard? Just let things take their natural course,” he said.

That was easy for him to say. Despite all his talk about my breasts, he seemed annoyingly cool and unfazed by my presence.

I ignored him.

He flashed his pearly whites at me.

Damn him and that sexy smile of his.

“Are you finished with your drink, Linea?”

“Yes.”

“Would you like another?”

If I had another one, I might jump into his lap and flash the girls at him. “No, thanks.”

“Then let’s dance again.”

I was feeling horny and thought dancing with him again was a no-no. Nevertheless when he rose and stood by my chair with his hand extended, I gave him my hand and rose.

He linked his fingers with mine.

I felt almost as giddy as a teenager as we returned to the dance floor.

When he folded me into his arms, I practically melted, pressing my breasts against his chest.

He sucked in a breath.

I smiled. Now we were both a little sexually uncomfortable.

He tightened his arms around my waist, pulling me closer to his hard body.

I surrendered to the inevitable, pressing my cheek against his shoulder.

We made no pretense about dancing this time. We just openly ground against each other. We shared two slow grinds before my nipples were hard and I felt his cock stirring against me. If we kept that up, I would be hard pressed not to

slip my hand between our bodies and palm his cock. And I wasn't about to stoop to that—at least not in public. I pushed my hands against his shoulders. "Grant?"

He lifted his cheek from mine and looked down at me. "What's wrong?"

His voice was even and held none of the tension I felt.

I shook my head. "Nothing. I think we should go." To bed. Oh, hell, take me to bed before I burst a blood vessel. Please.

His arms tightened around my waist. It was only for a moment, but I felt the unmistakable outline of his cock. Yes! He was horny too. I wasn't prepared to have intercourse with him that night, but damned if I didn't want to fool around a little—a lot.

The thought of his hands cupping my breasts, pinching my nipples or palming and slapping my ass just made me hornier than ever. In that mood, I considered anything short of allowing his cock into my pussy acceptable on a first date.

But first I needed to be alone with him. I pushed at his shoulders again.

He sighed, allowed his arms to fall away from me and stepped back. He glanced at his watch. "How about we take the long way back?"

I wasn't really interested in taking the scenic route because I just wanted to feel his big hands on my bare flesh ASAP. Still, I wasn't interested in having him

think I was an easy lay. How far did he live from the club? Would we make it to his place or start groping each other in his parking space?

“Linea?”

I nodded. “The long way’s fine.”

We left the club hand in hand.

I’m a modern woman but I love a man who likes to hold my hand in public. I’m not sure why unless it’s the thought that he can barely manage to keep his hands off me. There’s something undeniably sexy about a man unable to resist the urge to touch me.

For one electric moment when he held his car door open for me, he bent his head.

I held my breath and lifted my chin, eager to feel his mouth on mine and to taste and suck his tongue.

Instead of kissing me, he brushed the back of his fingers against my cheek, stepping away from me.

Disappointed, I slipped into his car.

He closed the door and walked around to the driver’s side. Once he’d started the car, he turned on the stereo, and drove away.

I closed my eyes, enjoying the soft jazz as I allowed myself to fantasize about our giving each other a scorching sixty-niner. It had been quite awhile since

anyone had eaten me and my pussy was suffering from tongue and mouth withdrawal.

Imagine my surprise when he parked the car and I opened my eyes to find we sat in Jen and Jarrod's driveway.

I turned to look at him. Surely he didn't think I was going to make out on their patio or inside their house. Or worse, did he and they expect us all to play together?

He got out of the car and walked around to hold the passenger door open.

When I made no effort to get out, he reached into the car to take my hand.

A jolt shook me. Feeling needy, I slipped out and leaned against him.

He sucked in a breath.

I smiled until he quickly stepped away from me. What the hell was his problem?

He provided a last unpleasant surprise of the night when he said good night and let himself out of the house. He left me standing alone in the foyer, unkissed, uncaressed, and filled with sexual frustration. Well, damn. He certainly knew how to put a damper on an evening.

After standing there for what felt like forever, I sighed and headed for the stairs. I was surprised but pleased to make it to the guest bedroom without

encountering Jen or Jarrod. The last thing I wanted was to talk with either one of them.

After I undressed and prepared for bed, I sat studying my reflection in the vanity mirror.

What had I done wrong? He surely must have known I wanted and expected a kiss at the very least. Damn him. I sighed. If he didn't call the next day to ask me out, I was going to be pissed. "But he will call," I assured my frowning reflection.

I spent a restless night wondering why Grant hadn't made a definite date with me. In the morning I woke tired and irritable. A bouquet of flowers from Grant arrived a little after nine. That brightened the day for me and left me anxiously awaiting his call.

But he hadn't called by the time we left for the shore at eleven. That put a damper on the ninety-minute trip for me. Jen was uncharacteristically uncurious about my date with Grant the previous night. She rattled on the entire drive until I felt like screaming at her to shut up for one damned hot minute!

Even arriving at the shore place, a three-bedroom house just two blocks from the beach did little to improve my disposition. Jen was still going on and on about nothing and with each passing minute, the silence from Grant put me in a worse mood.

Jen placed her house keys on the living room coffee table and slapped her forehead. "Oh, hell!"

"What's wrong?"

She stared at me. "I have to go back home."

"Now?"

She nodded.

"Why?"

"I forgot my birth control."

"Let Jarrod bring it when he comes."

She stared at me and then blinked rapidly. "I would...except he doesn't know I'm taking it."

"What?"

She shrugged. "He kind of wants another child."

"And you don't?"

She glanced away and shrugged. "I love him dearly and the twins are a source of endless joy for me, but I'm not going to go out of my way to get pregnant again. So I have to get it myself."

Great. Their marriage is so wonderful she's making decisions like that without any input from him. "Okay. Let's go."

"Oh, there's no need for you to come all the way back with me."

“Are you sure?”

She nodded. “Positive. You stay here and make yourself at home. Take either the middle or back bedroom. There’s food in the fridge. There are several lounge chairs as well as a table with an umbrella on the patio out back. There’s also a hot tub out there where we can relax and let the kinks out. You know the beach is only two blocks away. I’ll leave the keys with you in case you want to walk down to the beach. I should be back by four.”

Relieved not to have to listen to another three hours of her endless chatter, I nodded. “Do you want me to start dinner?”

“No. You’re a guest, but you are on your own for lunch.” She kissed my cheek and left the house.

I carried my suitcase into the middle room, changed into a two-piece cotton Capri set, and settled down with my ebook reader on one of the well-padded loungers on the patio out back. Between my restless night and the warmth of the sun, I soon became drowsy. I turned off my ebook reader and drifted to sleep.

I woke later with a start to find Grant seated at the table staring at me.

I lay smiling at him until I realized I wasn’t dreaming. This was real. After a moment of pure elation, I sat up. “Grant! What...what are you doing here?”

He rose and came to kneel on the side of the lounge next to me. He wore a short-sleeved white pullover with dark, casual pants. “Jen invited me to spend a long weekend here.”

“Oh.” I looked at my watch. It was nearly five o’clock. I glanced around. “Where is Jen?”

“In Philly.”

I frowned. “Is she driving back with Jarrod?”

“She’s not coming back.”

“What?”

“She’s not coming back.”

I stared at him. “What happened? Did their cars break down?”

He shook his head. “They never planned to spend the weekend here.”

“What? Then why...”

“She’s clearly playing matchmaker.”

Oh, damn but her ass was mine when I got back to Philly. “Will you give me a lift back to Philly?”

“Sure—on Monday night.”

“On Mon...” I felt my cheeks burn. “You think I’m going to spend the weekend down here alone with you?”

He shrugged. “I was hoping you might. There are three bedrooms here. It’s not as if I’m asking you to spend the night in any one of them with me. Of course if that’s what you want, I’m game.”

The idea of spending the night with him held definite appeal, but I wasn’t about to admit that. The fact that Jen had taken it upon herself to strand me down there with him pissed me off big time. It was one thing to arrange a blind date without my knowledge, but this was just too damned much.

I stared at him. How much had he known the previous night during dinner? “Did you know this last night?”

“If you’re asking if I knew she was going to drive you down here and then leave, no.”

“What did you know?”

“I knew I’d already accepted her invitation to spend the weekend down here.”

“And?”

“And what?” he shrugged. “I assumed she and Jarrod would be here as well.” He smiled. “Imagine my delight when I learned they wanted to spend the weekend alone in Philly.”

Just how surprised had he really been? I didn’t like to think the three of them had decided I needed someone else to make my decisions for me.

He reached out and took my hand.

A tingle danced down my spine, but I tugged at my hand until he released it.

“Why aren’t you seeing anyone special, Grant?”

“Special women want a special commitment.”

“And you’re not the commitment giving type?”

He shrugged. “There are a lot of available women. Narrowing the choice down to one isn’t easy or something a man should do without due diligence.”

What the hell had made Jen think I’d be interested in spending the weekend with a man who clearly wanted to play the field? Granted I wasn’t exactly looking to settle down myself, but it pissed me off that Jen seemed to think I was ready to drop my panties for Grant as soon as he winked at me. She’d done that with Jarrod but she and I were two very different women.

I rolled onto the other side of the lounge and stood up. I walked into the house without looking back at him.

Chapter Seven

He followed me inside. “Linea? What’s wrong?”

I swung around to stare at him. “What’s wrong? What the hell makes you think I’d take kindly to being tricked into a one-night or one-weekend stand with you, Grant?”

His gaze narrowed. “I had nothing to do with tricking you. Jen invited me down for the weekend. I accepted.”

“Obviously.”

“Don’t jump to wild, baseless conclusions.”

“Then tell me what happened.”

“Just before I arrived, Jen called me on my cell and told me she wasn’t coming. When I questioned her why, she told me she wanted us to have the place to ourselves for the weekend. I had no part in that decision.”

“How are you not involved?”

He shook his head. “I haven’t even tried to kiss you. Where the hell do you get off accusing me of trying to trick you into sleeping with me? This may come as

a surprise to you, Linea, but I don't need to resort to tricks to get any woman I want into bed!"

Clearly he was as pissed as I was, but I didn't care. "Are you going to drive me back to Philly or not, Grant?"

"Why the hell would I drive you anywhere? You don't want to be down here? Find your own damned way back to Philly!"

"You're a jerk!"

"And you're a..." He broke off, shook his head, and stormed across the living room. He jerked open the front door and slammed it on his way out of the house. Moments later I heard a car engine start.

I took a deep breath and sank onto the sofa. That went well, Lin. You sure know how to charm a handsome man. Besides, you shouldn't have been pissed with him when you know damn well this is all Jen's doing. And you just killed any interest he had in you.

I was too pissed to trust myself to call Jen and give her a piece of my mind. If I didn't allow myself to calm down first, our friendship, such as it was, probably wouldn't survive the weekend. Of course at that moment ending our friendship didn't seem to have any down side.

But in my heart, I knew that wasn't a decision I should make when I was hurt and angry. I decided I'd cook dinner, call Jen to tell her she'd better get her ass

in gear to pick me up in the morning, and spend the evening reading. I wouldn't waste another moment of my time fantasizing about Grant. And if Jen even dared mention Grant to me again, I'd rip her a new one.

Even as I told myself I didn't want to see or think about Grant again, I couldn't deny a small part of me regretted that we wouldn't get to know each other. I'd never get to see him naked and know how he stacked up to my dreams. Oh, well. No use whining now. You've blown it. Even if he had been involved in deceiving you, you could have chosen to take it as a compliment instead of going ballistic.

I went into the kitchen to start dinner. I'd toss a salad, make garlic bread, and broil a steak. I was sure Jen would have at least one bottle of red wine in the house. I'd chilled the wine and just finished making the garlic bread when the doorbell rang.

I frowned. It must be one of Jen and Jarrod's friends who had expected them to be down for the weekend. I left the kitchen and went to answer the door.

Grant stood on the doorstep with an elaborate bouquet of flowers. "Before you say anything, you're right. I'm a jerk. I'm sorry. Of course I'll drive you back to Philly."

I was happy to see him, but after the display of his temper earlier I wasn't so sure showing that was a good idea.

He extended the flowers to me. “These are for you, Linea.” He treated me to a slow, cajoling smile. “And the girls.”

The reference to my breasts should have pissed me off. It had the opposite effect. I caved. I took the bouquet and stepped back.

He followed me inside and stood with his back against the closed door.

We stared at each other.

He sighed and spoke first. “Last night at dinner, I knew you didn’t know I’d be here this weekend. I should have told you, but I promise you that I had no idea she planned to trick you.”

Looking into his eyes, I saw no sign of deception. He was a handsome, polished man. We’d flirted and he must have been astute enough to know that I shared his interest. He’d had no reason to trick me. I sighed and nodded. “I believe you.”

“Good.” Some of the tension left his body and he flashed a smile at me. “Now do you want that ride back to Philly before or after?”

I squinted at him. “Before or after what?”

His nostrils twitched. “Something smells good. We could drive back after we eat.”

“Aren’t you assuming a lot?”

He shrugged. “Probably, but surely you wouldn’t deny a starving man a meal?”

“And if I would?”

He leaned close to whisper against my ear. “I don’t think the girls will let you.”

Feeling my nipples harden, I shook my head before stepping away from him. “I wouldn’t count on them too much if I were you.”

He locked his gaze on my breasts. “Face it, Linea, they like me.”

Unfortunately so did I.

“So I’m invited to dinner?”

I’d be back in L.A. in less than two weeks and wouldn’t see him again. I decided to take advantage of the second chance I’d been given. “You’re invited to dinner and welcome to spend the night.”

I watched a flicker of interest flash in his eyes. “Spend the night?”

Feeling flirtatious, I ran the tip of my tongue over my lips before I took the flowers and smiled at him. “Yes.”

“You’re sure?”

“Yes. I’m very sure.”

He stared at my lips. “Linea—”

“There are three bedrooms. I have the middle one. You can have the back one.”

“Ah.” He gave an exaggerated sigh. “That’s what you meant.”

“Of course.” I gave a wide-eyed stare. “What did you think I meant?”

He laughed. “You’re the most charming ball buster I’ve ever had the pleasure of meeting.”

I laughed, deciding I liked flirting with him. “Are you spending the night?”

“Oh, hell yes.”

“Good.”

We had dinner out on the patio. We flirted with each other all through the meal and I enjoyed looking up to find his gaze locked on me. When he asked me to dance, I willingly waltzed into his arms.

He held me close with both hands on my back as we slow danced under the stars. It felt natural to wrap my arms around him and lay my cheek against his shoulder.

I lost track of how long we danced before I felt his cock stirring against me. I shivered. He probably knew my nipples were hard peaks. Ok, Lin, this is getting out of hand. Take your head off his shoulder and step away from him so he knows he’d better keep his lust under control. Instead, I ground my hips against his groin. And then rubbed my breasts against his chest. “The girls say hello,” I whispered.

He sucked in a breath before he slowly slid his hands down my back to my waist.

My heart raced. Slide them down further, Grant. Cup your big palms over my ass and grind your cock against me. Make me wet and horny for you and then fuck me all night long.

After several moments, I lifted my head from his shoulder to look up at him.

He bent his head.

I closed my eyes.

The tip of his tongue touched my lips.

I shivered, my lips quivering apart. Oh. Nice.

He tightened one hand around my waist, slid his other hand down to my ass, and settled his warm, firm lips on mine.

Oh...yes. I eagerly leaned into him.

Sweeping his tongue into my mouth, he kissed me with a slow, deliberate hunger that set my entire body on fire. I slid a hand up his back to his neck. I curled my fingers in his hair, returning his kiss with a greedy delight I made no effort to conceal.

I love to be kissed and I'm a sucker for a man willing to spend time getting me turned on by not rushing the kissing phase.

It was almost like Grant had read my mind. Sliding one hand between our bodies to caress my breasts, he spent a lot of time holding me in his arms kissing me and stroking the girls. He alternated between deep, hot kisses that made me burn for him and soft, sweet, nibbling caresses that slowly turned me into one big, throbbing nerve ending in desperate need of the ultimate release only obtainable at the end of his hard shaft.

Feeling his cock pressed tight against me, my determination not to sleep with him vanished under a wave of longing so strong I moaned against his lips and shook in his arms. I suspected I'd regret my decision in the morning, but I knew I wouldn't be able to deny my need for fulfillment that night.

He dragged his lips from mine and stared down at me with his fingers in my blouse between my cleavage. He took a slow deep breath before he stepped away from me, withdrawing his hand.

I bit my lip, confused and horny. Why was he releasing me?

He raked a hand through his hair. "I think I'd better say good night before things get out of hand."

As far as I was concerned, things were already out of hand and that's the way I wanted it. However, I wasn't so far gone that I was ready to toss my pride to the winds. If he didn't want to sleep with me, I wasn't going to beg. Or was I? I moistened my lips.

He brushed a hand against the back of mine. “Why don’t you go inside? I’ll clean up out here, lock up for the night, and see you in the morning.”

I stared at him. I could see he was serious. He wasn’t going to try to sleep with me. Why the hell was he so intent on being a damned gentleman? I swallowed the urge to tell him I wanted to sleep with him and nodded instead. “Okay. I...I’ll see you in the morning, Grant.”

He nodded, hesitated briefly, and finally bent and pressed a quick kiss against the corner of my mouth. “Good night.”

I placed a hand on his chest and leaned against him. “Should I...lock my door, Grant?”

“You can if you like, but I can promise you I won’t be making any midnight raids on your room.”

Damn him! I leaned away from him.

“I’ll see you in the morning, Linea.”

Oh, damn, I was so aroused, but clearly he didn’t share my need for intimacy. I nodded and quickly went inside. I undressed, left the door unlocked, and lay naked in bed. Maybe he wouldn’t keep his word.

But after lying sleepless for over an hour, I decided to go relax in the hot tub until I could unwind enough to fall asleep.

I put on a bathing suit, slipped on a robe, and went out to the patio. Grant was in the hot tub with his eyes closed. I turned to go back inside.

“Join me, Linea.”

I turned back to the hot tub.

His eyes were open and I saw the flash of his teeth. “Couldn’t sleep?”

“No.”

“Neither could I. Join me?”

I hesitated. “Are you...decent?”

“Am I...oh...” He laughed and stood up.

He wore a pair of dark trunks. “It’s safe to join me.”

I took off my robe and slipped into one of the two spaces opposite him.

I closed my eyes, enjoying the warm jets caressing my body.

“What are you doing over there? Join me here.”

I opened my eyes. “What?”

He nodded to the space beside him. “I don’t bite.”

And that was the problem. I wanted him to bite. Maybe he needed a little more encouragement. I stood up and reseated myself next to him.

“That’s better. Don’t you think?”

“Hmm.” I closed my eyes.

“You don’t expect to go to sleep do you?”

I opened my eyes and looked at him. “Why not?”

He lowered his gaze to my mouth. “Because I’m so horny I’m about to burst.”

Finally, he was ready to fuck me. “Sounds like a personal problem to me.”

“Oh, yeah?”

I nodded, smiling. “Very personal.”

He leaned over and licked my cheek, slowly sliding the tip of his tongue against the corner of my mouth. He brushed his hand over my breasts.

My nipples tightened.

“I’m thinking the girls want to make it a shared problem.”

That’s all it took. I turned my head with my lips already parted.

As before, he lingered over my lips. He kissed me with a slow warmth, as if he couldn’t get enough of kissing me.

I responded, loving how he nibbled and savored my mouth before he swept his tongue between my lips. A man who knew how to kiss was worth his weight and then some in gold.

I slipped my arms around him and made a small sound of encouragement when he lifted me onto his lap.

Still kissing me, he slid a hand up my belly to my breasts. Thrusting his tongue in and out of my mouth, he pinched my nipples through my swimsuit.

I curled my fingers in his hair, sliding my other hand between our bodies. I ran my palm over his chest and abs, and down to the waistband of his trunks.

He dragged his mouth from mine. He spoke with his lips against my ear. “Don’t stop now, sweet.”

When I didn’t immediately respond, he pressed my hand against his groin. “Touch me.”

Enticed by the hard and thick length pulsing against my fingers, I slipped my fingers under the waistband of his trunks. I took several moments to brush my fingers over his pubic hair before I slid my fingers down to trail over his cock to cup his balls.

He groaned and reclaimed my lips.

There are few things more exciting than palming a man’s jewels. I returned his kiss while gently pumping him. I trailed my fingers along his balls.

He responded by pulling away long enough to push my swimsuit off my shoulders, exposing my breasts.

“Oh...damn...hello you beautiful girls,” he whispered before he rubbed his face against my cleavage.

I tingled. Oh, yeah, baby. Yeah.

He sucked my right nipple into his mouth. He twirled his tongue lovingly around it with a sweet heat I felt down to my core. His mouth and tongue felt hot and wet, and sent shivers through me.

I gasped and shuddered, pressing his head against my breasts with my free hand. I ran my other hand up from his balls to close around his shaft.

Just feeling how thick and hard he was flooded my pussy. I wanted to feel him sliding inside me so badly my stomach muscles kept contracting. But he was determined to deny me that satisfaction. He lifted me off his lap long enough to peel off my swimsuit before he pulled me back onto his lap. While I eagerly pumped him, he sucked my breasts until I ached to feel him inside me.

When I rose with the intention of straddling his hips and sitting on his cock, he grabbed my hips and held me immobile.

“What’s wrong, Grant?”

“Nothing, but it’s late. We’d better go to bed, Linea.”

“To bed?” I felt my pussy dripping at the thought. Oh, yeah, big boy, let’s you, me, and the girls go to bed and love the night away.

“Alone.”

“What?”

Grant urged me to my feet and stood up. He still had his trunks on, although his cock protruded through the slit.

I stared at his cock and then looked up at him, confused and so horny I felt as if I'd burst if he didn't fuck me.

He stepped out of the hot tub. Pushing his cock back into his trunks, he picked up my robe and offered me his hand.

I gave him my hand and stepped out of the hot tub.

He slipped the robe over my shoulders before he retrieved my swimsuit from the hot tub, wrung it out, and handed it to me without meeting my gaze.

Still hoping to entice him into bed, I leaned against him.

He kissed my cheek but turned me away from him. "Do us both a favor and go to bed before I really lose it."

What the hell did it take to get him so aroused he considered he'd lost it?

He pressed a quick kiss against the back of my neck. "I'll lock up."

I turned to face him, making no effort to close my robe. "Should I lock my bedroom door, Grant?"

He shook his head. "You can if you like, but I'll keep my promise."

Damn. I turned and went inside filled with sexual frustration.

In my bedroom, I dried off and then lay in bed naked. I turned on the clock radio to cover the sound my personal vibrator made. I played with my breasts and pressed it against my clit until I came. Then I rolled onto my stomach and finally slept.

Chapter Eight

I woke the next morning to the smell of brewing coffee. After a quick shower, I dressed in a pair of cotton Capris with a matching top and made my way into the kitchen.

It was empty, but there was coffee in the pot and a covered tray on the counter. I lifted the lid. There were scrambled eggs, bacon, and toast on the warming tray.

I poured myself a cup of coffee, picked up a piece of bacon, and wandered through the house. In the living room, I could see Grant seated at the patio table on his cell phone with a cup in front of him.

I paused in front of the open doors.

Grant looked up, waved me out, and rose. "Yes. Yes, I know. No, I won't be working this weekend....I'll call you on Monday...yes. Monday. Bye." He ended the call and laid his phone on the table. He smiled and pulled a chair out for me. "Morning."

Surprisingly I didn't feel shy with him. I smiled up at him and sat in the chair, finishing my piece of bacon.

"Finished breakfast already, Linea?"

I sipped my coffee. "Actually, I just grabbed my coffee and a piece of bacon."

He arched a brow. "That anxious to see me?"

"Aren't you the conceited one?"

He shrugged. "Were you anxious to see me?"

"Not me."

He smiled, glancing briefly at my breasts? "Were my beautiful, adorable girls?"

What woman could lie to a man who displayed such reverence for her breasts? "Yes," I admitted.

He rose to lean over me. "Morning, ladies." He brushed his cheek against my cleavage and straightened. "I'll be back."

I sat sipping my coffee until he returned with the warming tray with my plate, the coffee pot, and cream and sugar on it. He set the tray down near me before he resumed the seat across from me. "Can I interest you in remaining here for the weekend if I promise you don't have to lock your bedroom door?"

Damn but he was determined to make me behave in a shameless fashion to get laid. I shrugged. "Why not?"

He grinned. "Great. How do you want to spend the day?"

"Lying around enjoying the sun." And your cock inside me and your mouth, tongue, and teeth on my breasts.

“You want to go to the beach?”

And risk some overly tanned, skinny hussy catching his eyes? I shook my head. “No. It’s sure to be crowded. Right here is very nice.”

He nodded. “I couldn’t agree with you more. I’ll make lunch.”

I smiled. “And he cooks too. Jarrod said you weren’t gay or bi.”

“He’s right. I have absolutely no sexual interest in other men.”

“Do you have any in me?”

He nodded. “Oh, hell, yeah.”

“Good.” I picked up my fork. “So you like full-figured women?”

He shrugged. “I’d rather a woman have lots of curves than not enough. Now tell me what you have against white men.”

I put my fork down. That was a strange statement considering how close I’d come to sleeping with him. “Who says I have anything against white men?”

“Jen says you don’t date white men.”

Jen talked too damn much. “So?” I shrugged. I had nothing against white men—except that they weren’t black men. “I think white guys are perfect.”

I watched his shoulders relax. “You do?”

I nodded, my lips twitching. “Sure—for white women.”

He stared at me for several moments before he leaned back in his seat and laughed. “You are determined to bust my balls, aren’t you?”

I gave him a wide-eyed stare. “Who? Me? Bust your balls? Never.”

He locked his gaze on mine. “So what do you have against me?”

“That’s a strange question considering what almost happened last night, Grant.”

“Did you want it to happen?”

Damn, he was dense. “Yes,” I admitted.

“But?”

“But I would probably have regretted it this morning.”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t date white guys,” I reminded him.

“Fine. You don’t date us. Does that preclude your fucking us?”

My cheeks burned and my stomach muscles clenched at the picture my mind conjured up. “I’ve never slept with any man who wasn’t black.”

“What’s so damned special about black men?”

His obvious irritation surprised me. “I’m black. There’s nothing mysterious about my preferring black men.”

“Jen is black as well.”

“I’m not Jen,” I told him.

“Thank God for that.”

I frowned. “And speaking of Jen, do you participate in her games?”

“Which games are you referring to?”

“You know what games I’m talking about.”

His gaze narrowed. “If you’re asking me if I flirt with Jen, then the answer isn’t just no. It’s hell no!”

I believed him. I sighed, relieved. “What bothers you about my preference in men, Grant?”

“Who says anything bothers me about your supposed preference?”

“My supposed preference?” I shook my head. “It’s a real preference.”

“That might be because you haven’t met the right white man.”

Instead of annoying me, his assertion amused me. “Well, hell. Aren’t you an overconfident bastard?”

He laughed. “Maybe, but I usually get what I want, Linea.”

“Am I supposed to assume you want to sleep with me?”

“Hell, yeah.”

I looked down at my cooling breakfast, my heart pounding. My pussy was flooding and my cheeks burned with heat. I sure as hell wanted him to fuck me, but—

“So what are my chances of succeeding?”

I lifted my head to meet his gaze. “I don’t do one-night stands.”

“You can make an exception for me.”

I stared at him. “You really are overconfident, aren’t you?”

He shrugged. “Should I pretend I don’t know most women find me attractive?”

“If you have so much success with women, you shouldn’t have to waste time trying to talk me into a one-night stand,” I retorted.

He laughed and ran a hand through his hair. “If I spend much more time with you, my balls will be permanently deflated.”

“You sound like a man in need of a cool shower.”

“Or some hot, sweet pussy.” He leaned across the table to take my hand in his. He lifted my palm to his mouth. “Put me out of my misery, Linea.”

I moistened my lips. The urge to surrender to my desire for him was difficult to resist. Recalling how close I’d come to sitting on his naked cock the night before, I knew it wouldn’t take much persuasion to lure me into a weekend of mindless and irresponsible sex. That was the last thing I needed. I withdrew my hand from his. I shook my head. “I’m not having intercourse with you.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t owe you an explanation for not sleeping with you.”

“Give me one anyway.”

I blinked at him. Who the hell did he think he was?

“If I decide to sleep with a white guy, it won’t be casual.”

He reclaimed my hand, gently squeezing it. “There are other ways we can satisfy each other without intercourse.”

“If you think I’m going to suck your cock—”

“I wish you would.”

“What?”

He tightened his hand on mine and tugged at it.

I rose.

He pushed his chair back.

I shook my head.

He tugged at my hand again.

I reluctantly moved around the table toward him. “Grant—”

He pulled me down onto his lap. He immediately wrapped his arms around me, pressing his lips against my ear. “You can work your way up to sucking,” he whispered. “Until you’re comfortable with that, you can jerk me off and I’ll eat you.”

Just the thought of his mouth and tongue on my pussy sent a shudder through me.

He nibbled at my ear. “Touch me, sweet,” he encouraged.

“No penetration with your cock,” I warned.

“Promise,” he told me, sliding his lips against my neck.

I turned my head, greedy for a kiss.

He surprised me by urging me off his lap and rising. He took my hand. “I want to enjoy this. Let’s go inside to bed.”

Even though what was left of my sanity screamed at me to tell him no, I went with him willingly. Inside the living room, he drew me into his arms and kissed me. He did it slowly, lingering over my mouth with his lips and tongue until I was so hot I arched closer, rubbing my breasts against his chest.

By the time he stepped away from me, I was more than ready. He led me into the middle bedroom where he tore off his clothes quickly. Damn he had a beautiful body. I particularly enjoyed seeing his fully erect cock in broad daylight. It was about average length, but thicker than any I’d ever had inside me.

For one greedy moment, I was hard pressed not to part my legs and invite him to fuck me after all, but I overcame the insane urge. He took me in his arms and started kissing me again while rubbing his cock against me.

I shuddered, reaching between our bodies to fondle his cock and balls.

He groaned and pulled away. “You’re overdressed, sweet.”

“Yeah? What do you plan to do about it?” I asked, my gaze locked on his beautiful cock.

“Undress you.”

“So who’s objecting?”

He undressed me quickly before he stood back to stare at me. His gaze lingered for a long time on my breasts before moving down over my belly to lock on my pussy. Without a word, he dropped to his knees, gripped my hips, and brushed his warm lips against my pubic hair.

I trembled and widened my stance. "Eat me," I begged.

He released my hips to part my slit with the fingers of one hand. "Damn, you have a pretty, pink pussy," he whispered.

"Say hello to her," I encouraged. "She'd love to meet your tongue, lips, and fingers."

"They've wanted to meet and taste her from the moment we met."

"Eat me."

He brushed his tongue against my clit.

I shuddered, pressing his face closer. "Oh...yes."

He ate and teased my pussy with a slow heat that set my entire body on fire. I felt as if I were burning and consumed with the need to come. My climax quickly built in the pit of my stomach and when he slid a hand around my body to rub against my asshole, I sobbed and exploded against his lips.

He thrust a finger into my ass and lapped at my pussy with his tongue. The sensation of having my ass finger fucked while he alternated between lapping at my pussy and sucking my clit, prolonged my climax until the waves of pleasure

were too much to bear. I gasped and shoved against his shoulders, while stumbling away from him.

I walked on trembling legs over to the bed and sprawled onto my back, gasping.

He followed me, slid between my legs, and thrust his tongue back into my pussy and his finger in my ass.

Damn. He continued making oral love to me until I sobbed his name and came again. Then he slid up my body to settle between my trembling legs. I felt his thick cock pressing against one of my thighs.

Oh, hell. He was going to fuck me without protection and I didn't have the will to object. I wanted to feel his thick length slowly sliding into my already flooded pussy. I slid my hands down his back to cup his taut ass. "Fuck me slowly," I told him. If I were going to have unsafe sex, I at least wanted it to last long enough for me to enjoy it.

But I'd misjudged him. He gripped my hips, fastened his lips onto my right nipple, and slowly rubbed his cock between my thighs and sucked and nibbled at my breast until he suddenly groaned. Moments later, I felt him coming against my thigh.

Call me crazy but I was so touched by his not taking advantage of my weakness that tears welled in my eyes and spilled down my cheeks. “Thank you, Grant,” I whispered.

He seemed to understand what I was feeling because he lifted his head from my breasts, kissed my lips, and settled his full weight on me. “I won’t ever take advantage of you, Linea,” he promised. “And I’ll do my best never to hurt or disappoint you.”

I believed him. I trusted him. I wanted to get to know him. And I wanted him inside me. “I don’t know what to say, Grant.”

He brushed his lips against my ear. “You can say you’ll make an exception in my case.”

“You want us to date for the rest of my vacation?”

“No.” He rolled off of me and propped himself up on his elbow. He slid his other palm down my belly to my pussy. “I want to fuck you.”

“I want that too,” I admitted.

“Good, but I want to be your lover beyond your vacation.”

A tingle danced down my spine as he rubbed his thumb against my clit. “A long distance romance—”

He slid a finger inside me. “Who says it has to be long distance?”

I parted my legs. “I live in L.A.,” I reminded him.

He slipped a second finger inside me. "So do I," he said.

A wave of joy engulfed me. "You do? But I thought..."

"I came to Philly to meet you."

"To meet me?" I reached down to remove his fingers from my pussy and sat up. "You did?"

He nodded, stretching out on his back. "I wasn't really interested in meeting you until Jen emailed me two pictures. You were wearing this pink frilly outfit in one. Damn you look good in pink. You had a bathing suit on in the other one. The moment I saw those pictures, I fell into instant lust. When she told me you were in Philly, I called in favors and rearranged my schedule to fly here to meet you."

"Even though you knew I don't date white guys?"

He sat up and shrugged. "I planned to change your mind."

"Damn you're arrogant," I told him.

He arched a brow and bent to brush his lips against my breasts. "But you are going to be my woman anyway, aren't you?"

There were probably several good reasons to say no. I didn't care about any of them. "Yes," I admitted. "I am."

"And these beautiful ladies are going to be mine alone?"

"Yes...oh, yes."

He released a sigh and slipped off the bed. “Stay right there,” he said and left the room.

I lay on my back, staring up at the ceiling. What have you just done, Lin? Have you lost your mind? You are not going to be his woman and you are not going to let him fuck you! You both came. Stop thinking with your pussy and let what you’ve shared be enough. Get your ass in gear and get the hell back to Philly.

I lay where I was, rubbing my pussy and getting wet and excited as I fantasized about being fucked with Grant’s incredibly thick dick.

When he returned to the bedroom several minutes later with a condom on his fully erect cock, my pussy flooded. Dismissing any remaining remnants of sanity, I parted my legs in an unmistakable and shameless invitation.

He quickly crossed the room and joined me on the bed. He slipped between my legs, pausing with his cock against my entrance.

My heart raced and my thighs shook. I couldn’t ever recall hungering for cock more.

He stared down at me. “Are you sure? I want our first fuck to be special. If you have any doubts, it’ll kill me, but I can wait.”

For an answer, I reached down, closed my fingers against his thick length, and thrust my hips upward.

That’s all the encouragement he needed.

He drew my hand away and thrust his hips forward, slowly driving his thick cock into my wet channel.

When I felt our pubic hair touching, he laid his big body on mine and sought my lips.

Oh, hell yeah!

I moaned with pleasure as he fucked me slowly. Ripples of pleasure tightened my belly and shook my entire body with each hard, wonderful thrust. I love a man who doesn't rush through a fuck as if he's afraid he'll be pulled out if he doesn't rut into me like there's no tomorrow.

Don't get me wrong. I can fully appreciate a man who behaves as if mine is the best pussy he's ever had and it's so good he goes wild, but I almost demand a certain level of expertise and finesse in my lovers.

Grant took his time fucking me and he knew what he was doing. He made every touch of his lips, tongue, and cock count. He filled my pussy with lust and touched my inner emotions with a joy and passion I couldn't deny or hide.

My back arched, my toes curled, and I moaned like an alley cat in heat.

He pounded my pussy while biting my breasts and clutching my ass to keep his cock as deep in me as possible.

Oh, God, what a blast. I sobbed his name and enjoyed an absolutely delicious orgasm.

He continued sliding in and out of my climaxing pussy for several moments before he finally shuddered against me, groaned in my ear as he ground his cock as deep as he could get it in me, and came himself.

As I lay under him, enjoying each groan and jerk of his big, hard body, I kept my eyes closed and pretended he was coming in my bare pussy instead of in the condom.

He collapsed on me with his lips against my ear. “Oh, damn, sweet, that was good.”

I smiled, stroking my fingers down his ass. “Well, I do have good pussy,” I said.

He bit my ear. “Good isn’t the word. Damn. Exquisite isn’t adequate either, but it’s all I can come up with at the moment.”

Oh, hell, but he was smooth.

I tightened my pussy around his cock.

He groaned in protest.

I laughed.

“Instead of wasting time teasing me, you’d better get on the phone and give your old lovers the bad news.”

“What bad news?”

“This pussy is now off limits to them.”

“Oh? Why?”

“Because you’re my woman now,” he told me in a deep, passion slurred voice. “And I don’t plan to share you, my ladies, or my pussy with anyone else. I’m going to keep you and it all for myself.”

I’ve never tolerated my lovers making decisions for me. But after that heavenly fuck and with his cock still stretching my pussy, I decided that sometimes it was okay to just enjoy being a woman and letting the man occupy the driver’s seat—at least for awhile.

I clutched his ass and stuck my tongue in his ear. “Oh, hell that sounds like a plan I can enjoy,” I admitted. Of course I didn’t mean it. I knew I was thinking with my pussy. That would change once I was back in L.A. and had a clear head.

“Oh, I’ll make sure you do enjoy it, sweet,” he promised. He kissed my neck and slowly eased out of me.

I moaned in protest.

He curled his body against my back. He slid his big palm between my legs to cup my pussy. “One of these days, I want to be able to lie with you after a hot fuck and feel my cum seeping out of my pussy.”

I shuddered with lust at the thought and turned in his arms. “Oh...shit...you’re making me hot.” I reached for his cock.

“Then let’s go raw, sweet.”

“What?”

He pushed my hand away, removed the used condom, tossed it on the bed, and then wrestled me onto my back.

“Hey!”

He slid on top of me with his bare cock pressed against my entrance.

“Grant!”

He rubbed his cock head against my slit and then slipped the tip inside me.

“No!” I pushed against his shoulders.

“It’s too late to protest, sweet. I know you’re on the pill and I’m taking my pussy the way I want it.” He eased his hips forward until the head of his shaft was between my wet slit.

Later, I told myself I’d been a fool not to do more to stop him. What I did was inch my hips off the bed.

He took the hint and pushed his hips downward, driving my ass back on the bed and his naked cock balls deep inside me.

It had been years since I’d had a naked dick inside me and I’d forgotten how utterly blissful it felt. I lost it. I slipped my legs around his body, clutched his tight ass, and moaned with lust.

And it was on. We fucked like a pair of mindless animals discovering sex for the first time. He ruthlessly plundered my pussy and I greedily convulsed myself

around his thick length, making him struggle to even withdraw a single inch out of me.

I dug my nails in his taut, clenching ass, and he bit my breasts and slapped my thighs until they stung. The room was filled with the smell and sound of two greedy lovers grinding against each other, and moaning loudly and wildly as we fucked each other.

I matched him stroke for stroke, and felt my belly clenching and my thighs shaking within minutes of his naked cock invading my pussy.

I heard myself sobbing and moaning how much I loved his thick dick with shameless abandon.

He slammed his hips down on mine, hurting me in such a good way, and encouraged me to take every inch of his cock and enjoy it because it was all mine.

That first, reckless fuck didn't last long but it was one of the most delicious ones of my entire life. When I came, my climax was so intense, I felt as if I was losing a part of myself in him.

He came within seconds of me, groaning and shaking as he shot his cum directly into my pussy. Then he collapsed on top of me shaking and groaning.

I cradled him close and he remained on top of me until his cock slowly slipped out of me.

He eased me onto my back and stroked my pussy. “Push it out,” he encouraged. “I want to see it seeping out.”

I happily obeyed, squeezing my internal muscles until I forced his cum to seep from my pussy.

“Oh, damn, sweet. I’ve never seen a more beautiful sight,” he said, his voice filled with awe.

“Oh, come on, Grant, it can’t be the first time you’ve seen your cum seeping out of a woman’s pussy.”

“It’s the first time I’ve seen it since high school.”

I blinked. “It is?”

He stroked my pussy, rubbing his cum over my clit. “I don’t do unprotected sex, Linea. This is the first time I’ve gone raw since high school.”

I was touched, but commonsense was pushing its way back into my head. “Did you enjoy it?”

“Oh, hell yeah.”

“Good. Because it was your first and last time going raw with me. No condom? No pussy, Grant.”

He turned me onto my stomach and slapped my ass. “We’ll see about that.”

“Yes, we will,” I said, closing my eyes.

“I told you this is my pussy now.”

“Whatever.”

Before I knew what he intended, he parted my ass cheeks, climbed on top of me, and thrust his cock into my pussy. “This is mine and I’ll take it however the hell I like and I like it raw,” he said, and began fucking me.

He was strong and on top of me. What could I do exceptt enjoy another raw fuck?

Chapter Nine

After he came in me again, we kissed and fell asleep in each other's arms. When he woke me up later, we took a shower, and then returned to bed where I sucked his cock and balls and greedily swallowed every drop of his seed.

Later we had dinner in Atlantic City. After several slow dances, we returned to spend the night and the rest of the weekend fucking.

On Monday morning, he called Jarrod to say we'd be spending the rest of my vacation down there—alone.

I've always enjoyed sex, but I don't think I ever enjoyed it as much as I did with Grant. Each time I felt his naked cock powering into my pussy, I felt as if an entire new world of delight lay before me. On our last night alone, he gave me such an exquisite fuck that shook me to my core. And when I lay gasping on the bed, sobbing with pleasure, I was too sated to protest when he parted my cheeks and gently pushed his cock up into my ass.

He was thick and anal sex with him had a rough edge to it. But he was gentle and before it was over, a nice buzz replaced the pain. I slowly relaxed my tense body, and he rolled us onto our sides.

As he tenderly fucked my ass, he rubbed my clit, nibbled at my neck and ear, and pinched my breasts until I moaned and came. Only then did he come in my burning ass.

When he eased his thick cock out of my now stretched ass and removed his condom, I tumbled into his arms, shaking with tears in my eyes. Happy, content tears. Oh, hell, but I was his woman to do with as he liked. Saying goodbye to him was going to be a bitch.

In the morning, we had a gentle, shower fuck before we headed back to Philly International Airport.

Jarrold and Jen met us there for a drink before leaving me and Grant alone to say our goodbyes. He would be catching a plane to France later that night.

As I boarded my plane, I knew it was going to be a long time before I got over him.

Still when I got back home, I called James and Pete and told them I was ending our arrangement. James tried to talk me out of it, but Pete was relieved since he'd met a woman he wanted to get serious with while I was in Philly.

Even though I didn't expect to see Grant again, I knew I was no longer interested in casual flings. I wanted a serious relationship with a man who loved and adored me enough to put up with my whims as Jarrold did with Jen's. Given

that Grant wasn't interested in a committed relationship, I knew I couldn't see him again. Or I'd risk falling in love with him.

It only took a five-day separation from him for me to realize that I'd been betrayed by love. I'd been foolish enough to fall hard for a man who didn't do commitments. As I lay alone in bed night after night hungering for him, he was probably going raw in his French woman's eager pussy. Damn him. Damn me for falling for him, his smooth talk, and his sugar dick.

The first two-weeks of his France trip, he showered me with flowers and candy, but he never made any attempt to call me. There was never any message on the cards that accompanied the flowers. During the last two weeks of his trip, the flowers and cards stopped.

Six weeks after we'd parted at the Philadelphia International Airport, I decided he was probably too busy banging some French hussy to want to continue our relationship. Not that you could actually call seven days of almost non-stop fucking a relationship.

I avoided talking to Jen because part of me blamed her for my unhappiness. If she hadn't maneuvered me into meeting Grant, I wouldn't have fallen for him and wouldn't now be struggling to pick up the pieces of a broken heart.

Two months after I'd last seen Grant, I came home from work one day and found a dozen red roses sitting outside my apartment door. I hurried inside and

plucked the card from the roses. It was sealed and I struggled for a few moments before I managed to tear it open.

My eyes welled when I read the message.

After eight weeks of celibacy, I'm horny as hell. Although I encountered scores of beautiful women, none of them were able to wipe thoughts of you and the nights of passion we shared from my thoughts or mind. I've missed you so much I can almost taste my need for you. I ache for you. My need and desire for you has nearly consumed me. Get the ladies ready to be kissed, licked, sucked, and adored. Lube up your hot pussy, sweet, your man is back and in desperate need of your loving. Grant.

It wasn't the declaration of love I wanted and needed, but it would do—for the moment. I was so happy I spent a good ten minutes sobbing with relief.

He arrived with another bouquet of roses half an hour later. I flew into his arms. After several hot kisses, we tore each other's clothes off, and fell down to the living room floor.

I rolled onto my back and parted my legs.

He pushed his bare cock into my pussy.

We both moaned and shuddered.

It had been so long. Too long. No woman should have to go two long months without Grant's naked cock.

“Take your pussy and fuck me hard, baby,” I told him. “Fuck me like my pussy is your exclusive property.”

“It is, sweet. It is. Mine. Only mine.”

“Only yours, Grant.”

After several hot, raunchy fucks, we made it as far as the bedroom. We took a nap then he made slow, sweet love to me that was so tender, I cried.

He kissed my tears away and asked me if I was still his woman.

“I don’t want to get hurt,” I whispered.

“I won’t ever willingly hurt you,” he promised. “Will you trust me, sweet?”

I buried my face against his neck. “I think I want more than you’re willing to give me.”

He kissed my hair and held me close. “Don’t be too sure of that. I had a lot of opportunities to fuck other women over the last two months, Linea. I turned all of them down because none of them were you.”

I lifted my head and stared down into his eyes. “I want a commitment, Grant.”

He sighed and nodded. “I know.”

“Are you going to give me one? Can you give me one?”

He reached up to touch my cheek. “I’ve never been celibate for more than two weeks before. I’m ready to commit to a totally exclusive relationship with you.”

“That’s not enough, Grant!”

“That might not sound like much, but that’s far more of a commitment than I’ve ever made with any other woman. And I’ve had more lovers than you’d want to know about, Linea. My life changed when we met, but I need some time to adjust to what I’m feeling. Bear with me, sweet. Give me time. I promise I won’t hurt you.”

“I love you.”

He sighed. “Apparently I love you too.”

“Apparently? I’m supposed to be satisfied with apparently?”

“I’ve never been in love before, sweet. I’m not sure what it feels like. But I know I used up favors that it took me years to build to meet you, and I just endured eight weeks without sex because we were separated. I wasn’t even tempted to sleep with anyone else. You were the only woman I thought about. That sounds like love. Give me time to prove it to us both, Linea.”

I should have kicked his ass out of my apartment. But I loved him and I had a feeling he loved me too. It would just take a little time for that fact to sink in. I could wait until it did.

We had a lot to discuss—including why he'd stopped sending flowers after two weeks but at the moment, I just wanted to savor having him in my arms and my bed knowing he hadn't loved any other woman.

I wasn't known for being patient, but I had a feeling Grant was worth a little effort. So I didn't push him to say he loved me. I just bided my time, and did my best to support him and show him each time we fucked that I loved him.

Seven months later, I was glad I'd been patient with him when he took me out to dinner at our favorite restaurant, ordered champagne, slipped this beautiful white diamond ring on my finger, and asked me to marry him.

After sobbing with joy, I got myself together enough to say yes.

We spent the night making love and plans. In the morning, I called Jen and thanked her for tricking me into coming to Philly to meet Grant. I took him to meet my parents and was surprised at how quickly they embraced him, and accepted him as their future son-in-law.

Grant's mother was a little more difficult to win over, but by the time Dad walked me down the aisle, I felt sure I could win her over with a little patience.

After three months of being married to the only man I've ever loved, I've decided that being betrayed by love is the best thing that could ever have happened to me. I wouldn't trade Grant for a million dollars and I know he feels the same way.

Life is good. I'm a woman who has everything. I know what lust at first sight feels like as well as what falling in love at first sight feels like. That's what happened the night Grant and I met. Love at first sight. My Grant is everything I want and need in a man. He's hard working, a passionate, unselfish lover, a considerate husband, and when we have our first baby in five months, I know he'll be a great father.

The End

<http://www.marilynlee.org>

Author Bio

Marilyn Lee lives, works, and writes on the East Coast. In addition to thoroughly enjoying writing erotic romances, she enjoys roller-skating, spending time with her large, extended family, and rooting for all her hometown sports teams. Her other interests include collecting Doc Savage pulp novels from the thirties and forties and collecting Marvel comics from the seventies and eighties (particularly Thor and The Avengers).

Her favorite TV shows are forensic shows, westerns (*Gunsmoke* and *Have Gun, Will Travel* are particular favorites), mysteries (loves the old Charlie Chan mysteries. Her all time favorite mystery movie is probably *Dead, Again*), and nearly every vampire movie or television show ever made (*Forever Knight* and *Count Yorga, Vampire* are favorites).

She loves to hear from readers who can email her at Mlee2057@AOL.com or who can visit her website, <http://www.marilynlee.org>. She has a Yahoo! Group

called Love Bytes that readers can join by sending an email to: marilynlee-
subscribe@yahoogroups.com

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