

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

DESIREE HOLT
ALLIE STANDIFER

Scorched

Turn Up the Heat

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

Scorched

Desiree Holt & Allie Standifer

Book one in the Turn Up the Heat series.

Kasey Jacobs spends her days as a bookkeeper for a discount furniture store and her nights writing erotic romances, still waiting to meet the man who could ring her chimes. Maybe her new neighbor, Skyler Brody... Too bad she hasn't seen him since the day he moved in.

Then Skyler, a cop recuperating from a gunshot wound, spies Kasey pleasuring herself in front of an open window and nearly trips over his tongue rushing to introduce himself. The sex is instantaneous and hot, with all the explosiveness of fireworks.

But Kasey wants something Skyler isn't prepared to give. Perhaps they can find a way to each other's heart—if they don't burn themselves out with their nightly erotic activities.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Scorched

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SCORCHED

Desiree Holt & Allie Standifer

Dedication

As always, to my very own personal hero, who dared me to be myself.

—Desiree

To all the people of Tennessee for their bravery and fortitude in the face of disaster.

—Allie

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Lone Star: Lone Star Brewing Company

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Chapter One

Elin sucked in her breath as his large hand cupped her breast, his thumb rasping her nipple through the thin fabric of her t-shirt. Her panties dampened and the drumbeat of need pounded through her body. He lightly nipped the line of her jaw before capturing her mouth again in a predatory kiss.

Kasey Jacobs sat back in her desk chair and took a healthy swallow of her iced tea. Despite the fact that the air-conditioning churned and she wore only thin shorts and a thinner tank top, she felt way too hot, her skin stretched tight, her heart racing slightly. It was always like this when she was writing the hot sex scenes in her books. How pathetic was it that her sex life existed within the pages of the erotic romances she created? Elin Farrell was having more sex than she was.

Idly she glanced out the window of the room she'd converted to her study, taking in the darkened house across from hers. They were the only two houses in the cul-de-sac and the way they'd been built, they directly faced each other. The owner of the other house had moved in three weeks ago but except for moving day she hadn't laid eyes on him. The broad width of his muscular shoulders. The dark tangle of sweat-dampened hair. Oh yeah, everything about her mysterious neighbor made her hormones stand at attention.

No lights came on at night. Weird, but so were males in general. Men had been a constant disappointment to her, unlike the heroes she created. Having decided that fake sex had far fewer problems, she'd sworn off men, at least for the foreseeable future.

But for some reason tonight he invaded her thoughts. As she wrote about Elin's lover the faint image of her neighbor kept jumping into her mind. Yummilicious. That was the word for him. He could have walked straight off the pages of one of her books. From just those glimpses of him sexual awareness had charged through her body.

Probably a good thing she hadn't seen him since or she might have made a total fool of herself. And she knew what a disaster that would be.

Well, hell!

Turning back to her computer, she picked up where she'd left off, trying to immerse herself in the scene again.

His tongue was a liquid flame, scorching the inside of her mouth as his hand continued to knead her breast. He whispered in her mouth, "I'm going to fuck you, Elin, until you know who you belong to."

Fuck!

Kasey hit Save and stood up. She was getting more turned on by her words than usual, and her neighbor's shadowy form kept superimposing itself on her thoughts. She looked out the window again and wondered what he did at night that he was never home. She'd begun keeping her blinds pulled up on the off chance she might catch a glimpse of him but no such luck.

She needed to get him out of her mind and do something to take care of the hunger riding her body.

* * * * *

Skyler Brody lay perfectly still on his bed, the lights in his bedroom off and his blinds wide open. From where he lay he had direct visual access into the house across the way and the mouthwatering redhead who sat there every night at the computer. He figured she didn't think he was home so she, too, kept her blinds up. Something for which he was extremely grateful.

She always wore the same type of outfit, skimpy shorts and top. Her generous breasts pushed against the soft material, making his cock harden every time his eyes focused on them.

Getting shot in the line of duty hadn't been any fun, although it was always a hovering possibility for cops. Especially Homicide cops. The wound had been a through

and through and shouldn't have caused him much of a problem. Except it was in his shooting arm so he was on leave until physical therapy cleared him as fully operational.

His first night home instead of out on the streets, lying in his darkened bedroom, he'd discovered the tantalizing show in the house that shared the cul-de-sac with him. Now he lay there each night, watching her like some voyeur, and fantasizing about all the things he'd like to do to her.

When he saw her rise from her desk chair and leave the room a shaft of disappointment arrowed through him. Usually she sat there much longer, doing whatever it was she did at the computer. The sight of her always made his cock harden and his balls draw up in frustration. At least he knew the most important parts of his body still worked. If only he had someone to work on them with.

He wondered where his neighbor had gone and if she'd be back.

He was just about to turn over when she came back into the room and...

Holy fucking shit! She was naked!

* * * * *

Kasey had thought a million times about moving the full-length mirror into her bedroom. It just seemed the more logical place for it. But when she'd bought the house the mirror had already been hung in the front bedroom so she'd just left it there, preferring to have her master bedroom farther away from the street. When her neighbor moved in she'd stopped using it for more than just checking her outfits every day or seeing which clothes looked best on her. Too bad, because when she pleased herself it always turned her on more when she could watch.

But after three weeks of not seeing him after dark she'd figured out her neighbor did something that took him away nights, so she had her privacy again. She supposed she could have closed her blinds, but the idea of imaginary voyeurism—someone watching her with her toys—upped the arousal factor. Of course, if he were really watching...

She shook her head. Impossible. She'd have seen some indication of it.

Maybe I should put a mirror on the bedroom ceiling!

She laughed to herself as she moved back into her study, imagining the jokes the workmen would make if she placed an order for that.

Kasey wet her lips as she placed her little pink tote with her toys in it on a small, low table. More than a week had gone by since the last time she'd done this, but she was stuck at a place in her book and needed inspiration. Reaching into the tote she plucked out one of her favorites, the whispering butterfly. She'd gone to a sex toys party doing research for her books—"Yeah, right," her friend Ariel had laughed—and the butterfly had fascinated her. Once she'd tried it out, it had become her favorite toy to start her sessions with. Adding a drop of a special cream to it that would make it adhere to her skin, she stood sideways to the window, facing the mirror.

Casually she brushed her fingers over her carefully waxed pubic area, feeling the heat rising from the skin. She enjoyed looking at herself with no curls to impede her vision. She could see the delicate pink of her labia and the tip of her sensitive clit just peeping out from its hood. The sight always gave her a rush.

Moving her feet apart, Kasey separated the folds of her cunt with the fingers of one hand and with the other placed the clamps of the tiny butterfly right on her clit. She pressed the little ball that replicated the head and immediately the delicate creature began moving, the wings fluttering slightly against her inner lips.

Immediately sensations shot through her body, vibrations humming through her pussy and into her womb. She cupped her breasts with her hands, feeling the heavy weight of them, and rubbed her thumbs across the hardening tips. Sometimes she imagined they were the hands of a lover, but she'd never had a lover as gentle or considerate with her as she could be with herself. They'd been inventive, demanding, imaginative, but it was still always about them. This way it could be about her and she didn't have to worry about anything.

Selfish, maybe, but she thought she'd earned the right.

As the butterfly continued to vibrate and flutter its wings, the mass of tiny nerves in the inner walls of her cunt responded, setting up tiny tremors in her inner muscles. Her cunt hungered for something to fill it, but she always made herself hold off as long as possible, prolonging each sensation.

When she felt her eyelids drooping, her mind tempting her to block out the sense of sight to enhance all the others, she pinched her nipples, hard, and forced them open. Staring at her pussy in the mirror, she watched the little butterfly and felt the first drops of moisture trickle down the inside of her thigh.

She never had a problem getting wet. Her greedy pussy always lubricated itself well. And despite the size of some of the cocks that had plundered it in the past, her inner muscles remained nice and tight. She felt the tremors in her vaginal walls increasing, almost as if the wings of the butterfly had moved inside her flesh and were beating inside her.

Her pulse was pounding harder now, stimulated by the insistent thrum of vibration racing through her. When she could stand it no longer she gritted her teeth to force herself to move and reached into the tote again. The dildo she pulled out was one of her favorites, long and thick and very lifelike. Lifting one foot and resting it on the low table, she inserted the dildo into her cunt, taking her time, pushing it in partway, pulling it out, then pushing again.

She drew out the process until at last she had it all the way in, and the muscles of her pussy clamped down on it avidly.

Yesss!

Oh, yes. That was what she craved. That huge cock filling her, stretching her tissues. Pushing on the tip of the butterfly again she increased its speed and began moving the dildo in and out of her cunt. Faster, faster, faster. One hand gripped her breast, rolling and pinching the nipple as the other thrust the dildo in and out of the wet, grasping cavern.

More, more, more!

The orgasm built low in her belly, spreading outward like the flames of a greedy fire, consuming her until it reached its goal and exploded. It was all she could do to stay upright as the spasms shook her and her cunt convulsed over and over again. When the last tremor died away she pulled out the dildo and stopped the butterfly, very carefully removing it from her sensitive, swollen clit.

Dropping the toys into the tote, she lowered herself to the floor, spread her legs and with heavy-lidded eyes looked at herself in the mirror. All that pale pink flesh between her thighs was now rosy with fulfillment, flushed with the heat of climax, and glistening wet.

When she could finally pull herself together, she rose on slightly unsteady legs, picked up the tote and headed toward her bedroom.

* * * * *

Holy fucking shit!

Skyler lay in his bed with his heart racing, pulse pounding, one hand fisted around his cock. As the show across the street progressed he'd thrown back the sheet covering him and taken himself in hand. His other hand cupped his balls, cradling them as he watched the erotic dance and slowly stroked himself.

If he could have asked for anything else to make this little episode better—besides having this woman right in his room with him—it would have been for her to be turned more toward him so he could get a full view of what he was sure was a delectable little cunt. Shifting to a better position, he turned onto his side with one knee bent, caressing his hot dick as his eyes devoured the scene across from him.

Naked! Her little puss was naked! She either shaved or waxed. Skyler didn't know and didn't care. He was just glad she did it.

God, she was such a wet dream. Had she done this before and he just hadn't noticed? Not damn likely. Probably before he moved in, when she'd had the cul-de-sac to herself. His arrival had no doubt put a crimp in her "activities". He figured his lack

of appearance at night as well as the absence of lights on in his house had convinced her it was safe to put on her little show again.

He wondered what she did during the day that inspired her to do this at night. Or what she was working away on every evening. That was more likely.

Oh, shit!

He watched her ride through her orgasm, body spasming despite her obvious efforts to hold herself together. And when she lay down on the floor and studied her pussy in the mirror, he just lost it. His eyes glued to the window, his hand pumped harder and faster until his balls drew up, his body tensed and his semen spilled out over his clenching fingers.

At last he lay back, exhausted, forcing himself to breathe slowly until his heart rate returned to normal. He managed to stumble to the bathroom and clean himself up, then fall back into bed. Tomorrow, come hell or high water, he was going to introduce himself to his neighbor.

* * * * *

A little after six Kasey wearily pulled into her garage. She leaned her head back as the automatic doors closed leaving her in the comforting dark stillness. How much more could she take, she wondered? Furniture For People, her current employer, paid a decent salary with the all-important benefits, but her brain just about slipped into a coma every day she spent there.

An accountant for the discount home furnishing chain, Kasey didn't expect intrigue or floor shows, but save her from middle-aged women with their pot-bellied husbands bickering over interest for a couch that wouldn't last the length of their contract.

Easing her eyes open, Kasey took a deep breath and let the day's annoyances wash through her. She'd made it home, to her personal sanctuary where no one and nothing could bother her. A place where the madness stopped, the mask of boring goody two-shoes fell away and she could truly be herself.

Through the mind-numbing boredom of her work, Kasey at least had plenty of time to let her imagination flow. Several new plots, positions and potential characters took root in her imagination. She needed to get it all down before she forgot.

Resigned Kasey forced herself out of her comforting cocoon of darkness and into the brightly lit kitchen of her home. She'd made a habit of leaving the light on in there so the gathering darkness wouldn't shroud the place in gloom. Twenty minutes later with her clothes changed, hair caught up in a loose ponytail and dinner warming in the oven Kasey let out of deep sigh of relief.

"Nowhere to be, no one to talk to for the next twelve hours." The thought always made her smile and gave her morale a small boost.

The doorbell rang right as the water boiled for the noodles. Startled she dropped the bag all over the counter and floor, cursing whomever dared interrupt her private time. Not bothering to pick anything up, she'd get rid of the idiot at the door then clean up the mess that had been the prep work for her dinner. Stomping her way to the front door, she threw it open prepared to blast whatever jackass ignored her No Soliciting sign and stopped dead at the vision in front of her.

"Uh," she stumbled over a greeting.

Over six feet of lickable slightly familiar goodness smiled at her and held up two beers. "Thought it was time I met my neighbor."

This was the guy living across the street from her? Shit, she really screwed up by not getting out in her yard more often. Then again he'd only moved in a few weeks ago. But Holy Taco night, Batman, this guy could have walked off the pages of one of her books. Fantasy and reality collided in her brain with a dangerous thud. "Neighbor?"

"Yeah, I live in the white house with the porch." He jerked a thumb over his shoulder. "Look I know this seems weird, but you're pretty much my only neighbor. I thought the least I can do is learn your name and offer to pick up the paper when you go out of town." He shot her an adorable smile complete with twin dimples.

Heat exploded between Kasey's thighs at the dimple sighting. Damn, this man was perfect fodder for her next hero. How could she resist finding out more about him? Her inner hussy snorted, "Yeah, research, sure that's all you want him for."

"I don't get a paper." Then wanted to slap herself. Good-looking men did not show up at her door every day. "I mean, thank you for the offer, but I read my news online."

"Okay, then what if you offered to feed my cat if I wasn't home?" The shining amusement in his coffee-colored eyes invited her to laugh along with him.

"Do you even have a cat?" Feeling more comfortable, Kasey leaned against the door, certain she'd have time to slam it in his face if he did something weird.

His husky laugh sent shivers down her spine and straight between her legs. "No, but I'll head to the shelter this weekend if it means getting you to let me past the door."

Stifling a laugh, she made the effort to wipe all signs of amusement from her face. "Look, I'm sure you're a regular guy, nice even, but I don't know anything about you. I have no idea if you're as harmless as the Easter Bunny or a scumbag. I don't make it a habit of allowing strange men into my house just because they have a cold beer and a killer smile."

If anything his grin widened. "Killer smile, huh? I can work with that," he teased, then grew serious. "I'm glad you're a cautious woman. If more people were like you they'd be a lot safer."

"I should tell you just in case my phone is programmed to dial 9-1-1 if I scream at it."

He laughed. "I assure you I'm a perfectly respectable person. No arrests, hardly even a speeding ticket."

"That's a refreshing change," she joked.

"So I'm going to set the beer down now and show you my ID. Okay?"

Not wanting to take a chance just on the remote possibility appearances were misleading and he turned out to be a new breed of rapist or serial killer, Kasey backed

into the hallway keeping the thick door between them at all times. "Fine, just no weird stuff. I have mace, too." A complete lie, but at least he wouldn't think she was defenseless.

If her threat bothered him his handsome face gave no indication. With cautious movements, he lowered the two dark glass bottles to her porch then flipped out a worn leather billfold from his back pocket.

With a quick grab, Kasey snatched the worn leather case. "Skyler Brody." A fast glance at the picture and the man in front of her assured her they were one and the same. "Well, then. At least you don't look like a serial rapist. Come in, please, Skyler Brody. And thank you for the beer."

And didn't her crappy day just take a turn up.

* * * * *

The woman looked hotter than he'd imagined. With her curly red hair, sparkly green eyes and lush body, Skyler wanted nothing more than to rip her clothes off and fuck her right then and there.

"Thanks," he said, and had to clear his throat. The images from last night flashed through his mind again, making him very grateful for the loose sweatpants he'd chosen to wear. "You've got a nice place here."

She shot him a tentative smile over her shoulder as she led him deeper into her house. "Thank you. I like it here. It's a quiet neighborhood where nothing much happens. Pretty safe for a woman living alone."

The living room, which opened into the kitchen, gave the whole area a broad open feeling. With the wide plush couches, stone coffee table and large windows, Skyler immediately felt at home. Especially when he saw the huge flat screen television above the stone fireplace. "Wow, I really like what you've done with the place."

She followed his gaze and laughed. "Yeah, my sister Kira is a buyer for that big electronics store. She's always passing along her leftovers. This is the third new set I've had in the past year."

His brother, Reed, would love hearing that. A woman who knew and understood electronics and all the other gadgets his younger sibling got paid to play with. He briefly wondered if he should try to introduce the two. Then shook his head. First Sky needed to sate his ever-growing need with his neighbor. Let Reed find his own girl.

"Must be nice, upgrading every time something new comes out," he said, trying to find a way to ease into her nighttime activities.

Her shoulder lifted in a casual shrug. "I guess, but it's a pain resetting everything else to match up to it."

Deliberately he clinked the bottles in his hand and, as he'd hoped, her gaze went straight to them. "Hope you like Lone Star?"

"Love it, actually. My favorite brand. I've got some beer mugs in the freezer if you'd like one."

"That would be perfect." He handed the bottles over and then crossed the room to sink into one of the dark brown couches. "This furniture is great. Mine's nowhere near this comfortable."

Besides being perfect for an afternoon nap, the width of the cushions would be ideal for a little one-on-one action as well. Too easily he could picture Kasey naked, one smooth pale thigh thrown over the back of the couch while the other rested on his shoulder. Her bare wet cunt would gleam in the light of the fireplace. With slow, easy movements Sky would then use one hand to gently open her folds while lowering his head—

"Here we go." Kasey's cheerful voice shattered his wonderful fantasy and caused his cock to throb in painful awareness.

He quickly grabbed a pillow to cover the tent poking up between his thighs and carefully took the frosty mug from her. "Thanks." He took a fast sip, hoping to cool the need burning inside him.

One look into her bright green eyes and he knew anything short of burying himself balls-deep inside her wouldn't work. Time to lead the conversation where he wanted it to go.

"You've got what, two bedrooms here? That's what I have, but I turned the front one into the master bedroom and use the other as a home office."

Her eyes widened at the news. So, he mused, she didn't know his bedroom looked directly into her office. It made last night's encounter all the more erotic.

"Ah, no...I mean yes. I have two bedrooms, but the master's in the back of the house with my office in the front. More room and better light when I work on the weekends." She twisted her hands nervously in her lap while color rose on her cheeks.

"You do a lot of work from home?" He pushed, wanting to know more about this stunningly beautiful woman fate dropped into his lap.

"Yes... I mean no." Her eyes skittered away as she groped blindly for the frozen mug on the coffee table. After a healthy swallow she set the drink down and took a deep breath, which he couldn't help but notice did lovely things for her breasts. "I'm an accountant for a local furniture store. My day job, I guess you could call it. I work or write at night from home."

"A writer," he said thoughtfully. The more he played it in his mind the better sense it made. Since his injury he'd watched her sit at her laptop every night, sometimes typing away for hours, lost in whatever she'd created. "That's got to be more exciting than crunching numbers."

Kasey smiled. "You have no idea, but until I build up a bigger fan base, I'm stuck with the dreaded day job."

"Would I have read any of your work?" If he hadn't then he'd be on the internet tonight ordering everything she'd ever published.

Again her cheeks pinkened. "I doubt it, not unless you read *Romantica*."

"*Romantica*?" What the hell was that? Some new chick romance?

"It's romance for women just a little hotter than usual," she explained, her eyes looking everywhere but at him.

Hotter than usual? How hot had they been before? Maybe he'd been missing out by dismissing romance as nothing more than wimpy men and whiny women. He was so heading to the nearest bookstore tomorrow. Then the most brilliant, erotic idea came to him.

"I read somewhere writers have to do tons of research to get their stories right. You do that?"

"Oh yes," she agreed with a fervent nod. "Readers are very intelligent and they know when you're trying to put something over on them."

"So you do most of your research here?" Come on, honey, he mentally cajoled, take the bait and put my cock out of its misery.

"Depending on where the plot takes me, but yes, I can do just about everything I need from my office." He watched her, judged her body language as relaxed and open. Right where he wanted her.

"I might have seen a bit of your research last night through my window," he said, his voice low and husky at the memories of Kasey pleasuring herself. "I wondered if it would be more accurate with a live test model. If so, I'm at your disposal."

"You saw!" Kasey jumped to her feet, ignoring the empty mug that had fallen over in her haste. "I can't believe this. I didn't think you were home." She covered her face with her hands and moaned. "This is humiliating."

Having heard enough Sky got to his feet and crossed the room to her. With gentle movements he tugged her hands down and stared straight into her embarrassed green eyes. "I've never seen anything hotter or sexier in my life. I came so hard watching you I saw stars."

At his admission silence settled between them while he let her absorb his words. A few minutes passed before Kasey finally spoke, her voice hesitant and unsure. "You liked watching me?"

He used one finger to gently tilt her chin up. When their eyes met he said, "I loved watching you touch yourself. Seeing that sweet bare flesh made me hungry to taste you. I've been waiting for you all day, dying to slip my tongue inside you and fuck you until you scream and beg for my cock."

She said nothing, shock immobilizing her, and just stood there with his finger under her chin and blinked those big innocent-looking eyes at him. Thinking he'd pushed too far, too fast, Sky dropped his arm and backed away. "Look, I'm sorry if I got out of line. Like I said seeing you last night pretty much blew my mind and I haven't been able to stop thinking about you. Uh, I'll just let myself out."

He turned to leave when a soft hand at his shoulder stopped him. He looked down and his body blushed while his heart did a weird flip.

"Give me a second to catch up," she asked softly. "You may have been thinking about me all day, but this is the first moment for me."

"Should I say I'm sorry again?"

She shook her head and red curls sprang from her loose ponytail to frame her delicate heart-shaped face. "No, I kind of like the idea of you seeing me."

"I'd like to see a whole lot more. I'd love to touch and taste a whole lot more as well." He was honest, not sure how much more pressure his poor dick could take. One touch and he'd blast off.

"Why don't we start with a kiss and go from there," she offered with a shy, hesitant smile. "It may be just like kissing your sister."

"I don't have a sister," he whispered before leaning down to cover her lips with his own.

Chapter Two

His lips were like rough velvet against hers, brushing against her mouth like the kiss of a butterfly before he increased the pressure. His hands gripped her head, holding it in place while his tongue danced across the seam of her lips before thrusting inside. She gripped his wrists, holding on for dear life as the kiss built and built. The tip of his tongue traced a fiery line across the roof of her mouth and the smooth inside flesh of her lip. Her knees weakened and her legs threatened to collapse beneath her as heat consumed her body.

Time stood still, everything in her body focused on the kiss, the touching of lips and tongues, the back and forth thrust as he drank from her, tasted her, pulled her tongue into his mouth. When he lifted his head they were both breathing unevenly.

Skyler took one of her hands and lowered it to where his cock was making an impressive tent in his sweat pants. He pressed her hand to his erection and her fingers wrapped around it automatically. The heat radiating from his swollen flesh shot up along her arm and into her body, making her pussy weep and her pulse ratchet up its erratic beat.

"See what you do to me?" His voice was thick, husky with need. "I've been like this since I saw you last night."

"You have?" She trembled with the desire coursing through her.

"So are you going to take pity on me and relieve my condition or are you going to make me keep suffering?"

"Well," she whispered. "I guess we could chalk it up to special research."

"Oh, I'm all for that. But only if we get to it pretty soon."

She laughed breathlessly and backed up to the couch, taking him with her. Her back was pressed into the nubby fabric of the cushions as his weight came down on top

of her. He licked her lips lightly before moving his mouth down to the pulse beating so desperately at the hollow of her throat. When he placed his open mouth over it and sucked lightly her entire body clenched. She wanted to rip off all their clothes and feel him skin to skin.

But Skyler was way ahead of her. He lifted himself enough to slip one hand between them and tug at her tank top, pulling it up until she felt the cool air on her breasts.

"No bra." His voice was heavy with admiration. "Thank god."

Then his lips closed over one nipple and immediately it hardened. Arrows of sensation shot through her to her womb and set the inner walls of her cunt fluttering. She arched her body up to him, her hands sliding beneath the fabric of his t-shirt across the smooth, hard muscles of his back.

Skyler hummed his appreciation, a sound that vibrated through her entire body.

He moved his mouth to her other nipple, giving it the same attention, the same wet heat. When he closed his teeth over it and bit down very gently a soft moan echoed in the back of her throat.

"We have too many clothes on."

Skyler lifted himself from her, pulling her tank top over her head at the same time. He tore off his own t-shirt and dropped his sweat pants. *He's a god*, she thought, staring at him. Every bit of his tall body was sculpted with fine muscle definition, his chest broad and dusted with fine dark hair, his thighs powerful. An angry red scar ran inside one shoulder, something she wanted to remember to ask him about later. But not now. Now she had other things to consider.

His magnificent cock hung between those thighs, open to her scrutiny. Kasey's eyes widened. His shaft was long and thick, with a purplish head darkened from the blood rushing to it. A tiny drop of pre-cum glistened at the slit. Impulsively she sat up, leaned forward to wrap her fingers around the thick erection and drew her tongue slowly across the velvety head.

"Shit, Kasey!" Skyler stood there with his body stiff and his fists clenched. "Give me a break here."

"You taste good," she murmured.

He unclenched his fists and moved forward. "My turn."

In seconds her shorts and thong were gone and she was splayed on the couch with one leg over the back and the other over Skyler's shoulder as he knelt between her thighs. Lean fingers caressed the naked skin of her mound before pulling back the swollen flesh of her labia. One swipe of his tongue and her body convulsed.

"God, you taste better than anything I've ever wrapped my tongue around." His voice vibrated against her flesh as he bent to his task again. His wide shoulders kept her thighs apart. He nibbled at her swollen, sensitive clit, licked her inner lips, teased at the opening of her cunt with the tip of his tongue. She pushed her hips at him and pressed the heel of one foot on his neck, trying to hurry him, trying to increase the pressure, but he was relentless in his teasing and tasting.

Every swipe of his tongue set her nerves firing and her muscles quaking. Every lick, every nip, heated her until she was sure she couldn't stand it another moment. The muscles in her belly clenched and her hips jerked.

"Hold your breasts for me." He sat up, her juices glistening on his lips. "Pinch the nipples."

She did as he asked, so hot for him she would have done anything for him. Watching from beneath heavy-lidded eyes, she saw him reach for his sweatpants, dig into the side pocket and pull out a condom.

"Do you always come with high expectations?" she asked.

He grinned. "And a whole lot of hope." He sheathed himself and knelt between her thighs again. "Kasey, I could feast on your cunt all night but if I don't get inside you in the next ten seconds I might lose my mind. Or explode."

Sliding his hands beneath her bottom he lifted her to him, positioned the head of his cock at the opening of her pussy and began an agonizingly slow glide inside. The thickness of his shaft stretched her muscles as he inched deeper and deeper. A brief thought flashed through her mind that she had never been this eager or ready for any man before, never wanted another man with such intensity. From the moment he walked in her door she was lost and she knew it.

And then she couldn't think at all anymore. He buried himself deep inside her, his balls touching the rounded curve of her ass. He nudged her hands away from her breasts and closed his mouth around one nipple again as his hips started a smooth back and forth movement. Kasey reached for his shoulders, his neck, anything to steady herself as heat and sensation consumed her and she flew into space.

"God, you're like a silk fist around me," he groaned, lifting his head as his hips rocked and his balls kissed her ass.

But she couldn't speak. Every bit of breath had left her body and her heart thudded so hard she was sure it would pound out of her chest.

Back, forth. In, out. Each movement creating delicious friction on her swollen clit. Again, again.

The orgasm built within her, clawing its way up from deep inside her and she clung to his sweat-slicked muscular body with all her might.

"Shit." The word slipped out between clenched teeth. "I don't know how much longer I can hang on here, Kasey. You're burning me alive."

"Do it," she breathed. "Now."

She was there, the climax bursting like a Fourth of July fireworks display, raking her from head to toe. Her cunt clenched around his spurting clock, milking it, pulling at it, her legs locked around him as they exploded together. She lost herself completely, the spasming of his cock driving her into yet another orgasm, the tremors shaking her like a leaf in the wind.

And then they collapsed, totally spent, breaths rasping, hearts banging on ribs, both stunned by the enormity of their shared climax.

Kasey had no idea how long they lay there, wrapped in each other's arms. She wondered if it would be possible to just stay like this forever. Skyler moved first, carefully easing himself from the clasp of her body, kissing her mouth and each of her nipples as he shifted position.

"I need to take care of business," he murmured, brushing his lips against hers once more as he stood up.

Holy fucking hell!

How the hell did he get so lucky? And had someone thrown a stick of dynamite into the living room or had he just experienced the most mind-shattering orgasm he'd ever had in his life?

Skyler wrapped the spent condom in tissue and dropped it into the waste basket in the small bathroom. He rested his hands on the vanity counter and leaned forward, looking at himself in the mirror. His face still wore a completely satisfied look, but he saw the heat continue to flicker in his eyes. He looked down and saw his cock hardening again.

Not possible!

He'd heard other men occasionally talk about women with whom the sexual attraction was so strong they were sure they could stay hard forever. He knew it was an exaggeration but now he at least had a glimmer of what they meant. He just hadn't thought women like that existed. Until now.

He ran the cold water and splashed it on his face. Time to get hold of himself. Pull himself together. He'd come over here figuring after what he saw last night he'd have a quick recreational fuck, maybe see if she was up for an occasional friends-with-benefits arrangement. Now he wasn't sure he ever wanted anyone but him even looking at her.

Get hold of yourself, Brody. You just met her. Remember what happened the last time you let your guard down. Go slow. And for fuck's sake, don't tell your brothers about her.

When he was sure he was steady enough to control himself, he found his way back into the living room. Kasey was lying exactly where he'd left her on the couch, skin flushed with the aftermath of passion, a siren smile playing on her lips.

"So," she said, with a teasing note in her voice. "Is this your idea of the Welcome Wagon?"

He burst out laughing. "All that and a sense of humor, too? I think I hit the jackpot."

Chapter Three

With one foot on the wooden rail of the porch Sky used his other foot to slowly move the porch swing back and forth.

“Almost seven at night,” he mumbled. “Where the hell is she?”

He looked across his lawn to the darkened windows of Kasey’s house. Granted they’d never actually set a real date, but still in all the time he’d spent watching her, Kasey had never come home this late.

When the sound of a car engine reached his ears Sky’s heart sped up. As the only two houses at the end of the street the vehicle had to be Kasey finally coming home. He stood, not caring if he looked like a fool, to get a better look. Maybe she’d been avoiding him, maybe she’d had second thoughts after he left last night.

After he’d taken her on the couch they’d moved their activities to the bedroom or at least attempted it. With her sweet naked body in his arms Sky hadn’t been able to resist touching her. One thing led to another until an hour later he’d used up another condom and had a serious case of rug burn on his knees. But it had been more than worth it to hear her screaming his name and coming around his cock.

He’d scared himself with this overwhelming need he had for her. The last woman he’d felt even marginally this attracted to walked out on him when the stress of erratic hours and potential danger grew too much for her. While he wasn’t sure where this thing with Kasey was headed, Sky knew he didn’t want to lose her before he had a chance to find out. That’s why he’d shown her his driver’s license instead of his badge last night. When he got to know her better he’d tell her about his job in the homicide division.

The sound of a car approaching grew louder, too loud to be his sexy neighbor’s little hybrid compact. With a sinking realization he knew who the vehicle had to belong

to. Sure enough a large black truck pulled into his driveway less than a minute later. The driver's side door opened at the same time as the passenger's and two large, very familiar-looking men stepped out.

"Hey," the first of the two called out while grabbing bags from inside the truck. "Think you can bring your tired crippled ass over here. We brought food."

"Not because we wanted to." The second man spoke around an armful of grocery sacks. "A certain blonde threatened us with bodily harm if we didn't check up on her poor hurt baby."

The last comment had the two men cracking up with laughter as they hauled their burdens up the porch steps.

Sky grunted and got to his feet. "I'll be sure to tell Mom thanks for sending you two yahoos over here. I do have food here, you know."

His youngest brother, River, snorted as he disappeared inside the house. "Tell that to Mom. She thinks we did something horrible to make you leave the house."

Reed laughed. "I keep trying to tell her we'd kick River out before you, but you know how she is."

Sky did know. His mother had a backbone of steel and the heart of a melted marshmallow. To put in forty years as a cop's wife and then raise three sons only to have them pick up the badge? Yeah, his mom was a warrior in her own right. Still he resented her for sending his brothers over to check on him.

"There is such a thing as a phone. I talked to her yesterday. She said she and Dad love Arizona. They're making friends and keeping busy. Nowhere in our conversation did she mention sending you two over to babysit me."

River came back out on the porch with two cold beers in his hand. He threw one to Reed then settled himself on the rail in front of his oldest brother.

"Yes, but she called again late last night and you didn't answer. She got worried about her baby boy. Woke us up first thing this morning and demanded we come over

after work to make sure you were okay and had food. If we even had an inkling anything was wrong we were to call her and she'd catch the first flight out to stay with you."

Sky closed his eyes with a groan. Thirty-seven years old and his mother still wanted to baby him. "That woman is nuts. I didn't answer my phone because I wasn't home. Why didn't she just leave a message to have me call her back?"

Reed and River looked over at each other and shrugged. Reed answered with a grin. "Maybe because she's just looking for an excuse to come check up on you?"

Sky flipped his brother the finger. "I don't need a checkup from Mom. I'm doing fine. The shoulder is almost all healed up." To prove it Sky moved his arm in a complete circle. "The bullet went clean through. The only reason I'm on disability is because the idiot hit me in my shooting arm."

Reed held his hands up in defense. "Hey, you don't have to tell me. I know you're fine, but she's your mother."

"And she's not yours?"

"Nope. Dad said my conception involved aliens, a light beam and gummy bears." The middle tech-savvy brother smarted off, his light brown eyes gleaming with amusement.

"Yeah, I can see that. You are kind of freaky looking," River commented from his perch on the railing. "Big ears, small dick, it's really kind of sad."

"Small dick?" Reed swiftly jumped to his feet. "You little shit. Wait until I get my hands on you."

River set his beer down safely and jumped off the porch, running to keep out of his brother's reach.

With a loud sigh Sky watched his idiot brothers race around his yard as the sun finally set. Reed had one arm wrapped around River's throat while River did his best to give his middle brother a wedgie from hell.

Wrapped up in his siblings' antics Sky didn't notice the quiet car driving down the street until the flash of headlights illuminated the faces of the two men still trying to beat the crap out of each other.

"Shit," he cursed knowing it would be too late to get rid of his family, currently rolling over his grass laughing and cursing each other loudly. "Get the hell up, you idiots."

Neither man paid him any attention as they continued to struggle with each other. Sky debated for a moment. The water hose would stop them, but he'd have to go get the thing, uncoil it, turn it on then walk back to hose the fighting freaks in the yard. No, he needed something a little bit quicker, but just as efficient.

"Hey, Reed, watch out for the pile on your left. My neighbor's got a huge pit-bull and he got loose earlier today. Left a nice warm land mine just about where your elbow is."

The words barely left his mouth when both men jumped to their feet, their hands quickly running over their clothing and skin. Sky laughed, grabbed both their ears and dragged them over to Reed's truck.

"Get inside before you shame the whole family. I swear it's a wonder the city lets either one of you carry a gun." He shoved them both at the truck just as he heard his name being called.

"Skyler?"

Kasey's voice sounded a little hesitant and Sky's immediate reaction was to run over and soothe her, but he couldn't do it with his brothers there. More important his brothers' big mouths. He didn't want her to find out about his job, not yet, not before he got a chance to really know her and for her to know him. Things were too new, too shiny, too perfect to ruin with the mention of his career choice.

Idiot, he mentally smacked himself, it had only been one night together.

So he plastered a smile across his lips and hissed out of the side of his mouth. "Say one word about my job or injury and I'll castrate you both."

"Kasey," he called out, and grabbed her hand as she crossed his driveway.

She took one look at him, one look at his disheveled brothers and tried to back away. "I can see this isn't a good time. I can come back later when you don't have company."

He kept a firm grip on her hand and used that to tug her close.

"This isn't company," he tried to explain. "These are my brothers, Reed and River. River, Reed, this is my across-the-street neighbor, Kasey Jacobs."

Both men send her a friendly wave. Reed opened his mouth to speak, but Sky made sure to cut him off. "And they were just leaving, weren't you?"

River, always the quicker of the two, shot a quick look at Kasey's hand protectively encased in Sky's and nodded. "Yep, we just wanted to drop some stuff off. Let's get going, Riv."

"Please, don't go on my account." She eyed each man and a small smile crept over her full lips. "Let me guess. Your mom had a thing for nature?"

Sky winced. The three of them were so used to their names they forgot it seemed strange to other people. "Mom made the mistake of naming us while still under the influence of medication. You don't want to know what she was thinking."

"I sure as hell don't." River said, "It was nice meeting you, Kasey. Hope to see you around again sometime soon."

Reed mimicked his brother's words, got into his truck. When both doors were firmly shut he sent them a salute and backed out of the driveway.

Relief coursed through Skyler as his brother's taillights grew fainter. Feeling safe and happy he looked down at the gorgeous curvy woman in his arms and smiled.

"Hello, beautiful. I missed you today." He bent his head and took her lips in a kissed filled with need and longing. She tasted as sweet and hot as he remembered and Sky found he couldn't get enough of her.

When their lips finally parted they were both breathing heavily. Kasey raised her head off his chest and sent him a smile that shot straight to his groin.

"It was a slow day at work," she said, mischief twinkling in her bright green eyes.

"Really? That must have made the day drag by forever." He slid an arm around her waist ready to lead her into his house and straight to his bed, but she stopped him with a gentle hand on his arm.

"Actually, no. I love days when the store is slow. It gives me time to think...to plot...the next sex scene in my book."

All at once Sky was filled with a desperate need to know exactly what her every thought at work had been. "Um...wow...anything I can help with?" *Please, please, please*, he mentally begged, *let there be something for me to do*.

"Well, now that you mention it. I may have one or two pivotal plot points that I can't seem to get right without actually trying them out. Feeling like helping work the kinks out?"

"Lead the way. I'm yours to command."

"Oh I hope so," she whispered against his lips, "I really hope so."

Kasey waited for a heartbeat or two in case Skyler was planning to invite her into his house. Maybe she could get a glimpse into his personal life. Even find out what he did for a living. True, they hadn't left much time for talking so far. But she'd told him a lot about herself, and all she knew about him was he had two brothers. A fact she found out by accident. What was with him, anyway?

"I have to take a shower before I do anything else," she told him, unlocking her front door and walking into the house.

"Sounds like a plan to me. Lead the way."

She looked over her shoulder. "You going to watch me shower?"

"Hell, no. I'm getting in there with you."

He was already pulling his black t-shirt over his head as he followed her into her bedroom. "I thought maybe I could help you create a shower scene for your next book."

Kasey laughed as she began stripping off her own clothes. "What makes you think I haven't already done that? Shower scenes make great reading."

He turned her to face him. "Not like mine."

When his mouth came down on hers she thought she was prepared for it, getting used to his kisses. She should have known better. Each one was like the first time—hot, predatory, and thoroughly bone-shattering. His tongue traced every inch of her lips, licking them like an ice-cream cone, before inching inside. He tasted the roof of her mouth, the inside of her cheeks, even the surface of her teeth before dancing his tongue against her own.

He invaded her mouth, there was no other word for it, plundering it and taking all she had to give. Heat shot through her body and her pussy, quivering with need, dripped cream. She clutched his muscular shoulders, her fingers biting into his skin as she held on for dear life.

Sky's hands gripped her head, holding it in place as he slanted his mouth for a better angle. Reality floated away as every molecule in her body was focused on the fusion of their mouths. When he broke the kiss she felt as if a lifeline had been cut.

"Every inch of you tastes delicious, Kasey," he purred, fire dancing in his coffee-brown eyes. "Inside and out. And I can't wait to taste it all again."

He unclasped her bra, slipped the straps down her arms and took first one nipple, then the other into his mouth. Each pull of his mouth sent electricity straight to her womb, each flick of his tongue against the hardened tip was like the kiss of a soft flame. She was drowning in erotic sensation, her breasts throbbing, her pussy quaking. All rational thought had fled and all he'd done was kiss her and suck on her nipples. She wasn't sure she'd make it into the shower.

His warm hands slid down her arms and moved in to her waist, opening the button at the top of her slacks and slowly lowering the zipper. The click of the teeth separating was like some kind of erotic music. He brushed at the fabric until it swished down her legs to pool at her feet. His hand insinuated itself between the thin silk of her bikini panties and the burning skin of her tummy. Down, down over her waxed folds, sliding one finger between them to rub against her aching clit.

Automatically, as if they had a mind of their own, her hips rocked against him, riding the touch of his finger. She squeezed her thighs together, trapping his hand in her warm, wet flesh.

Skyler bit down gently on each nipple, then soothed the nips with his tongue. When he slipped his hand away from her body she cried out in protest.

“Don’t forget the shower,” he murmured.

Shower? What shower?

In seconds he’d removed her thong and his jeans, lifted her in his arms and carried her into her bathroom. Sitting her on the vanity counter he reached in and turned on the water, waiting for it to warm. His eyes were like live coals burning into her, the naked desire alone almost made her come. She wanted Skyler inside her so badly she didn’t know how she could wait. A shower seemed like an unnecessary endless procedure.

She hummed in anticipation, rubbing her hands over Skyler’s chest, tangling her fingers in the soft matted hair. She wanted him inside her. Now. Right now.

Sky held his hand under the water to test the heat, satisfied that it was at the right temperature. He had no idea how he was going to get through an entire shower with Kasey when what he really wanted to do was take her down on the bathroom floor and fuck her senseless. Touching her, feeling her hard nipples and that oh-so-wet cunt made his cock so hard he was afraid it would break off.

Gritting his teeth to pull himself together, he lifted her off the vanity counter and stepped into the shower with her in his arms. He let her slide down his body, his cock

rubbing against her, prodding at her bare pussy. He nearly lost it right then, but he forced his mind to other things.

Think about mug shots. Ballistics. Forensics.

He lifted the bottle of shower gel from the built-in shelf, poured some into his hand and worked it into a sudsy lather. Propping Kasey against the wall, he rubbed the lather over her petal-soft skin, beginning at her shoulders. He traced the line of her collarbone, the definition of her arms, the upper swell of her breasts.

Plucking at the diamond-hard nipples he massaged bubbles into them then blew on them to dissipate the bubbles into the air. Down, down, over her slightly rounded, sexy tummy, pausing to pay careful attention to her bellybutton. His finger traced the tiny swirls of flesh in the indentation.

When he reached her naked cunt he had to bite down on his tongue to make himself take his time. He didn't want to rush this.

Kasey's eyes were closed, her face flushed with heated anticipation. Sky stared at her face as he slipped two fingers into her slit, pushing aside the folds of her sex and capturing her clit between two knuckles. As he rubbed and kneaded he watched her breathing hitch, her mouth part slightly, her eyelids flutter. He thought he could look at her face forever and never get tired of it.

As he rubbed her clit harder, reaching down farther with each stroke to rim the opening of her cunt, soft little sounds of pleasure burst from her lips, making his cock even harder if that was possible. He couldn't remember ever being this gone on a woman before. Ever. Even his one deep relationship that ended so badly lacked the intensity of this. Which was why he deliberately held back from telling her more about himself. He wanted to put off the moment she'd turn away from him as long as he could.

Squirting more gel into his hands, he knelt on the tile floor and went to work on her feet, paying careful attention to each toe. Then the arch of each foot, her ankles, working

his way up her calves to her thighs, his strong fingers gently kneading her muscles, massaging the lather into her skin.

When he reached her cunt he brushed it gently with his fingers, drawing a long shudder from her before turning her around and placing her hands flat against the wall. Then he began on her shoulders again, reveling in the feel of her skin. He traced her spine, carefully dotting each bump with a bubble of soap before running his hands over the swell of her buttocks, cupping them where they joined her thighs, then down to her calves and ankles.

He squeezed gel into his hands again and blew out a breath, knowing he was moving into new territory with Kasey and hoping she didn't kick him out of the shower. Letting his fingers dance lightly down the cleft of her ass, he nudged the cheeks apart and worked lather into the soft skin. When he pressed the tight rosette with the tip of his finger she jumped, and started to turn around.

Skyler put his lips to the shell of her ear. "It's all right, sugar. Just hold still. I'm going to make you feel very, very good."

She made whimpering little sounds but allowed him to adjust her hands on the wall again. And when his fingers began probing the entrance to her dark tunnel again she didn't try to draw away.

He spent seconds rubbing the lather into the tight muscle of her anus, teasing at the mass of tiny nerves lodged there before pushing the tip of one finger inside. When Kasey whimpered again he put his mouth on the sensitive spot on her shoulder where it joined her neck and bit down gently.

The whimper turned into a moan, but as it whispered out into the steamy air he pushed harder with his finger until it was lodged completely inside her. Her tight, dark muscles clenched around him, sending shivers through his body. He didn't know how much longer he could hang onto his control.

He moved his finger gently, in and out. He wanted to add a second finger but she was so tight he had a feeling that was one orifice of her body that had never been breached. A virgin ass. He almost came just thinking about it.

Reaching around her with his free hand he found her clit and massaged it in time with his strokes in and out of her ass. She moaned louder and began rocking her hips, impaled on twin racks of pleasure.

When he reached his limit he shifted position, opened the shower door and reached for the condom he'd left on the vanity counter. His fingers trembled with need as he tore the foil and struggled to sheath himself. Turning Kasey to face him, he placed both hands beneath the cheeks of her ass and lifted her.

"Wrap your legs around me," he commanded, holding her so the head of his cock prodded the entrance to her cunt.

Linked together in the shower, he drove into her until he bumped up to the mouth of her womb. The clasp of her pussy walls around him was so tight it made him shake. He braced Kasey against the wall, settled his grip on her, drew in a deep breath and drew his cock in and out of that hot, wet fist.

He set up a rhythm, forcing himself to keep his eyes open so he could watch her face for signs that she was close to her climax. He rocked his hips back and forth, dragging his thick cock over the tiny bundles of nerves, leaning against her so his pubic bone rubbed over her clit with each movement.

The moment he felt her hands tighten on him, saw her breathing hitch and felt her tightening around him even more, he increased the tempo of his strokes. He saw it catch her, like a tidal wave rolling through her. Her nails dug into him as her orgasm shook her and spasm after spasm racked through her body.

He held on as long as he could but as she clamped down tighter around him he let go, spurting into the condom, wishing there was nothing between them so he could feel that silky skin kissing his cock. His fingers dug into her ass as he emptied himself, his big body shaking with the intensity of his release.

He leaned his forehead against hers, the water sluicing over them, and licked at her lips. Would he ever get enough of this woman? At last he turned off the water, reached for towels to dry them both off and carried her to the bed.

Chapter Four

Moonlight spilled over the damp sheets as Kasey finally got enough muscle control back to lift her head. With nothing but the faint silver light spilling through the windows Skyler looked like a warrior of old. With his wide chest, thick, strong thighs and muscled arms she was sure she could look at him and touch him forever.

He'd come into her life so suddenly, filling an aching void she hadn't been aware of. The Fates and Saints were being kind to her for once. If only she could get him to talk more. Granted with their sex being off the charts fantastic she could understand his perpetual hard-on. But sooner or later she wanted to snuggle in his arms and talk about their lives and the things they did each day. Hear about the things that made him laugh at work or those that caused him to lose his temper.

Shit, she still didn't know what the man did for a living. Was it possible he was hiding some dark secret from her? Dismissing the thought almost before it formed, Kasey looked over at his long lean form and sighed in appreciation.

Gently she reached out a tentative hand to trace the line of his taut stomach and marveled at how well his body was made. When his breathing remained even and slow Kasey grew bolder. Softly she ran her hands over his chest and through the light patch of hair growing there. Moving her exploration over to his shoulders and arms she stopped when her right hand glossed over a patch of uneven skin.

The first night she'd noticed the angry scar but had forgotten about it in the explosion of lust that consumed them. Now she leaned closer trying to get a better look, but while the moonlight was good for romance it did little to improve her spying. What could have caused an injury like that? From the puffiness under her touch it must be a recent wound. Then why hadn't he said anything to her?

Why would he, she scolded herself? They had sex. They were fuck buddies. He'd never mentioned wanting anything more. But he'd looked so happy to see her this evening. The way his sexy brown eyes had lit up made all the crappy customers from the day disappear from her mind.

Tired of being in her own head Kasey slid out from the bed. Or tried to. Before her foot even touched the floor a strong masculine arm slipped around her waist. Sky pulled her tight against his chest.

"Where are you going, beautiful?" His sleep husky voice sent shivers along her sensitive flesh.

"I thought you were sleeping." Kasey avoided the question, much the same way he ducked every personal question she threw at him.

"I woke up when you tried to get out of bed." With her back pressed against his chest she couldn't see if his wonderful coffee-colored eyes were filled with sincerity or blatant lie. She felt him nuzzle her neck and cursed her traitorous body for going wet. "So why were you leaving our nice warm bed without me?"

"Answer my question first. Where did you get that knot on your shoulder?" *Would he answer her? Tell her something about himself?*

At her words his body went taut and he eased his arms from around her. "It's just a little ding."

Not willing to be brushed off so easily, Kasey sat up and turned to face him. She grabbed the sagging sheet and tucked it beneath her arms. Somehow being naked with him now made her feel more vulnerable. "If it's so little and minor then what's the big deal in telling me about it?"

She had him. Or at least she thought she did, until his next words. A final refusal to answer anything close to personal.

He huffed out an impatient breath and scooted up until his back rested against the wooden headboard. "Look it's not a big deal. I got hurt a couple of weeks ago. No permanent damage. Nothing to talk about or get worked up over."

Every word felt like a slap in the face even when she knew she had no right to feel hurt. The man had made no promises to her. So what if he didn't want to talk about his *ding*. Maybe he'd gotten it in some stupid guy way and was too embarrassed to give her the details. That she could understand. Then again most other guys would have made up some kind of manly cover story. Skyler refused to throw her even a crumb.

"I'm not worked up," she told him in her most calm and controlled voice, "but I can promise you I will be if you don't knock off the patronizing tone."

"Shit, Kasey, I'm not trying to talk down to you. I just really don't want to talk about some stupid ding that doesn't mean anything to me." He huffed out a breath. She watched him run a frustrated hand through his already rumpled hair.

"Oh I get it."

She did...finally. Reality sucked, but it was time to start living in it again. He might look like one of her heroes, and act like one in the bedroom, but this wasn't one of her books where the happy ending came as a guarantee. Real life came with no promises except heartbreak. Too bad this knowledge came after two nights of the best sex of her life. It amazed her how quickly and effortlessly Sky had blended into her life. She felt as if she'd known him forever. Too bad he didn't return the feeling.

This time she made it out of bed without being stopped. Grabbing her robe from a chair she quickly shoved her arms in and belted it tight.

"Come on, Kasey, don't do this." His voice reached out through the dark almost causing her to stumble back to him. The warm erotic tone weakened her knees and had her leaning against the wall for support. She'd be double damned before giving in to him again. Not without hearing some real answers first. Without him willing to share some of himself with her.

"What I do isn't important. What we have together is amazing. Why ruin it with shop talk?"

Those were the words that helped shore up her mental defenses. How could such a seemingly intelligent man sound so stupid? Why didn't he just leave a fifty on her

nightstand in the morning? At least that would be more honest than the crap he kept slinging at her.

"Skyler, it's getting late and I think you should go."

"Fuck, no." He jumped out of the bed and closed the small space between them. "I'm not leaving until you tell me what brought this on. When I fell asleep you were happy with me and the world. I wake up a few minutes later and you're jumping down my throat, dumping questions all over me and demanding answers."

"Is it so terrible to want to know more about you? About your life?" She had to blink several times to battle the tears threatening to overflow her eyes. The damn jerk wouldn't see her cry, but he would hear a few honest truths. "I woke up before you. I thought you looked so handsome I couldn't resist touching you. That's when I felt the scar on your shoulder and remembered it from last night. Silly me, I *was* concerned. So I asked. Then you growled at me, told me to mind my own business and now I'm asking you to leave."

"Shit," he cursed, pulling on his messy hair. "Kasey, I just—" He stopped there as she waited, prayed for him to say something, to show an ounce of trust in her and their new relationship.

Instead he walked over and pulled on his clothes. With each piece of skin he covered Kasey felt daggers sinking into her heart.

"I still think this is a bad idea," Sky informed her once he'd finished dressing. "I don't want to lose what we have."

Wary of being pulled into his arms, Kasey backed away. "I don't either, but I can't be with a man without knowing him. You shut me out every time I try to get closer. Forgive me if I'm feeling a little bruised by you slamming the door to your life in my face."

"Fuck Kasey, it's not like that. I don't want to lose you. All I fucking wanted was the time for you to get to know me without all the usual bullshit. Why is that so much to ask?"

"It's not too much, but you're offering too little. Now it's really getting very late and I have to get up for work tomorrow. Work that you know about. You know what I do, where I do it and when I do it. I know you have two brothers and live in a house. Hmm." She tapped a finger to her chin in a mock thinking pose. "Well, golly gee, Skyler it seems you know so much more about me. I wonder if that's fair?"

"I planned to tell you everything." He paced away from her, his long strides quickly eating up the small distance from wall to wall.

"When?" she demanded. Crossing her arms underneath her breasts so he wouldn't see her hands shaking.

"When I had more time. When we'd had more time together."

Kasey shook her head sadly, tears brimming her eyes and knowing he couldn't give her what she needed. A piece of him, a piece of who he was and where he wanted to go. For the smallest crumb she would have opened her arms and her heart and welcomed him back into it.

Maybe it was better they ended things now. If it hurt this bad after a few days then she might not live through it in a few months.

"Please," she whispered trying to keep her voice even, "just leave and go home, Skyler. I can't deal with you tonight."

"I don't want to leave things like this between us," he protested and stopped his incessant pacing.

"Skyler, if you ever felt anything at all for me you'll walk out of this room and house and leave me in peace."

He didn't respond and the silence grew thick and uncomfortable between them. When Kasey was ready to scream to break the tension, Skyler huffed out a breath and slammed out of the room.

As the front door closed behind him she slid down the wall, tears already pouring down her cheeks. Life really should be like a romance novel, she thought as wave after

wave of pain slammed into her. At least with a book you knew the good guy always won and got the girl. Reality could learn a few things from romance.

Then she let the pain swallow her as her heart broke into a million pieces.

Chapter Five

For three days Kasey dragged herself to work, deliberately forcing herself not to look at the house across the street, plodding through her daily routine before dragging herself home again. She hadn't written a word since the night Skyler slammed out of her house, angry at what she considered the dumbest thing in the world. So she wanted to know more about him? What was the big deal, anyway?

She was too disheartened to try to figure out the answer and definitely not in the mood to create romantic and erotic scenes for her make-believe characters. She should have stuck with creating fantasies on paper instead of trying to live one herself. All it got her was a broken heart.

Damn, damn, damn.

When would she ever learn not to fall into that trap? But she'd been so sure she and Skyler had connected. More than just between the sheets. But he seemed determined to hold his real self back from her, give her nothing but hours of sweaty sex that didn't require anything of him except physical activity.

Pulling her hair into a ponytail and donning a short, thin robe, she poured herself a glass of wine and took it out onto her small patio. Maybe the night breezes could soothe the ache in her body and her heart.

* * * * *

For the third day in a row Skyler cursed himself for being eighteen kinds of a fool. He'd sensed from the minute she opened her door to him that Kasey was more than just a pretty face and a hot body. In between the hours of the most exquisite sex he could ever remember, she'd shared herself with him. Her dull job. Her disconnect from her

family. Her dream of becoming a writer and the success she was having, a success she had no one to share with.

And he, ass that he was, like every other man he knew, painted all women with the same brush. Once burned, forever shy.

He lay in his bed at night staring at the dark window across from him and wondering what she was doing if she wasn't writing. Did she miss him? Hate him? Would she ever talk to him again? All he had to do was conjure up the image of her naked body to make his cock hard, and he lay in the dark like some simpleton stroking himself to a climax.

Jackass!

He had two more days before he had to report back to work. Tomorrow was Saturday. Kasey didn't have to work. He had one shot to fix this thing and he'd better not make any damn mistakes.

* * * * *

Kasey had barely struggled out of bed Saturday morning when the doorbell rang. For a long minute she was tempted to just ignore it. The last thing she wanted was to see another human being. But whoever was on her porch was pushing the bell so insistently she figured the only way to shut them up was to answer the door. When she yanked it open she froze, gawking at the man standing before her.

"Skyler?" she squeaked.

"In the flesh." He grinned and her knees trembled.

Stop that!

He looked mouthwatering, his shoulders pushing the fabric of a dark green t-shirt and cargo shorts exposing his long muscular legs to her hungry eyes. She nearly gave in to the impulse to throw herself into his arms before reality set in.

"Go away," she snapped. "I hate you."

She started to slam the door but he caught it with his hand and held it open.

"Give me one chance to set things right, Kasey. If that doesn't work I'll go quietly."
He grinned again, his dimple flashing appealingly.

Don't do it!

Do it or you'll regret it.

Sighing at her own vulnerability, she opened the door and waved him in.

"Do I get a chance to get dressed or do you want to do this with my early morning self?"

"Nope. I'm doing this right." He settled himself on the couch and looked at his watch. "You've got fifteen minutes to get ready. Shorts and a t-shirt or whatever. Nothing fancy." When she didn't move he said, "Come on, get going. We're burning daylight."

Again she started to protest but decided, what the hell.

Fifteen minutes later she was back in the living room, showered and dressed with a minimum of makeup and her hair once again in a ponytail. He'd have to earn the right for her to spend more time on her looks for him.

"Okay. Now what."

"Now we get going."

He hustled her out of the house, making sure she locked the door, and guided her across the street to his SUV. When she climbed into the front seat she happened to look into the back and saw a big straw basket and pointed at it.

"What's that?"

"A breakfast picnic basket."

Her eyebrows flew up. "A what?"

"That place called Let's Eat Out does a great job with them." His cheekbones colored. "A friend's wife told me about them."

She stared, open-mouthed. "You *asked* someone about this?"

He nodded. "I wanted to do this right."

And that was all he'd tell her as they drove out of town and followed a two-lane highway to a more rural area. He deflected all questions with the same answer, "You'll find out."

"What is this place?" she asked, when they turned off the road and pulled up in front of a small cabin.

"My mom and dad own it. Since they're in Arizona my brothers and I get to use it. I warned them if they showed up today I'd be forced to kill them all."

He ushered her out of the SUV, snagged the picnic basket and a folded quilt and walked her around to an area beneath a very old, shady oak. He spread out the quilt, nudged her onto it and opened the basket. When he'd poured orange mimosas from a bottle into two decorated plastic cups, he held up his cup in a toast.

"To a woman I nearly lost through my own stupidity. I hope she gives me another chance."

Kasey watched him carefully over the rim of her cup. "Does that mean you're ready to share yourself?"

He lowered his cup, his face sobering. "I was in a long relationship with someone who broke it off with me because of my job. I'm a cop, Kasey. A homicide detective. I work nights. The scar is from a bullet wound I got accidentally walking into a holdup."

Kasey stared at him. "*That's* the big deal you didn't want to tell me about? *That's* why you didn't want me asking questions? You thought I'd, what, tell you to take a hike?"

He shrugged. "Most women think the idea of a cop is sexy, but then they get tired of the long hours and the dangers of the job."

"Skyler, you must have dated some pretty shallow women. Plumbers can work just as long hours, and there's danger crossing the street. Don't you think you should have given me the chances to make the choice for myself?"

"I just thought —"

“You thought we’d have wild monkey sex and then we could go our own way? Damn! Isn’t that just like a man?”

He reached for her cup and put it down next to his. “You’re right. It was stupid. But by the second night with you I was feeling a lot more than horny and I was afraid to let myself get in too deep. Feel anything too strong.”

She pushed him back on the quilt. “Well, you’re in deep now, buster. You’d better remember that.”

She leaned over him and pressed her mouth to his, opening it when his tongue licked her lips. His strong arms came around her, pulling her close to him. One hand slid up her thigh and beneath her shorts, trailing across her ass and teasing the cleft of her buttocks.

She was wet instantly, her panties soaked. Running her fingers through the silk of his hair she pushed herself against him. He moaned into her mouth.

“And here I was going to feed you fresh strawberries,” he breathed, breaking the kiss. “And read you poetry to charm you.”

She looked down at him. “Poetry? Really?”

He chuckled. “No, not really. But I wanted to show you what a gentleman I am and that just because I’m a cop doesn’t mean I don’t know how to do the nice things in life.”

“I never would have thought that,” she protested.

“Anyway, I’ve been cleared for work so I’m back on the job Monday.” He paused. “Nights, Kasey. And you work days.”

She kissed his chin. “I’m sure we can work out a suitable schedule. Meanwhile, we shouldn’t waste the time until then, right?”

“I like the way you think.”

He rolled her until she was the one flat on the quilt and took his time removing her clothing. When she was naked he ran his eyes over every inch of her. Her nipples puckered beneath his intent gaze and the pulse in her womb increased its beat. He bent

his head and took one nipple into his mouth. Sucking hard on it before grazing it with his teeth.

Kasey swallowed a gasp, pure fire shooting straight to her cunt.

"Like that, do you?"

"Y-Yes."

He turned his attention to the other one, sending more streaks of fire through her. As he pulled on first one nipple, then the other with his mouth, one hand drifted down between her thighs, caressing her skin and feeling the wetness of her sexual liquid. She widened her legs for him, signaling her need and he answered by gliding two fingers over her clit, between her slick folds and into the hot well of her pussy.

"Jesus." He lifted his head. "You're soaking wet already. How am I supposed to keep myself under control?"

She gave a breathy little laugh. "I think we have plenty of time for control later."

"I had great plans of seducing you and making long, slow love to you, but I think we have to get to that later. I can't wait, sugar. I have to have you right now. I've been too long without you."

He stripped off his clothes, pulling a condom from the pocket of his shorts and sheathing himself with shaking hands. He paused a moment as he kneeled between her thighs, his eyes feasting on her cunt. He spread her folds with his fingers and lowered his head to take one strong lick at her flesh.

"I had to do that," he gasped. "Had to take a taste of you."

Then he lifted her ass with both hands, bringing her up to him, positioned the head of his shaft at her opening and drove into her with one roll of his hips.

"Ohhh." Kasey exhaled on a long breath. "Oh, god, Skyler."

Then she wrapped her legs around him, pulling him tight to her. His hips moved and she moved with him, riding him, feeling him filling every empty space in her body. She knew it wouldn't be long for her either, as her climax began to build at once.

"I'm sorry, honey," he groaned, "I can't hold it."

"Me, either. Now, Skyler. Right now."

"Come with me, Kasey."

They exploded together, riding the roller coaster, flung into space and spun around. Bodies shuddered, hearts thudded, breathing rasped as the orgasm consumed them. Until at last they lay spent and sweaty, still wrapped in each other's arms.

Finally Skyler kissed her, a soft kiss full of promise. "Am I going to be the hero in your next story?" he asked.

She smiled up at him, hands smoothing on his firm back, more fulfilled than she could ever remember.

"You're going to be the hero in *all* of my stories, Sky. Every one of them."

About the Authors

Desiree Holt: I always wonder what readers really want to know when I write one of these things. Getting to this point in my career has been an interesting journey. I've managed rock and roll bands and organized concerts. Been the only female on the sports staff of a university newspaper. Immersed myself in Nashville peddling a country singer. Lived in five different states. Married two very interesting but totally different men.

I think I must have lived in Texas in another life, because the minute I set foot on Texas soil I knew I was home. Living in Texas Hill Country gives me inspiration for more stories than I'll probably ever be able to tell, what with all the sexy cowboys who surround me and the gorgeous scenery that provides a great setting.

Each day is a new adventure for me, as my characters come to life on the pages of my current work in progress. I'm absolutely compulsive about it when I'm writing and thank all the gods and goddesses that I have such a terrific husband who encourages my writing and puts up with my obsession. As a multi-published author, I love to hear from my readers. Their input keeps my mind fresh and always hunting for new ideas.

Allie Standifer has lived in various places around the world. The gift of travel enables her to create the rhythm and feel of far-off places and feed an overactive imagination. Her life has been one of constant adventure, including growing up in Saudi Arabia, where her brother tried to sell her to Bedouins (for what amounts to less than \$1.50). It's been nonstop; she loves every minute of it.

Ideas, plots, characters and conversations keep her company inside her head and fuel her need to write. And no, they don't tell her to start fires. :) Tired of everyday stories, Allie adds paranormal twists to her tales. They're filled with past lives, chain-email-sending oracles, mythical creatures, magic, sexy gods, and heroines who know exactly what they want—and aren't afraid to go get it.

Free time is spent spoiling two nieces and two nephews, pumping them up on sugar and caffeine and buying very loud toys then sending them back to their parents. The perfect revenge for all the slights of being the youngest child. When not writing or contributing to the delinquency of minors, or trying to outsmart her psycho cat, she spends time with her wonderful and supportive family.

Desiree and Allie welcome comments from readers. You can find their websites and email addresses on their author bio pages at www.ellorascave.com.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

Also by Desiree Holt & Allie Standifer

Kidnapping the Groom

Seductive Illusion

Also by Allie Standifer

Twenty-Four Hours

Also by Desiree Holt

Cougar Challenge: Hot to Trot

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