

A close-up portrait of a woman with long, wavy, reddish-brown hair and light brown eyes. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her right index finger is pressed against her lips in a universal gesture for silence or secrecy. The background is dark and out of focus.

DIANA DERICCI

THE  
LIBRARIAN'S  
*SECRET*

# THE LIBRARIAN'S SECRET

DIANA DERICCI



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PO BOX 234

Swansboro, North Carolina 28584-0234

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## Chapter One

Let me clear the air right now before we go any further. I was *not* a prostitute. As Victoria, I was a certified, trained, and educated Relationship Sex Therapist, with a psychology degree. There wasn't any radio talk show behind my work, or a secret Dear Madam newspaper column for what I did. There couldn't be. In order to know what was wrong with a couple, I had to meet with them, talk to them, listen to them. Hear their voices, understand their worries, fears and doubts. And hear what they felt their real obstacles were in the sexual department, because honestly, no two couples, if it were a couple, typically had the same problems verbatim. And on occasion, I would get naked with them, but that was a rare occurrence. I *know* the human body. More than that, I *love* the human body. Let me rephrase that. I have a *deep, unadulterated, hungry passion* for the human body.

The rough part was I was a dual persona. Clark Kent and Superman, if you will. My Clark Kent job was a library superintendent for the county. It was a standard eight to five kind of routine, overseeing three different library systems in my county. Lots of driving and paperwork. *Boooring*. The evenings though, those were a different story. I also had weekend hours to accommodate working people. The day job paid my bills. The therapy job fed my soul. I needed the therapy as much as my clients did. I just never knew it.

I'd hidden my fears, and my scars, as deep as they could go. I'd buried the real me for years and didn't have the strength to bring her back to the surface. That wasn't easy for me to admit then, either. My childhood, the hurts and pains I'd lived through didn't exist in Victoria's world. As Victoria, I ruled. And I rather liked my reign. I had respect on many levels, in two different careers. I had my own home, my own possessions.

I didn't have love. See, I had thought I didn't deserve it because of all the things I'd done. This was the beginning that changed it.

The epiphany was scary, exhilarating, shocking, terrifying even. Thankfully, by the time I got hit with that epiphany clue-by-four, there was a man in my life who was ready and willing to help me pick up the pieces. This is our story. It's also the only one I've ever wanted to write down. See, so much of what I do is of a personal nature, emotionally and physically, something like this being read out of context would see me getting sued! And we don't want that. Especially since I'm not even doing the therapy any longer, but that's for later in the story. But to protect the innocent, I'll change names.

It was actually Brad—I like that name—his wife Nancy, and their friend Cory—I'll get to him later—that gave me the incentive to write this down. It seemed fitting since their seeking me out for their problem became the catalyst behind the discovery and healing of my own problems. Problems I'd ignored, buried, and drowned into the blackest abyss of my subconsciousness. Yes, I was a therapist in desperate need of my own therapy. It wasn't so much this couple that prompted me to write this down, as the tangle of events that meeting them created. I'm very glad I did now, but in the beginning... Well, it will become apparent why I was nervous about this situation soon enough.

I met Brad and Nancy first and oh Mama! Was he sexy. She bagged herself a catch with this man for her husband, and wouldn't you know it? She was letting him rot like an old log.

Okay, that might be a bit strong, but the man obviously had frustration issues. It might seem like a trivial thing, but when a person has bottled up emotion and desires for a while, and after talking to him it came out that it had been quite a while, this lack of an outlet begins to have repercussions. Insecurity, frustration, doubt, and anger are often the most common. Just like any other relationship, communication is key. Oftentimes when it comes to sex, we just expect our partners to *know*. Last I heard E.S.P. doesn't come in a handy bottle form. He loved his wife. That I had no doubt, but he wanted new experiences. With her. And out of fear of disrupting the balance, never mentioned them. After time, she picked up on the angst, took it for withdrawal and bam! One major misunderstanding. It had now festered until his greatest fear was that he was losing his wife. Seems simple enough in hindsight, but when there's enough tiny misunderstandings, one large one is usually the result.

I'll never forget the first time I met him. He had this slow southern drawl that could make women drool at ten paces. Nothing was ever spoken in a rush, and he had a voice like a king. Dark. Imperial. Still gives me shivers when I remember. Better than dark chocolate that man was.

Okay, so back to where I was going.

After several office sessions and breakthroughs, they anticipated taking the next step. It's an option I lay on the table when necessary. They can accept or decline, but often when a couple is making this kind of breakthrough, a sense of familiarity goes a long way. And I don't represent a threat to either.

We had an appointment to meet in the hotel bar, a usual for me. I liked dark corners and quiet most of the time. I always had. The chosen hotel was also well away from any place that I would normally be recognized. The meeting place was also in public, kind of like offering a final stand to change minds if necessary. After the office conferences, we all knew what they felt their problems were, and how they wanted to address them. And how they both wanted to get past them. I didn't think either would be changing their mind tonight.

Brad impressed me quite a lot from the beginning. In more than one way. Nancy was a lot shyer about discussing her sexual desires. I've noticed that can be very common in women. As if we're supposed to be ashamed to admit we want a climax. As if we're not supposed to really *want* to be satisfied, and should take it like a gift when it does happen.

My answer to that can't be said in polite company.

So I'll express it here: Fuck that! One thing I've learned is sex is a give and receive action. I like to do both.

During the office sessions, we conversed and did light situational testing. The "How do you feel... How do you think you'd react..." type of hypothesizing. Once they got over the initial embarrassment of discussing their sex life, which is something I'm always sensitive about, they both began to describe their home life in their own words. Over the last two years, Brad had been feeling more and more insecure with Nancy. Wary, and it was affecting their lovemaking. She wasn't demanding. Quite the opposite. She was repressing and he feared it was because of something he had done and either couldn't remember or was being blamed for something he had no clue about. They visited their regular therapist once or twice a year to clear the air and nothing had ever arisen. They had one of the strongest marriages I'd ever encountered, especially considering the steps they took to keep it strong. She came across as the quiet thinker, where, given the chance, Brad was a man of action. Now he wasn't sure if the root of their dysfunction was something either of them had delved deep enough to uncover.

Thus my involvement.

Like any male, he had fantasies. He also suspected Nancy had a few too, but real life factors kept them hidden, tight in a box. With her unwilling to discuss hers, he felt trapped unable to discuss his own. It was finally getting to the point where they both needed to let out the urges, either verbally or physically, or explode. Brad felt giving his wife a safe way to explore those hidden desires would unlock the heat and passion that had been slowly fading. He hadn't counted on finding the depth of his own fantasies along the way.

He was a smart man, though. Brad knew his insecurity to speak his own desires was just as much a stumbling block. They both needed a safe way to discuss, explore, and experience.

I really felt for them by this point and after several weeks, I presented the option to them to take it a step further. The proof that I wasn't too far off the mark in diagnosing their needs became apparent when she didn't run screaming away from the ideas I had suggested for this intimate session. Nancy knew what she wanted, but had never known how to put them to voice. Nancy became stronger in our sessions and finally admitted she knew what she wanted, but was still hesitant about putting that want to practice. Safety to explore was Nancy's largest concern.

Tonight we would touch, in more than one way, on her deepest desires. I sipped my drink while I waited for the couple, doing a mental rehearsal of the ideas we had discussed.

Brad was easy to spot as soon as he entered the bar. Late forties, with a touch of gray in his dark sandy blond hair right at the temples. That distinguished “better with age” look. Strong face and hands, and a body that was freaking solid. The woman in me couldn’t help but purr. The therapist kept her smile in place, relaxed as he approached. He wore a dusty-gray cowboy hat, a well tailored suit and scrumptious cowboy boots that screamed money. He walked right up to me and gave me a kiss on the cheek.

“Thank you for being here, Victoria,” he said in that swoon-worthy voice. “You look good enough to eat.”

I smirked then buried it. That was part of the plan. “Thank you.” My dress of choice had a loose cowl off the shoulder neckline that draped low over my chest, clinging to my curves in all the right places in a rich, deep green. I knew what worked. If his gaze was any indication, it was working like a charm. His inspection had hardly gone higher than my chin since he’d first spoken.

My Manhattan drink was cool in my palm. I sipped at it, then asked about Nancy, glancing around his shoulder.

“She’s coming. She was a little nervous. Stopped at the ladies room.”

I nodded, not really surprised. “She’ll be fine. You both will be. You both know tonight’s intentions and hopefully what the discoveries will open up for you. This is a great step to strengthen your relationship. Most don’t take the time, or are too frightened of the unknown to really challenge their own insecurities.”

“It’s no secret how much I love Nancy. Two of our best friends are divorcing. I don’t want to be them. I want her to be happy.”

“Strong sex, shared sex, can bring you together,” I told him, leaning closer to keep the conversation private. “Have you searched your memories like I asked? Those first dates? The first rush? It’s still there. It’s only that familiarity and time has dulled the sensation. It’s all grown up now, but it’s still there.”

Brad was the rock in the relationship. If he was confident and secure in tonight’s journey, that would greatly reduce Nancy’s apprehension.

He smiled, a knowing smile that was as sweet as it was sensual. “Yeah. She was something else back then. Still is. I know I haven’t told her often enough.”

“That’s easy to fix. Expression is important.” It was one of the points I’d counseled them on during the office sessions. It’s selfish to assume your partner knows you and your thoughts twenty-four/seven. He nodded in agreement. I knew he understood.

The bar where we waited for Nancy was elegant, with leather and deep, smoky wood details, with hazed mirrors on two walls, and the only visible neon was the requisite retail signs behind the bar and the big one outside the front door. Calming jazz and piano played in the background. This wasn’t a drunken nightclub. It was perfect for the image and state of relaxation I wanted both of my clients to absorb.

Let’s think about this a minute. How many would love to have their partner as their personal sex dream, sex kitten, or Adonis? Able to fulfill any desire suitable to that relationship? An equal partner to the give and take, where pleasure and passion have equal footing for both? This was one of the ideas I opened up for my clients. Why shouldn’t they enjoy each other? The human body was meant to experience touch, pleasure and pain, and react to it. One of our more enlightening conversations had been on how rare that balance really was between *any*—even married—couples. It helped Brad realize that what had happened between him and Nancy was just a matter of a hurdle, and it was only finding the right way over it to make it disappear.

While their relationship was normal for them, lacking substance and reciprocal physical attention was leading them to a dangerous side of need. Especially if they didn’t know how to broach the subject with the one person who could remove the danger element.

When in a solid relationship, either should feel unfettered and able to explore anything. This was actually far more rare than most think. People clam up, fearing their own needs and the reactions they might receive, or of disturbing their partner. Or worse, the balance of the relationship. There’s a long

list of excuses. Thankfully, we'd addressed a lot of those concerns already and I really felt these two were on the right path to solving their problem.

Nancy was a lovely average height platinum blonde, easy to spot as she entered from the side causeway from the hotel foyer. Two kids had given her a bit of a stomach but she worked out and took care of herself and the family. She wasn't a weak woman. I'd also seen how proud Brad was of all she'd accomplished with her life and kids.

He slipped an arm around her when she came into range and pressed a kiss to her temple.

I leaned forward and brushed a cheek to hers in greeting. "You look lovely, Nancy. I'm glad to see you."

"Me too," she replied firmly. She glanced at her husband. "You're sure about this?"

He hugged her snug. "Completely. We need a safe place with no kids, dogs or TV to bare everything."

I hid my smirk at his pun behind my glass. I sipped then said, "I assure you, nothing will be done that you don't agree to. Just like we discussed in the office sessions, we're only putting those desires into practice. You know I have a clean bill of health, and everything we need is already in place."

Her mouth made that silent 'o' shape. She was nervous but determined. There was something on her mind that I glimpsed once or twice but she still hadn't found the courage to put it into words. Tonight would likely fix that.

"Honest. This is what I do, Nancy." I had explained to them both before they'd agreed to this step how few I actually physically helped. Sometimes it was the encouragement more than the action that did the most good. I loved getting naked, but not at the expense of a client.

She tipped her head. "I thought it sounded insane at first, but it makes more and more sense."

"You trust me, right?" I asked, without inflection.

"Absolutely!" she stated.

"That is why you can be comfortable with this. It's like learning to trust a professor. You don't, not on the first day, but by the end of the second week, you believe he might just know what he's teaching. I'm here to teach you how to unlock what you're rediscovering in each other."

"I trust her," Brad told Nancy, drawing her attention up to him. "This will be good for us. What we want from each other is individual. I love you. I don't want to lose you because one of us isn't doing or saying the right thing."

"Excellent." I praised him for being so open. "It's actually just being free, following your desires, sharing the joy in expressing it with your partner. Even something as simple as vocalizing what might be on your mind in that moment. Many are programmed to never do that, to hate saying their deepest desires when lost in passion. That could be another avenue to try to see how it feels for the both of you." I gave them both an easy smile, not rushing any part of the evening, keeping the conversation slow and relaxed. "Sex should be enjoyed on all levels, not just the physical. It's a sensual act because you bring your senses to the party. Touch, taste, sound, smell and sight. Sometimes the most arousing thing and erotic thing is nothing more than watching your partner."

"Take your relationship," I offered. "Have you tried my suggestions to use candles in the bedroom, or shared a bath with music in the background and low lights?" They glanced at each other and Nancy blushed.

"We've used the candles, but it's hard with two teenagers at home to feel sexy."

I grinned. She had me there. I didn't have kids.

"Then tonight is about taking it to the next level."

Nancy tipped in agreement, curving more into Brad's body as he stroked a slow finger over her shoulder. I brought myself closer to her. On the side of her body that was blocked from the view of onlookers, I drifted the back of my hand down her body, caressing the swell of her breast. She was tense and still a little nervous, but she was also slowly getting hot. Slowly unwinding. Sipping at her drink, her eyes locked on mine.

"A body is made to feel. The more you feel, the more you want to share that feeling. It escalates for the both of you."



“That is hot,” Brad groaned, following the slow motion of my hand on her body.

“You like watching your wife, don’t you, Brad?” I always reaffirm the relationship. I was an outside influence and would remain that way.

He looked at her, his heart in his eyes. “She’s beautiful.”

Nancy’s cheeks pinked again. “It’s been a while since you said so.”

Her breasts rose and fell with heightened energy. The press of her nipples tipped the fabric of her blouse. It was hard not to look. Harder not to appreciate. She had a luscious body.

I finished my drink.

Time for the lesson to begin.

\* \* \*

“Tell me the fantasy you’ve always wanted.” I stood close to Nancy on the elevator, rising to the suite I had reserved for the evening for them. She gave me a wanton smile when I rested a hand on her lower back. I didn’t remove it the entire trip upward, caressing and teasing the fabric of her blouse beneath my touch. Once or twice, I swept to caress the gentle slope of her ass. I felt her arousal heightening, flowing off her in waves. The more aroused she became, the more open she’d become to sharing.

I had ordered wine and champagne for the room. It was sitting out, breathing, or chilling and would be ready when we arrived.

“Well.” She dipped her head, grinning mischievously. “He’s watched me masturbate and I know how much that turns him on.”

Brad groaned. Thank God the elevator stayed empty except for us. His slacks hid nothing.

“And?” I encouraged. Brad answered first.

“I’ve always wanted to watch her with another woman.”

Typical, but easily fulfilled. “Nancy?”

The elevator doors slid open on silent runners. The hall beckoned. All three of us strolled easily toward the room. It was early evening but the low lights of the hall made it seem much later.

“How will that help us?” She was shooting lowered appraising looks at me, and I knew she was considering it.

“Fantasy is all about breathing life into your sex again. Some suggestions I’ve made are titillation, light bondage, and sex toys. Even something as simple as whipped cream or a body butter. Something sensory for the both of you. Just because it’s more than you and him naked doesn’t mean it isn’t right. It’s what you’re both sharing and that you both enjoy it that counts. Doesn’t the same coffeecake every morning get boring?”

It’s one of the most simplistic comparisons you can make. An everyday norm associated to their sex life.

In answer: Hell yes it gets boring!

While I let them think about that, I opened the door with the pass key I’d stashed in my purse. The door closed behind us and I set the purse to the side. The front room was quite large, the bedroom doors open and inviting to the side. The entire suite smelled like jasmine and vanilla. I preferred this hotel because of the colors they used. Rich and vibrant in reds, russets and dark browns, a little more subdued for the bedrooms. None of that depressing teal and green that was everywhere.

“Nancy,” I said. “Did you have a fantasy you wanted to explore or do you want to see where this goes? Let yourself experience the freedom of your body?” I neared her again, giving her a soothing expression. There was a game plan, but spontaneity could heighten the anticipation and the level of freedom. Plus, it put the ball in their court so to speak. They, as a couple, were making up the plays rather than following an itinerary. “Humans are sensual creatures. We crave touch, crave pleasure, but are taught to segregate it from our physical selves, to be turned on like a switch at will. You have more control than that. *You* have the power to create it, not just receive it.” I gave both of them frank stares. “When you separate yourself constantly, you become apathetic to sex, to what it means, to how it can be enjoyed. I really feel this has happened to the both of you through time and real life



intrusions. You have been blocking cravings. You're both careful and considerate to not push, for those deeper wants. You're safe in the status quo and don't want to disturb it, but leaving it as is can be even more damaging. There is no one better to explore the unknown, all the wonders than the one person you cherish, trust and love above all others."

Brad stood at my side, both listening intently, their gazes showing I'd hit the target full on.

"Don't be scared to voice what you want in this room, either of you. This is a special haven to find your inner sensuality and embrace it. Once you've found it, you get to take it home and explore it even more."

Brad grinned at that. "I like this idea," he said.

He wasn't the one I was worried about. Nancy was still watching me, neither of us really blinking as she absorbed the fact that it was *okay* to want. That it was *okay* to ask for her pleasures, for satisfaction. I didn't think Brad was losing her at all. She was a mature woman, with kids. You did certain things in life, at certain ages.

Sexual freedom wasn't typically one of them. That train had departed. Or so she thought.

I was going to fix that misconception.

One of my hands lifted between us, hovering then sliding along her jaw, caressing her. "Feel," I crooned and her lashes fluttered closed. "Breathe." She did. A small smile curved her lips. Vanilla, every time. Music played through the suite, a slow sultry jazz quartet that always made me think of humid nights and no clothes, sensual caresses and secret desires.

"Listen. To our breathing, the rush of your heart, even the music." Her chest staggered as she did. With gentle pressure, I touched my thumb to her bottom lip. Her eyes opened and locked on mine. "Taste."

The flicker of her tongue was hesitant against me but it only took a short second before she was opening to lick the pad of my thumb in fascination.

Most men who brought their wives to help unearth hidden desires easily digressed back to their late teen years. Brad was no different. Men and sex were synonymous. The male was made to procreate. It's really a shame to me how women are force fed their submissive tendencies through their lives and then the men bitch when the women won't come out of their shell to play. Go figure.

But Nancy was blooming before my eyes. The office sessions and confident support were doing wonders to awaken her dormant sexuality, to regain the heat of passion she'd been denying.

## Chapter Two

Brad must've spotted the wine and glasses because he walked to the hutch and filled three. "What do you want, Nancy?" I nudged her gently. "Do you want to touch? Do you want to taste? Do you want to be touched?"

Her answer was a low spoken affirmative, slipping through lips she moistened with the tip of her tongue. Brad was watching her intensely from where he stood near the hutch. He'd removed his hat and his jacket. I spared a glance to appreciate his physique, broad shoulders with a solid chest and a little broader than some in the waist and hips, but he'd been married for twenty years. It looked good on him.

The pair had gone out before tonight's tryst. A night on the town to celebrate their breakthroughs and the new adventure they were embarking on. I applauded his thoughtfulness to make Nancy feel special. The night wasn't all about her. It was about bringing them closer. It was still a very nice and generous effort.

"My fantasy," Nancy finally whispered.

"Yes?" Anticipation filled the room.

"I have a few," she admitted, blushing.

I had suspected but she'd been tightlipped about what they may be during the office sessions.

"I want to see Brad with another woman. I want to see what it's like when he's with me." She drew a steadying breath. "And I want to do the same."

I was proud of him when he didn't express the shock I saw with a glance in his eyes. His voice didn't change one bit. It could easily set Nancy back to square one or further.

"With another guy?"

"I don't want to have just another guy," she said a little stronger. "I want two."

He groaned an 'oh shit'.

Nancy didn't break eye contact with me. I could sense the tension already rising now that she'd admitted it. "Don't be frightened of wanting," I told her. "It's perfectly normal. It's how you address it as to whether you can do it as a partnership and enjoy it to fulfill the need between you, or approach it in secret and spiral out of control because of it. Or the least favorite. Ignore it and let it fester." I'd seen all of the above happen. Unfulfilled desire, passion left to rot, made even the strongest relationship bitter and brittle over time. I didn't want anything but success for Brad and Nancy's relationship. Still holding her in the palm of my hand, her hair slid through my fingers as I released her.

"This is good that you are sharing. Tonight we'll open the desire vault and see how far we can get."

"Honey, do you really want two men?" That slow as molasses voice, deep as thunder. No wonder she fell for him.

She swallowed and after a short hesitation, she nodded. She didn't turn around though. "Are you mad?"

"God, no!" he replied in a rush. "I'm so damned turned on..." He gusted a sharp breath and walked up behind her. He tipped her head and brushed her hair to the side to nip at her neck. "I had no idea," I heard him say as he nuzzled his wife.

Which proved I was right. Again. It's amazing what just communicating can do for a couple. Granted, many would say this is dangerous territory to experiment with, possibly creating the first step for a failed marriage.

I don't think so. We would not even be at this point if either of these two, or any client, were on rocky ground. My first focus is always to stabilize the relationship, then the sex, in a form that is acceptable to the client. The sex then creates an even tighter bond, a shared experience to savor between them. It forms a tighter bond of trust, which strengthens the love between them because the two go hand in hand. If you can't trust your lover, love is rarely part of the equation. Watching Nancy and Brad, these two could become oblivious to an entire room—or just the woman standing in it with them—if the mood struck them. Them not being in love was hardly a problem.

I chose my clients as carefully as I chose my tomatoes at the store. If I even had the inkling that their personal stability would be in jeopardy, there'd be no party. It was that simple, and always had been. The rarity of nights like tonight was testament to my personal ethics on the matter. And yes, I'd been propositioned more than once. No, none of them got what they wanted. Business rules and professional ethics would always come first.

Brad stopped and turned Nancy in his arms, looking down at her with all the love in the world. "I'm glad you told me, honey. We'll do something about it, unless Victoria happens to have a spare guy hidden in the bedroom. Just the idea of it..."

His breathing grew labored and his nostrils flared, like an animal in heat. He palmed his wife's face and kissed her with a hard, passionate kiss. Plunging between her lips, he claimed her, a thorough caveman-style marking kiss, pulling her tight against his body. Quiet, whimpered moans flitted between them. It made my heart beat a little faster for watching the show.

He groaned when he finally let her go, only to press his forehead to hers. "Tell me what you want baby. I'm yours. I always have been."

*That...* That almost choked me up.

Nancy turned and faced me. I waited. I had a room reserved down the hall in case they didn't need me. At this point, they could say they were done with me and I'd be fine with it. Horny as hell, but fine.

Nancy surprised me though. She smiled, leaning against Brad's chest, watching me. "I want to give him his fantasy for tonight." A daring smile rose on her kissed blush lips. The woman had a devil imp the size of Michigan. Sparkles of adventure lit in her blue eyes. She was blossoming into her sexuality. It was a beautiful thing.

"Why don't you get comfortable, honey?" She tilted up to find his gaze, sounding a little breathless. I wondered how much of it had been from his kiss, or the anticipation.

He dropped a last kiss on her mouth then stepped back. With a glass of wine in hand, he laid down on one of the long couches, sliding off his boots. He undid his tie and flicked open the top buttons of his shirt exposing the short curls that dusted his chest.

"I've never been with another woman," she said quietly to me, bringing my full attention back to her.

"Just remember," I told her. "You can stop this whenever. It's your desire, your pleasure that is important, that we're bringing to the surface."

She nodded, her eyes dilating with the flow of lust running rampant through both our systems.

It was very gratifying to know I wasn't the only one turned on in the room.

Leaning forward, I brushed my lips to hers. Just a light touch, an introduction if you will. Hers were soft and silky. She stood stiff and unyielding for only a few short beats, then began to respond. She curved and warmed beneath me, following my lead when I touched her lips with my tongue. Her gasp was deep, but her moan made me shiver a little.

"Touch me," I whispered against her mouth, needing the feel of her hands on my breasts. The fabric of my dress rubbed over my nipples, creating a new shiver of excitement with just the words. The heat between my legs was turning into a churning, gnawing ache.

She cupped my breasts with tentative touches. "Like this?"

I moaned. I couldn't help it. My breasts are seriously sensitive to touch, any kind of abrasion. Bras were often a nightmare for me. Beneath my lips, she let that daring imp out more. She found the peaks of my nipples, running her tips over them through the knit of my dress. The sensation sent liquid heat to my core. She relaxed more as both of our bodies turned supple under the friction and rising enjoyment.

Part of my love for the human body is the many erogenous zones. Nipples would be one of those. Hard and aroused, they made my tongue itch to taste. Nancy's were definitely showing through her blouse, a rich cream silk that hugged her body.

I lowered myself to find one hard peak with my lips and a pleased moan slipped free. Her hands cupped mine tighter and a shot of lust warmed me. I was going to come if she kept doing that.

Wanting to see her body, I withdrew enough to pull her blouse free of her evening slacks and tossed it away. A bra of pale ice blue formed over her breasts. A lace woman. It wasn't hard at all to understand why men find lace and satin sexy on a woman's body. Reaching around, I had the hooks undone and it fell to the floor. The slacks followed a moment later, kicked to the side, leaving her in a small pair of lacy cream yellow panties.

"You," she panted, completely absorbed in new discoveries. My dress was pulled up over my hips, then over my head. It floated to the floor in a green pool leaving me in nothing but a green string thong and my heels.

"That is so hot," Brad growled from the couch. "Come closer." He motioned to the thick designer rug in the middle of the floor. He'd unzipped his trousers, the bulge held back only by the thin material of his boxers. Leading Nancy with me, we approached him. He cupped his erection, his gaze sliding back and forth between us. One darker brunette, the other vibrantly, pale blonde.

He stood and dropped his pants completely, then stepped in front of us. Reaching behind me, he undid the jeweled clip that held my hair up. For as long as I could remember, I'd worn it up, in a coiled bun. The only difference was when I'm doing the eight to five, there would be no soft tendrils to float around my face to reach my neck. It's all in the coiled rope, tight.

With a single motion, he pulled the clip free and the coiffed bun fell down beyond my shoulders.

Facing us, he dropped a hand to the thinnest piece of material known to mankind between each of our legs. He drew her nearer with a kiss. Then he shifted and kissed me, all the while playing with the edge of my pussy. We both anchored ourselves to his shoulders, just riding the wave of electric pleasure. He slid his fingers along the crotch of my thong, scraping over my clit until I saw stars. The flicking tease of his nails was making me very wet. Every now and then, the slipped shock of his touch on hot flesh sent a shudder down my spine.

His kiss deepened with a ground out moan. I glanced and spotted Nancy's hand caressing his thick length through the boxers, watching us as he kissed me deep, his hand stroking me. It was all I could do to stay on my feet.

"I want to watch you eat my wife," he growled, biting down on my lip then licking the pain away.

That worked fine with me. I was ready. More than ready. He dragged his hands free with excruciating slowness then licked the fingers that had been touching Nancy. Erotic doesn't even come close to the image. Leading her, he sat her down, slipping her underwear free.

"Beautiful," he breathed, dropping a kiss on her skin. Her hair was trimmed to expose her slit. He rose, positioning her as she watched him, her breasts heaving with excited, desire filled gasps.

He sat facing her on the couch, one leg beneath him and I knelt between her legs on the floor. She did have a beautiful pussy, tight and firm, even with having kids. He palmed one of her breasts and suckled on a taut nipple. I went downtown.

Every woman has a different taste or scent because of their body and chemical makeup, the same as men. Nancy was baby powder and horny woman. And she glistened with juices. A throbbing, wet pussy is such a turn on. Mine. Theirs. It's like candy. A hard cock makes me react the same way. I love the human body and what it can do, how it can feel, how it can express itself on the physical plane.

And Nancy wasn't against expressing anything. She moaned with the first stroke against her clit.

"That's hot, baby," Brad whispered to her over my head.

Her hips quivered when I spread her labia, hungry for the lushness in front of me. His encouraging voice swelled around us the same as the music, which only made her more responsive to everything I did to her body.

"Do you want to come?" His deep voice was even more hoarse, filled with lust.

I glanced up toward them to see her answer. She nodded, staring at him and clutching at the couch. He blocked her aimed attempts for his cock. What a man. This was for his wife and he wanted her to enjoy it.

"Make her come, Victoria. I want to see her orgasm."

The increased graveled strain in his voice was easy to hear. He was totally aroused and watching his wife with unblinking eyes to not miss a single sensation. His request was an effortless one to fulfill.

Nancy's body trembled beneath my gaze. With renewed enthusiasm, I attacked her body. Sucking on hot flesh between my lips, I laved her with my tongue and teased her with my fingers. Her body responded instantly with shivers. Moisture slicked her pussy as I delved and licked. With two fingers, I thrust within and she groaned louder, pumping to meet the thrust. I lipped at her clit, whipping against it with the tip of my tongue. Her walls clenched down on my fingers in raging desire.

I felt the buildup, not relenting until she screamed. She bucked wildly as she orgasmed, pushing harder against my tongue and fingers where I filled her heat. With a final lapping circle, I rode her clit and she shivered from head to toe with ecstasy.

"Beautiful," Brad murmured, raining light kisses to his wife's shoulder as she came back from Orgasma. Then he looked at me and gave me a devilish grin that made my nerves tingle. "You're next."

He kissed his wife, a slow passionate surrender, then asked her, "Do you want to watch, or do you want to touch?"

I almost swallowed my tongue at the decadence in his voice. The man should be in radio.

"You do it. I want to watch." Her blue eyes were bright with her own pleasure still pulsing through her own system. Her words came out in a breathless plea. It was her fantasy to witness her husband's pleasure.

He ran a possessive hand over her soft breasts, tweaking at her nipples as he grazed them. Then palming one of her hands, he put it over her mound.

"Keep that warm." She shivered under his promise-laden command. Her fingers danced over her clit as Brad stood and dropped his boxers. He stood before me and he was beautiful. Hard and thick and heavy at the head. Professionalism had officially left the building.

I licked my lips anticipating what would come next. I hoped it would be me.

## Chapter Three

That night with Brad and his wife was a very good evening for all of us, a learning experience for them that I hoped would create even more creative freedoms for the couple. It was the first of two sessions. Tonight would be the second and last. I noticed an apparent and very encouraging change between them when we all met for a conference in my office a few days after the first night. Most of the therapy was done in a non-intimate setting. Typically, several meetings were held to help my clients, help them explore the sexual newness in a non-sexual setting.

Nancy was firmer in acknowledging that she wanted certain things. We discussed boundaries and safety issues. I guess I could also qualify on some level as a marriage counselor, but I never make my clients feel that's the case if it's a couple I'm working with. Sex invariably was why people get married. In my opinion, it's also one of the leading reasons people get divorced. I'd worked with couples and people with sexual issues for quite a while. I'd heard some very unusual sexual fantasies and fears, and worked with a finite few. Lack of communication seemed to be the largest hurdle for many to overcome.

It's really sad because it can be fixed in most cases. Men and women both suck it up and deal with it, or more commonly, the lack of it. Good *it*. Imagine how happy everyone would be if they just got laid regularly? Makes me smile too.

The last session was to acknowledge that both Brad and Nancy had accepted their own desires and could discuss and act upon them as the loving adults they were. To not feel threatened by the curiosity and new desires that had reawakened their passions for each other. Even if they never traveled this road again, they'd discovered that they could with absolute trust and love in each other, and sometimes that's all a couple needs to realize the person they are with is the absolute best thing in their lives.

I was lounging in the sitting area of the hotel suite, drinking a glass of wine mid-evening, on Friday when the keycard hit the door lock. Brad laughed with Nancy tucked into his side, both relaxed when the door opened, letting them cross into our haven.

Starting to stand to welcome them, I spotted the man behind the couple. I had known he was coming to join the last session. Brad had hand picked him because while the new guy to the group knew Nancy, he wasn't interested in her emotionally. He didn't threaten Brad's relationship as Nancy's husband. It was purely physical. Sex.

Nancy had informed me she'd agreed with his choice before the invitation had gone out. He would be the one to fulfill her fantasy. She was absolutely comfortable with Brad's pick. And that was essential. We weren't making a porn movie here. Their combined comfort was the deciding factor. I was only waiting for them to signal that I wouldn't be needed. My participation tonight wasn't necessary.

But the second that door closed behind him, I knew I was in trouble.

I'd never met anyone like him. He wasn't bulk or buff, but he was certainly solid. His jeans fit him, hugged his hips and ass, and he had enough of a package that his length fit against the front by the zipper. Light brown hair and sexy 'kiss me' lips. His eyes captured mine and a slow grin tipped the corners of his mouth. If I didn't know any better, I could swear he undressed me with his eyes where I stood as he raked his gaze over me.

"Victoria," Brad said, coming forward. "This is Cory." He held out his hand.

We never used last names outside of the conferences in my office, and no, that's not his real name either. He looked like a Cory to me though. I shook his hand and he leaned over, drawing air into his lungs from beneath my ear.

"Divine," he murmured.

A sexual reaction was normal for me, but a heart-thumping, dizzy, careening out of control desire? Never.

Until that moment.

I needed to get a grip on my head, quick. "Please, sit down. Wine?" I offered, withdrawing my hand without seeming too desperate.

"Please," Brad answered as all three found spots on the couches. Nancy just happened to find hers on her husband's lap, his hand already disappearing beneath her shirt to her encouraging gasped murmurs. I brought three glasses to the table in the middle of the room. A finger danced along my arm and the short hairs stood up. I thought he'd been fixated on the actions of the other couple. Electricity sparked instead and I swallowed. I should've left at that moment.

I didn't.

"Beautiful," Cory said, his hand sliding from my skin to one of the wine glasses, like it had been planned and rehearsed to look that seductive. He sniffed at the swirling liquid then sipped. He raised the glass in an appreciative toast, the wine leaving a blush red on his lips that I wanted to lick off. I knew a good wine or two. Seemed he did too.

"So you're the one responsible for getting these two to fall in love again, huh?" he asked in a light tone.

I shook my head. "I just showed them the road. The rest was up to them."

The couple in question happened to be deep in a kiss at the moment. Brad's hands played with her breasts beneath the fabric of her shirt, oblivious to us voyeurs or the conversation.

Cory set his glass down and ran a hand up my leg, sensually curving upward to stop possessively on my hip. "And it doesn't bother you that you don't know me?" He was watching me, as though he were holding his breath.

I'd had his medical background checked. He was there to fulfill Nancy's fantasy. I wasn't part of the equation.

At least...I wasn't supposed to be. I lost count of the commands I'd given myself to leave but something kept me rooted to the floor. His hand. His eyes. Myself. Pick one.

"Relax," he purred, pulling me down until I straddled his solid thighs. Looking at his features, I discovered trouble had eyes the color of granite: blue, gray, and flecks of black.

I nodded, finding my voice wasn't where it was suppose to be.

Strong fingers inched up my back until I felt their tender strength on my nape. The sticks in my hair slid free one at a time and the mass tumbled down my back. He purred in approval. "Gorgeous." His fingers forked into the length, separating it, lifting it and it felt heavenly. One of his hands drifted forward and cupped my breast.

My eyes fluttered as a shudder swept over me.

His pupils dilated when he felt the taut peak and no bra. I squirmed on his lap, quickly falling under the spell he was masterfully weaving over me and my body. My lips parted on a rushed pant when he flicked his thumb over a protruding nipple. With one hand behind my head, the other teasing my breast, he kissed me. He tasted like rich wine and it was all I could do to not purr beneath his lips.

I had thought Brad was a good kisser. Cory was...a god. My panties were soaked almost immediately I was so turned on. The light sweater was pulled over my head. The pair next to us were already ahead in the 'let's get naked' race. Ahead by a shirt and almost by a pair of jeans. Brad was working Nancy out of hers with deliberate hands. Cory looked at me and we grinned at each other, a sensual, sexually charged glance that made my whole body tingle.

Sliding from his lap, he stood with me and I helped him out of his shirt then shucked jeans went flying right and left. A bare chest caught me when he pulled me backward, locking his arms around my waist. His hot erection pressed against my ass. I guess this meant I was officially staying.

"I can't wait to fuck you," he breathed with a masculine huskiness, then licked up the side of my neck.

Tell the truth, neither could I. This was a fantasy. I didn't have to be Victoria. I just had to enjoy the offerings. I planned on doing just that.

Nancy crooked a finger toward me as she dropped in front of Brad. "Bring Cory with you."



Like I could get away? Her grin was infectious. The carpet was soft on my knees as I sank down next to her, shoulder to shoulder. Cory stood in front of me. Both men towered over us. The sight created another lusting shiver to strike.

“Now this is fucking hot,” Cory stated, sliding a palm into my hair.

In unison, Nancy and I began sucking and licking at the flesh before us, and what glorious examples of flesh they were. Little moans slipped out between us. I heard Brad’s grunt, catching the sight of his penis disappearing between her lips until she’d swallowed him as deep as she could. Slickness coated the inside of my thighs, I was so turned on. Both men’s breathing grew deep and lustful, renewing the surge of heat flaring through my own body. I whimpered in answer.

Cory tasted so damn good as I licked at his length, swirling over the engorged head then sucking him down with slow pulls until I felt his groin against my lips.

The best part? He’d trimmed for the night. Whether he did it on purpose or he did it regularly, I didn’t care. Cory had earned points.

Music filled the corners of the room, a sultry and sexy saxophone that ramped up my own rhythm. The weight of his fingers in my hair was controlling, coaxing, but not demanding. Pleasure was the name of the game, and we had all night.

He tensed beneath me and I felt the slightly salty taste of his pre-come hit my throat. I purred, feeling the way he pulsed with energy and passion against my tongue.

“Damn,” he choked out a moment later. His fingers loosened from their grip where he’d tightened in answer to my tongue licking him as I rode him between my lips.

Just to show him he was in for a long a night, I took him deeper yet by relaxing to swallow the smooth tip of his cock. The man groaned loudly. Thigh muscles shook beneath my hands where I clutched. He pushed a little, trying to regain control. I didn’t let him. Sucking on him like a lollipop, I dragged my tongue along his entire length being sure to touch the base before starting the languid journey to the deep red head.

I gave him the ‘don’t mess with me’ look.

His hand tightened again and he leaned down to me and kissed me—hard, thrusting his tongue between my lips and sucking the air from my lungs with his passion until I saw stars. “I can’t ignore a challenge like that, baby,” he warned me in a husky voice meant for my ears alone. “Just remember that when you’re begging me to stop while you’re screaming out your orgasm. Over and over.”

I smirked. The man was going to be a menace.

Nancy’s purr of satisfaction reached my ears as she released Brad from her mouth. I turned toward her and we shared a kiss. I respected her level of comfort with me, as a woman and as someone to trust. “Bedroom?” I asked when we parted.

“Definitely,” she replied with a sultry gleam in her eye. Brad helped her stand and with a hand on her ass, led the way.

Strong fingers encircled my arm and spun me around when I stood, trying to follow. Cory clasped me to his body. The rasp of his chest hair against my nipples sent a sharp quiver along my nerves to crash with an aching unsatisfied need between my legs.

With the devil’s own stare locked on mine, his hand coursed down the swell of a breast, over my stomach, learning me in an erotic way that had my heart pounding until he slid between my legs.

I moaned, my head lolling back as sensation roared up my back when he touched bare skin. Without so much as a blink, he thrust stiff fingers into my pussy. He rolled my clit as he pumped without apology into my heat. I came at the sudden friction, bliss cascading to coat my inner thighs and his hand. A small orgasm. Like I had a choice.

“Tease,” I accused, catching his superior stare when he didn’t continue.

Bringing his hand up, he popped one of those fingers into his mouth and I couldn’t look away. Then he shared, letting me savor my flavor on his skin.

“I’ve never met anyone like you,” he said, shocking me with some small part of his brain surprisingly not on sex.

“Cory?” Nancy called from inside the bedroom, followed by a giggle that quickly turned into a loud moan.

That cocky grin of his returned. “After you, baby.”

I really needed to tell him not to use the nickname. It wasn’t that big of a deal. He’d never see me again. I couldn’t see this man ever needing the services of a sex therapist. I decided to let it slide. This was for Nancy after all. It was make-believe for me.

Yeah, I’d try to remember that. Nancy and Brad were one thing. Cory, I feared, had his own rules for the night. His full lips, eyes of chipped stone and light brown hair were meant to make a woman’s heart melt and leave her scorched. Mine sure was.

Finding the couple on the bed already fucking wasn’t that big of a surprise. I was actually happy for them. Brad knelt behind his wife sliding his heavy cock up and down her ass, teasing her until she mewled little hungry whimpers. Nancy crooked a finger when she looked up from her hands and knees, her face flush and her hair swirling around her. Cory answered, biting at my shoulder as he slid around me to reach the bedside. The burn of his fingers as he caressed my ass shocked me. He was driving me well past my normal state of sexual neediness.

He stopped at the edge of the bed and Nancy dove. She swallowed him into her mouth, sucking his dick down to his scrotum. His head snapped back and he growled with the instant pleasure.

A matching deep groan erupted from Brad, watching his wife suck on Cory. Her moans and gasps were thick and intense from the pounding she was receiving from her husband. Cory’s shaft disappeared repeatedly between her lips, his gaze locked on her as she bobbed her head.

Toys and condoms were on the nightstand and scattered on the chair in the room. I wasn’t feeling left out, but I didn’t exactly know what to do with myself just that second, either. Before I could make up my mind, Cory’s eyes lifted and found me. My heart tripped with the dark heat in their depths.

“Come here, baby,” he crooned, his chipped eyes glinting at me with secrets and promises.

One hand loosely plied through Nancy’s blonde hair as she slid up and down his shaft, but I got the distinct impression now that he’d spotted me, she wasn’t the one he wanted sucking on his cock. His come-hither, wicked smile sent a shiver down my arms and I flexed my fingers. It was even worse that he smelled of hot male, clean ripe sex, and a faint sharpness of something so alluring I couldn’t *not* obey.

He pulled me tenderly to his side when I neared him and he kissed me. Not a hard, frontal attack of a kiss like the one he’d given me earlier. No. This was a slow, teasing, seducing kiss that almost brought me to my knees. There was passion then there was *passion*. Something so intangible that I’d never known a way to describe it. I’d never known it.

Cory changed that. He was that passion. He owned it, and I guess from that point forward, he owned a little bit of me. It was sobering to say the least.

“You are beautiful,” he whispered with a velvet huskiness then sipped on my lips. His tongue trailed along my jaw. It was almost as though he was tasting me. The idea sent another sizzling shiver down my back. He groaned, his eyes rolling upward in bliss. Looking down, I spotted Nancy lashing him with her tongue. He smiled encouragingly when she glanced up at him. He pumped into her, filling her with his length, refusing to let me go even a little.

Brad never lost a stroke, his forehead damp with perspiration, his eyes following Nancy’s actions. His palms were planted, clutching at her hips as each stroke pushed her down Cory’s thick cock over and over. Questing fingers cupped my breast, teasing the tip again. It was impossible not to moan.

His smoldering gaze found mine. “Gonna come, baby?” he taunted me.

Shivers raced over my body as he teased and tortured me, alternating sucking and tweaking my nipples. Nancy was lost in the moment, getting fucked like a queen and playing with Cory’s full penis right in front of her.

Cory’s hot breath sizzled across my ear. “Come for me, angel. Come for me,” he ordered, twisting my nipples as he fucked Nancy’s mouth.

The growled sound of his voice, his breath floating across sensitive skin, the sexual energy before me—it drugged me. He suckled on a hard tip, pulling it deeply into his mouth, dropping a hand to

caress my ass. I felt the tickle of his fingers slide against my sex from behind and I was lost. My head fell back and I came. Standing straight up with him commanding my entire body.

I loved it. Shakes cascaded down my body as the orgasm crashed, leaving me clinging to him in the aftermath. Nancy was giving him the blowjob extraordinaire and I was limp, leaning against his shoulder dragging in air to my heaving lungs.

The surprising warmth of his tongue slid across my shoulder and his eyes glittered with something so hungry, so sexy, I almost melted all over again. Nancy released Cory's cock with a guttural groan when Brad heaved against her, then shouted his release. Nancy's cries echoed his and they both collapsed to the bed in spent bliss.

## Chapter Four

Nancy smiled serenely laying in Brad's arms.

"Don't worry. We're not done," Brad assured me with a contented grin of his own.

Nancy purred, running a hand lightly down my thigh then meandered them down Brad's chest. "Not at all, but feel free to catch up."

I think that's all Cory was waiting for. One second I'm standing in his arms, the next I'm prone on my back on the edge of the bed next to Nancy's head and he's between my legs. As though he knew he was there for Nancy, for her night of fantasy, and only needed her okay to ravage me senseless, because that about describes what he did.

He tongue fucked me. Not just a little, but unending. I barely felt the light drag of fingers on my breasts my senses were so shattered by his mouth on my pussy. *Nancy*. Her name snaked into my thoughts but all of my attention was on that man and his tongue.

"I should have warned you." Brad's male chuckle reached my ears, muffled by the pounding of my own blood. "Cory loves to dine."

I soon found that to be an understatement of grand proportions. I can't tell you how many times that man made me orgasm. I lost count.

At some point, I was flipped to my stomach. I remember the feel of his hands, so tender, so caring, so *loving* when he filled my body. It was the craziest, most fulfilling night I'd ever spent with a man.

I've never allowed my feelings to play a part in what I do. That's just disaster waiting to happen. I am clinical, almost to a science of how to have sex and remain emotionally uninvolved. But Cory... There was something different about him. The longer we spent wrapped up in each other's arms, our bodies flush with lust and passion and sex, I *felt*. In fact, I felt wonderful, cherished.

And that just isn't a good thing.

\* \* \*

I rolled over to look at the clock. Four in the morning. The room was a disaster, but oh, the fun we had getting it that way. I'd make sure to tip the room maid when I checked out. Bodies covered the king-size bed. Mine included.

Slipping from the bed, I gathered my clothes and dressed, pulling my bag from the closet to move over to my own room where the remainder of my necessities was stashed. I never stayed in the same room as my clients. Tonight it felt imperative that I kept to that procedure.

Light was at a bare minimum as I searched to locate all of my belongings. Dressed, I quietly opened the door, when I heard a whispered husky voice behind me.

"Going somewhere?"

I startled, spinning. I hadn't heard a thing from the bedroom. Facing him, those dark eyes scintillated with sultry promise if I but looked.

He stood completely naked, completely at ease, lounging against the doorframe to the bedroom across the suite.

"I have my own room," I explained, letting the door rest, not quite shut behind my back.

He straightened and walked up to me, coaxing my fingers away from the door. It closed with a locking snick when he pushed it closed. "The only way you're getting out of here is if you take me with you."

I frowned. "I'm not staying and you aren't going with me, Cory."

"I am," he insisted, dipping down to press kisses to my throat. My pulse beat in answer, but I firmed my resolve. The night was over. "Or you can stay here with me, with the two lovebirds. I enjoyed it, but I have something on my mind that I haven't been able to forget."

He's a slick talker, isn't he?

Blood pounded with renewed heat even though I ordered myself to ignore the gorgeous male in front of me. "What?" I asked, well aware I shouldn't humor him, but it's so damned hard not to.

"You."

He caged me with his body and pressed me to the door. His hands explored my front at a leisurely pace trapped as I was.

“Cory, this isn’t what—”

“Shh,” he breathed against me, pressing a finger to my lips. Did you know the devil knew how to smile and had blue chipped stones for eyes? I could prove it. He stood in front of me. “You like sex but when was the last time someone *loved* you?”

My eyes widened, giving away more than I would have allowed if I’d been better prepared. It was four in the morning after all.

“What’s your room number?” His lips breezed down my neck, hovering fractions above my skin. His breath was warm and moist and made my knees weak. The weight of his hands formed to my breasts unerringly, bringing my nipples out in hungry anticipation. He seemed to revel in the reaction, rubbing his thumbs over the hardened tips beneath the soft knit of my top. I sucked in air on a ragged gasp at the renewed sensations.

He wasn’t moving fast. He wasn’t rushing. He wasn’t even pushing. If you don’t call being captured and fondled like a cherished jewel pushing.

I fought to recapture my resolve before it fled completely. I *never* stayed with clients. “I don’t stay with my clients, Cory,” I stated firmly. Saying it out loud helped to convince my already wavering self-control. I’d never had a problem standing up to a pushy client before. I’d never tell him but I was no better than melted butter beneath his seeking touch.

“I’m not a client and I’ll come stay with you,” he replied, nixing my argument.

“This isn’t the right time or place,” I interjected. “You don’t even know me.”

He rolled my hardened nipples between his fingers, the soft knit of my sweater buffering the abrasive roughness of his teasing fingers to a tactile sensation that was making me hot. I was quickly succumbing. I had to admit my body was a traitorous playground for a man who knew apparently as much as Cory did.

“Then we’re wasting time, aren’t we, baby?”

I snapped my eyes open, piercing the euphoric fog to speak. “Cory.” I drew a settling breath and straightened my back. He moved with me. Craving or not, this man was a friend of a client. “I have my rules for a reason.”

He paused and lifted from his wandering. His hands flattened on the door on either side of my head to hold him up. His erection, apparently not in the least deflated, stood boldly between us. “Victoria, trust me. What you got out of tonight—”

I cut him off at the pass, literally. “Tonight was for Nancy. I wasn’t even supposed to hang around.”

He shook his head, losing some of his cajoling amusement. “I came to play because it didn’t matter to me if I did or not. Nancy is hot. I’m not going to turn down a hot, no-strings-attached fuck especially when I get to do so much more.” He trailed a seductive finger across my shoulder, edging along my collarbone with the tip. “But it matters to me if you leave.”

That had to have its own alarm sound somewhere. In fact, I’m positive it did.

“Why would that matter?”

Silence grew like a wild thunderstorm, his dark eyes pitching even darker. “Because I haven’t had a tenth of the time I want with you.”

“That sounds like a relationship line,” I bit out. “I don’t date clients, either.”

“So you only fuck clients?” he taunted without humor. He stared me in the eye. He didn’t blink at all, demanding I answer.

I tilted up, meeting his stares. “I help clients release their sensuality, removing inhibitions that are detrimental to a loving relationship. I only *fuck them* if it accomplishes something.” How much more truthful did he need me to be? Did he want blow by blow replays of my appointments? They didn’t all have the same outcome as I did with Brad and Nancy. Not everyone needed it, for one. Hell, only a fraction even ended up naked in my presence.

“I see.”

I really doubted it. "I need to go, Cory." I reached for the door behind me.

I had no idea why I was responding to him so deeply, craving him yet again after the hours we'd already spent fulfilling our body's desires. I only knew I had to get away. This man was dangerous to me.

The low hum of his voice hung just between us, that heavy timbre sliding like liquid heat down my spine even though I didn't want to acknowledge it. If I didn't, then I wouldn't have to face it. Some may have called it cowardice. I called it preservation.

"It's a shame a woman like you doesn't know the difference between a fuck and being loved." His fingers lingered on the bared skin around my pulse point, lazily drawing patterns on the exposed skin, his gaze dipping to follow the path he took. As though he hadn't just tossed the gauntlet.

Now he was starting to piss me off. "You don't know what you're talking about." I bit the words out. Of course I knew the difference. I also knew how to keep them separate.

I swear, his eyes gathered the little bit of light in the room. They snapped with the electricity when he looked at me.

"Then tell me the last time you were deeply, passionately loved." He quirked a sexy brow, taunting me as if he knew I couldn't possibly answer him without it being a lie.

For some reason, the caustic retort I had froze in my throat. There was something so genuine in his eyes that even though I wanted to tell him to fuck off, I couldn't.

The truth wormed its way out before I could stop it. Maybe I was throwing out my own challenge at the time. A dare if you will. I just never expected him to accept. I'd never had my back up like this either, being picked apart and challenged. "I don't feel. Love has nothing to do with what I do."

He nodded, as if he were anticipating it. "Can't? Or don't allow yourself to feel?"

My lips thinned in annoyance. "Now who's the one playing shrink?"

"What's your room number, Victoria?"

I couldn't bring myself to say it. Couldn't bring myself to tell him the room number. I had rules, damn it. I followed those rules. Those rules protected me, gave me an escape. Like now. Seconds ticked by.

He didn't get upset. He didn't show any anger at my reticence. "I have all night, sweetheart," he murmured when he leaned over to touch his lips to my neck once more. His breath raced over my skin. I fisted my palms to keep my control. I couldn't move with his body caging mine and I wasn't going to make a scene. He would let me go. I wasn't scared, just perturbed with his persistence. And completely turned on.

"The night is over," I pointed out firmly, the prickly attitude more ingrained than I'd ever noticed before. Why now? Why him?

"Then we'll stay the day in bed, waste away the hours. I know something you don't." Lifting in front of me, I saw the devilish ploy in his expression.

"Oh?" Then I mentally rolled my eyes. What's the matter, Vi? Didn't see that one coming? His blossoming grin proved I'd done exactly what he'd wanted. Proven my own curiosity was winning out over common sense and rules.

He shook his head, smiling as though he held the greatest secret. "Room number. It's the only way."

I knew what would happen if I gave him my room number. I could just go and collect my bag and check out. There wasn't any way he'd be dressed and down the hall before I could be on the elevator and gone. But even though it felt like the safest thing to do, it felt completely underhanded too.

"Victoria." He touched one of my cheeks. "I can see the doubts and worries in those sweet gray eyes of yours. You don't trust easily and you don't want to trust this." He brushed a light kiss to me. "You can trust me."

I smirked. Sadly, he'd nailed it on the head. My circle of friends was very small. I didn't think it was all that unusual though. It worked for me.

He continued, slicing through the growing silence. And the last of my objections. "Feeling at all is a danger to you, isn't it? Don't feel threatened by this." His fingers were so gentle, sliding and

caressing down my neck to my shoulder. "That's what I meant when I said I'd never met anyone like you. Your body is superficial. What's inside..." He tapped a finger over my heart. "That caught my attention. You really care about people, but keep yourself separate from them at the same time. Either you tell me your room number or stay, because you aren't leaving without me."

"It breaks every rule."

"Rules were meant to be broken," he replied, pounding at my hesitation with disregard. He slipped closer and his lips created another trail. I felt myself weakening. Eyelashes fluttered at the sensual storm he was brewing inside of me.

He traced my mouth with his tongue and I fell silent. I stopped thinking under the exquisite seduction. I couldn't believe I was even considering... "You're not already involved, right?"

He shook his head. "Not at all, but I'd like to be."

I groaned. He was incorrigible.

He must have sensed when I'd given in. His fingers slid upward gently into my hair and he kissed me. A soft, sweet, aching kind of kiss.

I told him my room number.

And wondered if I'd just made the largest mistake of my life.

His eyes were soft with gentle understanding even though his smile was sheer devilry. "I'll be no more than ten minutes." The tone of his voice made it clear. He was following.

I nodded, shaking a little at the enormity of what I'd revealed. I'd never let another follow me, let another into any part of Victoria's world. Cory was determined to get as close as possible. With my satchel in hand and the door handle in a crushing grip, I fought the urge to flee and just let myself out. The hall was empty, well lit by the lights.

He paused in the opened door to the room I'd left behind, watching after me until I turned to enter my own room, a few doors down. Blatantly naked and uncaring, ensuring I was safe in my own room before he turned away. Or making sure I hadn't lied. It was hard to say which was his true reason.

I dropped the overnight bag on a chair and dragged air into my tight lungs, curling my arms around my body just as an avalanche of shakes struck. I had to lean against the door to hold myself up. Why? Why did I tell him? Why did I cave? Was it curiosity? The promise I saw all night in his eyes? The understanding gentleness? I honestly couldn't say.

I rolled my bottom lip, feeling unsure and at a total loss. What could he possibly have guessed about who I am? About what I feel on the inside? He just met me!

What scared me more was how exacting he was, how very, very right. I carried a lot of old pains and buried scars that no one would ever see. And I had never talked about them, but somehow, he'd known. He'd *known*. How?

I thumped my head twice on the door out of frustration. He was already getting under my skin, making me do things that weren't in character, especially for Victoria. She never let anyone get the upper hand. Never felt out of place. Victoria was a strong woman, the front I used to hide behind, the face everyone knew.

Sex was the only way I allowed myself to feel. I was probably even obsessive about it. I loved sex. All kinds. The more, the better, which was why I absolutely loved working with Brad and Nancy. My body loved sex. Loved to touch and be touched. Just thinking about it made my nipples tighten.

I didn't have to become emotionally invested to enjoy it. I didn't have to be in love, either. I'd given up on that when I was young, not even a teenager when that illusion had been stripped away, leaving only the dirty truth. Sex was just sex, but as I matured, I found it could be satisfying beyond any imagining, filling an emptiness that Victoria camouflaged. That was what I craved, that satisfaction.

I let out a very quiet groan. *What was he thinking?* Searching the ceiling gave me no answers.

I took a deep breath. Only one way to find out. Then there was a soft tap on the door and I had no more time.



## Chapter five

"I left a note for Brad that I'd cut out. I told him to call the next time he wanted to do that." His grin was pure sexy male. The door shut behind him.

I shrugged. They knew I'd be gone. Morning afters were for the clients, not therapy.

"Relax, Victoria," he said, rubbing his hands up and down my arms with slow sweeps, apparently picking up on my unease.

"This isn't right," I managed through a parched throat. "I shouldn't—"

He pressed a light finger to my lips. "This is perfect. I almost told Brad I wasn't going to do it. I've known him a long time and know he trusts me, and yeah, I adore Nancy. She's a nice lady, but they're married. It felt weird at first. Then we talked about it, and about you. How you have this awesome figure, long dark brown hair and killer gray eyes. And how you got both of them to feel again." The last was spoken with quiet sincerity.

I probably blushed. How often did girls get compliments like that? Not often enough.

"And I wanted to meet you. You made something happen for my friend. You gave them back something that even I knew was missing. That makes you special."

"I—" He didn't let me get a word in edgewise.

He shook his head, totally unrepentant. "I'm not done. If anyone had seen what I'd seen tonight, you wouldn't still be single. You really give a damn about them. You also wouldn't be doing this for a living."

"I'm not a whore!" Talk about backhanded! I snarled through gritted teeth, prepared to throw his ass out and not caring how he landed.

"Whoa!" He held up his hands, a sincere expression softening his eyes. "I know. I researched the degrees to see just what they were. Impressive. Only people who really empathize can deal with something that emotionally charged and turn it positive." His eyes slid up to mine. "But you're not the only one in this room who can read a person."

That should have been my first warning. And a glaring one at that.

"You want more than sex," he informed me.

"No, I don't." How dare he assume to know me *that* well? I wanted nothing more than sex, ever.

A corner of his kissable lips lifted in a knowing taunt. "You shouldn't lie."

"Look," I finally said, exasperated and tired. Lifting a hand from my waist where my arms still crossed my body, I rubbed at a temple. "I'm tired. I don't know why you needed to come over here. If you wanted to talk my ear off, I have an office."

He reached behind himself to the door and removed the Do Not Disturb sign. Opening the door enough to place it outside, he then double locked the door.

"Believe me, sweetheart, I didn't come to talk. Not this time. We'll save that for another date."

I blinked. My brain was lagging. Did he just say date?

"Come here," he purred, pushing off the door. I stared at him, still feeling the sting of his opinion. When I didn't move, he did. He slid his hand into my hair once more. "This is beautiful. It surprised me when I saw it fall loose earlier."

"Why are you here?"

He stopped moving, his gaze locked on mine. Then he shook his head. A slow smile returned along with a glint in his eye that I took as challenge. I mean, he'd fought every step of the way to get from Brad's room to mine. I later found it was anything but—it was pure self-assurance.

"Just let go," he breathed. "*Feel.*"

It sounded just like the advice I gave my clients only it was directed at me, meant in a vastly different way. They needed to feel with their senses, learn to feel the reawakening of their bodies. He wanted me to feel with my soul, with my heart...my emotions. It terrified me. I was getting the tables turned on me and I couldn't remember when I'd asked for it.

"I can't." My lip trembled. My head swarmed with exhaustion and a rise of emotions that I'd fought long and hard to bury. Warm lips brushed against mine when he kissed away the tell-tale sign.

“Shh. Let me take care of the details. You always think of your client, of your partner, first, don’t you?”

I nodded.

“Who takes care of you?”

I blinked at the wash of understanding in his expression. Warmth tingled me in new ways. “No one,” I admitted. If I didn’t give anyone the opportunity, then I couldn’t be hurt. It was simple. His blue eyes darkened to a smoky haze. That warmth grew. He was actually the first to put me first, ever, with the complete sexual adoration he’d given me earlier. I was also beginning to suspect he was just as attracted to me as I was to him, and probably having just as hard a time controlling it. If he was even trying.

He skimmed his hands beneath the bottom of my sweater and cupped my breasts in warm palms. Shivers cascaded down my spine to land between my thighs, sparking little electric currents against my womb.

“Then that is something that will be corrected immediately.” My arms fell from my front when his hands invaded beneath my sweater, giving him better unhindered access to my sensitive nipples. “You know I’m right.”

*Right about what?* I never should have let him touch me. Exhaustion and a renewed lust were fogging my mind.

He pulled the sweater up and away, tossing it to the chair where my bag sat. “These are perfect.” He cupped them again then leaned down and sipped a kiss to each turgid peak. A gasped moan broke free at the damp heat of his mouth on skin. “Come on, sweetheart.” He walked me backward to what I hoped was to be the bedroom. The layout was exactly the same as the other suite. I wasn’t disappointed.

Standing at the foot of the bed, he stripped my jeans away, kissing and licking at skin as though I was a favorite delicacy. “What’s your favorite orgasm spot?” I wasn’t sure I had a favorite one. He scraped his nails over my taut nipples and I shuddered in answer. “Nice.” He pushed me down gently and I sat. He knelt in front of me. “Now I’m going to take my time with you.”

He leaned on my lap, suckling on my breasts until I was moaning, growing hungrier by the second for the completion I knew he could give me. When I lifted my hands to hold him, he surprised me. Wedging his body between my knees, he placed one of my hands over my slit, capturing the other to flick his tongue over the tips.

“Play with yourself.”

“You want to watch?” I asked throatily.

“For a moment,” he replied, lifting away his own shirt. He had a light scatter of curly brown hair that caught my eye and hard muscles beneath the skin. A gorgeous chest. “Don’t worry. There’s no rush today. It’s Saturday for another nineteen hours or so.” He gave me one of those grins, and I saw the devil peek out again. “You do know how, don’t you?”

Oh, he was a bad boy. Of course I knew masturbation. Rather enjoyed it, actually. I just hadn’t come across it too often as a means to arouse someone I was with. Then again, most of the time it was their arousal, their pleasure, not mine that was being explored. Mine was usually just fine all by itself. I think Cory was bound and determined to show me I’d been short-changing myself.

“Play,” he ordered this time, moving enough to fondle but still be able to watch. “I love watching how wet you get.”

Placing a foot on the edge of the bed to broaden his view I let the other lag over the side, then I leaned back a little to get comfortable. “What else do you like?”

“I love watching you orgasm. It’s a perfect release.”

That made me smirk. “You don’t get out much, do you?” I was wet. It was very apparent as I splayed the edges and touched my throbbing clit.

“I get out plenty. I’m not going to screw everything that asks for it,” he replied with a touch of disdain in the retort. His gaze lifted from watching my hand to my face, that dark heat in his eyes daring me to defy him. “I agreed to let Nancy suck me off. They both know and trust me, but I’d said

no to you. Only Brad knew that. I had ground rules too, but when I met you, I couldn't wait to change my mind." He swiped his tongue over my nipple showing his impatience as he pointedly focused on my hand and its motions again. It made me quiver with want.

"Do that," I moaned when he twisted the same nipple, stimulating me between the lines of pleasure and pain. I rubbed at my clit. He did it again and I felt the pressure of my orgasm rising fast. I fell into the feeling, the pending orgasm on the cusp. He twirled and pulled at my nipples and breasts, and I played with the slick heated essence of my pussy.

Through lowered lashes I saw him lean back. "So wet," he breathed in that seductive husky voice that sent shivers down my back. "Do you like that? Do you like to hear how sexy you are?"

I nodded. I loved it. I never got to hear it for me, and me alone. I was the one usually giving the encouragement.

"You've got a beautiful pussy." He lightly brushed my hand and I froze. The next sensation was his tongue licking the full opening of my sex. "And you taste so damn good," he groaned, his hot breath racing over me with him so close.

A sharp smack on sensitized flesh made me cry out, sparks exploding. He alternated a lick, a flat-palmed spank, then again. I twisted and arched into it, feeling the dampness between my legs slick my center.

"Like that?" he taunted with a commanding chuckle, doing a rapid fire palm against me. The pleasure/pain explosion of it was mind blowing. I cried out, lifting, twisting, anything to get that final release. He didn't allow it. When he stopped, he soothed the heat he'd created with the velvet rasp of his tongue.

He touched my hand once more. "Now. Orgasm for me, baby."

I wasn't in the frame of mind to wait. I needed release. Muscles tightened with the first pressured touch of my fingers, sliding and filling my heat. I moaned, long and deep working my clit as he dragged his fingers up and down my cleft.

Suddenly his mouth was on me, his tongue thrusting. I came, hard and fast. Right into his waiting mouth. I knew it wasn't a big thing for men to expect women to swallow their cum. It's a little harder for women to ejaculate well for a man.

Cory proved to me that wasn't the case at all. You had to know what you were doing, and you had to want it, because he sucked me dry.

First time for everything.

I collapsed on the bed, staring at the ceiling in shocked, blissful wonder, ripples of pleasure riding my body in undulating waves. He stripped down again and tugged until I moved enough to roll the blanket out from beneath me. Curling his body around mine, he held me close.

"Go to sleep, baby. We have hours ahead of us."

I was already half gone, so relaxed and content that if I'd tried, I would have purred. Then sleep claimed me.

\* \* \*

The day we shared was indescribable. We splurged on room service and didn't leave the room at all until Sunday afternoon. After the first few hours, I felt completely free, relaxed. I laughed and joked like never before. Light touches and tender glances were the norm. It wasn't until later that I realized what had happened. He'd done exactly what he'd sworn he'd do. He made me feel. He made love to me.

We were sprawled on the large king bed after spending a long and enjoyable shower together and eating a scrumptiously decadent breakfast. A real treat for me. Living alone removed the want or need for extravagant cooking.

Neither of us even thought of turning on the television, rather listening to the stash of slow jazz CDs that I kept in my suitcase. It must have been the safe feeling, cocooned as I was naked in his arms in the privacy of the hotel room that led me to divulging so much, which in truth was only the tip of the iceberg. But it didn't scare him away either.

I answered his questions, as he answered mine. My answers were just a little vaguer in some cases. The answer to this one wasn't crucial. It didn't even hurt anymore to admit it. Not at the moment anyway.

"You were a runaway?"

I nodded, glad he wasn't stunned to the extreme. He paused in his meandering travels up and down my body where I laid next to him, cradled against his chest but continued even as he coaxed my horrific background from me. I guessed to someone unprepared, it could be horrific but I'd lived it. I'd moved past it. It meant nothing to me now. I just wasn't used to sharing like this at all, but his coaxing made it easier on me. He seemed to want to know everything he could about me. The words seemed to fall out of my mouth.

"I hitchhiked across three states before I was finally picked up by someone with enough sense to turn me in to the authorities. I swore if the police or child services returned me to that house, I'd run again. They put me in a home."

"Why did you leave?" No censure. Just a desire to know, to understand. I wished him luck. I wasn't sure I understood everything myself.

"My parents realized I could make them money. Quite a bit. My step-dad had a friend of his pop my cherry and then they started selling me out. Pulled me out of school to turn tricks for them. They were more interested in their next drug purchase than my welfare." It had taken me years to understand their motivations, to know why Mom and Poppa had done that to me. Love had nothing to do with it. I doubted I'd ever really even had theirs. I couldn't forgive them, but I could put it behind me.

I felt the way his chest rose and fell with harsh jags of his breathing, his gaze focused upward. His hand had never stilled. "They made you a prostitute."

I shrugged. Old wounds, remember? I'd never spoken of it, even to the child therapist. I was still living in fear at that age. "Basically. I didn't come from the right side of the tracks," I went on. "Money was always hard to come by, until they realized they had me. What you see, I've earned. I've learned to walk and talk big. It took me a long time to get this way, to move past their control, but they were the ones who put me on this path." I refused to regret the steel it had earned me, either.

"How old were you?"

"Eleven, almost twelve."

The single exploitative was ground out between stiff lips. Silence hung heavily for several minutes as we let the day slip by. It had felt good to actually tell someone, and not be condemned for it. I'd made my peace with it years before during all the psychological evaluations we as students had to complete for our degrees. But to actually speak of it and not feel a second of withdrawal from him was very comforting in its own way.

"Wait." His hand stopped moving and he glanced toward me. "Why are you telling me this now? I bet your closest friend doesn't know this about you." It didn't take him two seconds to answer his own question. "You're not planning on seeing me again."

"Nope."

No sense in lying about it and giving him hope. He didn't know my real name. Didn't know where I lived. Didn't know jack about me.

A flash of frustration glinted in his eyes. "This is going to be a bigger challenge than I'd originally thought." He rolled, pinning me beneath his solid weight. "I know I'm not imagining this, but you don't recognize it because to you it's not safe."

"What are you talking about?" I demanded, a touch of anger slipping into my voice.

His gaze raked over me, sparking like coals at night, the black scattered through the blue and gray mixture blazing. "Nothing you need to fear." He nuzzled my neck. "It won't mean anything to you, not yet, but I do need more than one day." The burning rasp of his tongue beneath my ear made me arch into his hold. "You have to meet me again. Next weekend. Even if you insist on doing it incognito, *Victoria*," he stressed.

The devil and Cory had an agreement. I could see that easily because Cory had his grin. I saw that same knowing male grin when my eyes opened.

"I know it's not your name, baby. I also didn't think..." He trailed off, his gaze landing on my lips. He shook his head as if clearing cobwebs. "Doesn't matter." His fingers whispered over me. "I will tell you this. I would never hurt you. You can tell me everything, anything, even your real name and I would never betray you."

"You're talking crazy," I choked out, feeling a brick of anxiety land on my chest. Trusting him with what I'd shared as an unknown was one thing. Trusting him because a part of me wanted to care, that *was* dangerous.

"Maybe, but there's Jubilee next weekend. I want to take you. We'll stay in a hotel again if it will make you more comfortable. How early can you meet me on Friday?"

"I can't meet with you again, Cory." I shoved him away, denying the flutter I felt at his suggestion. I'm sure most of it was accounted to fear, but I refused to delve into it to find out. I'd already given him far more than any other person when it came to *me*. I couldn't go further. Propping myself on my elbows, I put space between us.

"Yes, you can. What time?"

"I don't date—"

He swooped in and attacked my lips for several minutes, finally releasing me when we both needed to breathe. "*You will* date me. End of argument."

I arched a brow at his end of discussion tone. "Bossy SOB, aren't you?"

"Only with those who need it."

I chose to ignore that.

"You know you want to go. Fireworks, a carnival. Who can pass up fried food and bright lights? You know it's the city's biggest costume party. We'll go in costume. It will be fun," he persuaded. He punctuated every detail with lazy kisses to my shoulder and chest. "I bet you can't remember the last time you did something for fun."

"Sex is fun," I denied.

"Sex is sex," he replied, sounding disappointed. He ran the tips of his fingers through the wave of hair at my shoulder. "How deep did you have to bury yourself to get out of there, Victoria? When was the last time anyone got close, or tried to? Not everything good in life leads to pain."

"Stop." The word was a choked sound. "Please." He was treading on water that wouldn't hold either of us afloat.

"You will meet with me on Friday." It was a molten order. His voice, his eyes, penetrating me so deeply, I felt a quiver race over my body. It was one of the few times I'd seen a real hardness in him and knew he wouldn't take no for an answer. In any form.

Reluctantly, I agreed.

## Chapter Six

The week passed as normally as most. I worked between two of the three libraries that were under my supervision, checked messages in my office, usually staying until well after nine once I'd left the day job behind. I was trying to work myself into some sort of amnesia. I didn't want to remember the weekend I'd spent in that man's arms. I didn't want to remember the way he watched me, or the way... Yes, the way he'd made me *feel*. I didn't want to remember the details. I wanted to somehow lose them, maybe have them mysteriously end up in the circular file but I knew I couldn't.

Cory knew me a lot better than I knew myself on some level. It was another frightening reason not to let him too close, but it seemed inevitable. I couldn't refuse, not without proving him right.

Not without proving myself a coward. My relationships had never been in depth. Yet, without giving him so much as a phone number, he was trusting me to show up at our agreed upon spot on Friday afternoon. He had given me his, and every time I looked at it, I swear my palm burned. Just like the black chips in his eyes could reach through space and time. I'd see his smile and *know* he was expecting me to blow him off and not show up. But then I'd be proving him right.

One of the last things he'd said before we parted ways on Sunday still rang between my ears. I didn't know how he knew what to say, how to find that part of me that no one knew about, but he had.

"Believe in yourself enough to feel. You won't regret it," he'd told me with a final kiss.

Then he walked away, leaving me to watch him disappear into the cars surrounding the hotel. I didn't spot him again, or know which way he left after that.

Friday loomed no matter how much I dreaded its arrival. I could go, prove him wrong and leave him standing there. If I was a colder bitch, yeah, maybe. But a part of me was curious. Curious about his intentions, curious about why Jubilee, why *me* for that matter.

So Friday evening, I left my car in the packed dirt lot and followed the meandering couples and families to the entrance. Jubilee was an annual waterfront celebration that lasts a full week. Starting on Friday night through the following Sunday, ten days of food, carnival rides, bands and parades of costumed anything.

He'd challenged me to be fun. To have fun. We'd see what he thought of my 'fun' self tonight. I wore one of my best masks and the outfit to go with it.

Sequins coated my indigo blouse in flowing designs, one side hanging dangerously low, hugging my body like a glove to barely cover one of my breasts. The other side was a full sleeve that had insets of sequins and pearls in the arm length. My mask was black and sequined to go with the blouse, with huge black and indigo feathers that framed the upper half, leaving the bottom of my face visible. I was wearing a decadent pair of sequined trousers that matched the blouse with a hot pair of black boots. Hey, even I'd been to revel in Mardi Gras once or twice.

I got more than one look but I ignored them all, my gaze searching the throng at the gates. My heart was racing and I breathed to try to control it. Anxiety attacks were *not* what I was trying for here. A cacophony of screams, music and insanity filled the air.

Then I spotted him. And I enjoyed the view for a moment before he could spot me in the crowds. He was wearing a long outfit, a cape tossed insolently over one shoulder with a simple Zorro style mask, but there was no mistaking his rich earthen hair or those kissable lips. A tight black button-down shirt fit over his body like a second skin, the top buttons open to show off his magnificent chest.

I swallowed my tongue to keep it inside my mouth. His ass was so well formed in the tight pants, I felt my body heat rise like a plane taking off. Fast and without apology. He'd warned me. Glad I took his warning to heart.

"Whose horse you gonna ride, *Señor*," I purred into his ear before he could turn and fully see me.

"*Madre de Dios*," he murmured with a husky sound, leaning back until he brushed against the side of my head, managing to avoid feathers at the same time. "I'm glad you're here."

"Did you really think I'd not come?" I challenged him, fully aware of what his answer would be.

"Every minute this week."

He faced me and the granite of his eyes stole my breath again. Gorgeous blue and gray framed in the mask as they were. That gaze started at the tips of the feathers and strolled down my body with sheer desire in their depths to return to my eyes. I didn't have to look to see what he thought of the outfit. His pants hid nothing. Just the thought of him in *and* out of them kept my body humming.

"Magnificent," he said. "I'll have to remember that mask for later."

Thankfully the evening was cool, and once we left the gates, the tromped and stirred dust was left behind as well. I wished I could say the same for the heat between my legs.

He took my hand and put it on his arm, escorting me through the crowd, meandering at a leisurely pace. Throughout the evening other costumed couples nodded and smiled, as if we all shared a secret, and I guess in a way, we did. We could be anything, anyone dressed in anonymity.

My smile returned, very naturally, and I relaxed. He'd suggested the costumes on purpose. Whether it was to keep me from being recognized or to allow me a sense of armor, this was a very well thought out plan.

"How did you know this would make it easier for me?" I leaned in to get a quick fix of the musk of his skin and the clean aroma that was all Cory.

His grin returned, yet it was his eyes that twinkled with a telling boldness beneath the hung ornament lights that swayed and bobbed from tree limbs all around us. Dusk had fallen. It was less than half an hour to full dark.

"I was hedging my bets. I wanted every reason for you to be here, and as few as possible for you to talk yourself out of it. I'm glad it worked."

He leaned in and licked right behind my ear, his breath rustling the heavy weight of my hair. One of the rare times I wore it down. A constricted bun didn't go with the frivolity of the outfit in the least. He purred his own approval as he hummed and breathed against my neck.

We walked and browsed through various craft tents, working our way to the main grounds where the music stages were. Five stages with all kinds of music being played. The crowd was thick all over, but the flow was easy.

He bought me a drink, something with a Mediterranean flavor, citrus and mango. It was a shocking cold compared to the heat of my body next to his. Every stride brushed his body against mine in delicious teasing torment. I saw several people with Mardi Gras beads and had to smile. Some things were universal. If you spotted those beads, it could only mean one thing. Party. And Jubilee was a huge one.

I leaned my head to his shoulder, silently thanking him for inviting me, for thinking of this. Silently keeping the smile hidden. I couldn't let him know he'd won this round.

The heat of his lips coursed down my spine when he kissed my temple at every opportunity. I relaxed even more, swaying to the different strands of music, his hard body contoured to mine.

It was much later when Cory received a tap on his shoulder from a stranger.

"You and your date have been chosen for the first parade," he was told.

Cory glanced at me, his body saying he was willing to decline if I didn't want to do it.

I answered. "We'd love to." See how brave I can be when I want?

"Great! Meet over at the main stage in twenty minutes." And the man in a function t-shirt turned and began stalking the crowd again.

"I wonder why us?"

"Because you're a hot babe," Cory supplied, as if it was absolutely normal to point that out. He leaned in for my ears only. "Because every man here is jealous that you're with me. And I'm the one that is going to get to play with your body later."

I moaned. "Stop!" Although it was impossible not to smile at the deviltry.

"I love when that happens."

He looked pointedly at my body, his gaze deepening with his own desires right out front for me to see. He crowded me a little more, pulling the cape close and purposely fondling the hard nipples that were visible now through my blouse.

"I've thought of your tits all week," he breathed. "I've dreamed of watching your body."



I groaned, my eyes fluttering under the sensual onslaught. What a time to have sensitive breasts!

He didn't relent. "I've awakened to the sound of your orgasms, craved your cream. I'd make love to you here, right now if I could." His breath was a hot groan on my skin as he held me close, both of us breathing a little too hard to not be noticed. But I didn't care. I was hidden in plain sight.

And I loved it.

\* \* \*

We paraded and danced through the grounds amid cheers and whistles, the rolling sound of Samba music floating around us, the music of the hour.

The man knew how to dance, too. He was incredible, firm hands, solid thighs and a look that burned me to my core with every glance. He held me close then whipped me around, pulling me back into his body, seducing me through the beat and tempo of the music. He rolled his hips, playing to the sound of the beat, tossing my body like a whipcord, loose and at his control. He pressed against me, making sure I felt the entire rigid outline of his body each time he pulled me close.

By the time we reached the end of the parade march, a fine sheen of sweat coated Cory's chest and I was breathing a lot harder. The sight of him afterward was masculinity defined.

He never had less than a smile for me, nothing but tenderness, and a burning hunger in his gaze that was for me and me alone. No one else got that look and believe me, a lot of women tried.

But tonight I wasn't me. I was so far from the real me that I didn't care. I wasn't the librarian. I wasn't even Victoria. I was anyone I wanted to be. And right then I wanted to be his lover. I wanted to be the woman who deserved those burning looks of hungry desire. I wanted to be the woman that drove him. I wanted to be the only woman.

That thought was like running full speed into a brick wall the size of New York. I froze solid, making Cory almost trip.

"Whoa!" he shouted, caught completely unprepared, struggling to regain his balance. He turned to me, a worried expression clouding his eyes. The music seemed to vacuum itself to another part of my head. "You alright, baby?"

Revelers walked or danced past with hardly more than a sideways glance at us. Kids with cotton candy paper cones, parents with silly if exhausted grins, couples walking with their hands locked or arm in arm. And then me. Suddenly I felt so alone.

Cory held me close, protecting me from getting trampled as more raucous groups passed us. "Baby?" he asked, his voice low and gentle as he protected me from the crowd.

"I need to leave." I needed to escape. Now.

"Alright." He didn't ask questions, just put an arm around me and kept me steady as we cleared the gates. It was now closer to midnight than the almost eight it had been when I'd arrived.

I don't know how long we walked before he stopped. Noise lay behind us and cars lined out in front of us. He stroked a hand up and down my bare arm, holding me steady with the other.

"You okay now?"

I barely heard him. I just needed to get out of there.

"Victoria?" I blinked and for the first time, the name didn't register. Victoria was the person I was when I was in control, and I wasn't in control right that second. I felt far from being in control. I shivered.

"Shh." He gathered me up and held me. "It's okay, baby."

That was when I discovered just how frightening it was to allow myself to feel. I was terrified. Because I was starting to care.

## Chapter Seven

He asked for my key when we reached my car and I thought he was going to open the door for me. He did, but on the passenger side.

"Get in, honey."

It was a low spoken order. I should have argued, but I was still shocked. I think he knew it, too. I slid in and buckled the belt. A few minutes later he stopped near another car, popped the trunk and tossed a bag in with mine. The engine purred at idle and then he was in the driver's seat again.

He reached across the seat and grabbed my hand before we started moving again. "Tell me your real name."

I jumped at the warm feeling of his hand covering mine, so it took a moment for his words to register. My gaze fell to the security, the flesh and bone hiding mine where he held it on my thigh.

I expected him to start making demands, arguing, forcing me to bend, anything other than what he did. With careful fingers he pulled my mask away, laying it on the back seat. Then he did the same with his, never releasing that hold on my hand.

His face was in shadows but no less familiar. The hard planes of his cheekbones, the almost square jaw with just the slightest dimple in his chin. He even had sexy eyebrows, a little on the thick side but shaped naturally to accent his face. He was beautiful.

"No more masks, baby."

Then he leaned over and kissed me. Remember those sweet, intoxicating kisses that I told you he could give? Well, they apparently had only been a precursor to what the man was actually capable of. Time vanished beneath that kiss. Sweet, giving, drugging. I felt my world shift again when he finally released me, pulling his fingers out of my hair where he'd slid them at some point to hold me for his exploration. He pressed his forehead to mine.

"Trust me," he whispered, the look in his eyes somewhere between a dare and begging.

My heart twisted with the knowledge that this man, this incredible giving, patient man could be forced to beg. For anything. Least of all from me, because of me.

His shoulders lifted when he drew a deep breath moments later, something sad and wounded stripping away the sensual heat that had been in his eyes for most of the night.

"Brandon," he said.

I blinked in confusion.

"I know it doesn't hold any weight because you don't need it but I want you to know it. You can trust me."

He brushed a quick touch to my lips, a surreal heat. Time and silence stretched out, him watching me until he finally relinquished my hand with a final look of sad disappointment. I couldn't give him what he wanted. I just couldn't. I think it was actually the headlights from behind that broke the moment but I wasn't going to debate the little facts.

"I'll get my car picked up later," he said, putting the car in drive.

Okay, a safe topic. "Who?"

He shrugged. "One of my brothers. We have keys in case we can't drive after a night out."

"Really?"

A head shake and then he was merging with traffic. He had family that looked out for one another. I'd never had that security. If I did, it was before my life became one of night after night on the run. I didn't think to ask him where we were going until it was obvious we were heading away from downtown. Hotels slipped past us until they were behind us.

"Where are we going?"

"I'm kidnapping you."

"What?" The admission didn't frighten me, but it did surprise me. Somehow I knew he wouldn't do anything, but the blunt answer still caught me off my guard.

"Two days and two nights. If I can't prove anything over this weekend, then I'll leave you alone."

"Cory—"

“Brandon.” Those lips of his rose in a knowing smirk. “Cute name but you call me that over this weekend and people are going to think you have a screw loose.”

“Oh. Why?” My heart tripped at the blatant truth in his voice. I feared I knew the *why*.

“I’m kidnapping you. I don’t have to tell you the details. You just have to sit there, look gorgeous and like my every fantasy come to life and we’ll do just fine. Deal?”

What could I say? He was driving *my* car. I was his prisoner. I knew I was nervous, but I thought the apprehension would be deeper. I knew I should be screaming at him to let me out, to take me back, something. But I couldn’t force the words out. Somehow, someway, he’d bypassed my defenses. Cautious, yes. Out and out fear? Couldn’t find it.

“Did you know you were going to do this?” I asked, feeling the weight of distrust still weasel into my voice, making it sound dry and reedy. Trust was so damned hard for me to give. He was asking for a lot more than he could probably even guess at.

“Honestly, no.” He glanced my way, that sensuous grin back on his lips. “I have a hotel room held, but it’s not where we’re going.”

“When did you change your mind?” I gripped the belt that sliced across my lap, trying to ignore the pounding of my heart. I watched the world go by on the other side of his face, viewable through his window.

“Say my name,” he whispered, sliding that heated blaze of desire up my body when we reached a stoplight.

“Brandon.” It was a choked whisper and his eyes closed, as if he bathed in the sound.

“That’s your answer.” The light changed to green.

“Just like that?”

“Just like that,” he replied, his hands firm on the wheel. “You know I’m attracted to you. I know you feel it. And baby,” he purred, the devil’s own fires in his eyes, “I’m not letting this slip through my fingers without a fight.”

“What if there’s nothing to fight for?” I asked him, blatant dismissal in my voice.

“You’d be lying,” he countered. “It’s okay, baby. You’ll understand in time.”

He chuckled low and slid me a look that had my body taut in an instant. It was so not fair that he knew which buttons to push. He pushed that button hard every second he could as we left Jubilee in the rearview mirror.

I couldn’t help that I was nervous. I wasn’t stupid. Brandon could have been a murderer for all that I knew. Sliding a cool look at him from beneath my lashes, I had to admit the name fit him perfectly. Suave, secure, passionate, tender. All wonderful qualities—if I was interested in him as a man. As someone permanent. Which I wasn’t.

Was I?

My eyes drifted closed and my head sank back to the headrest. No. I knew I wasn’t. I lived in the land of make-believe most of the time because the real me was scared to face the world. I knew that. I was insecure in so many ways, I almost always relied on “Victoria” to keep me sane.

Like a bad movie, bits and pieces of my past kept unwinding in my head. After running away with the forty dollars I’d stolen from my own mother—not that she was such a bargain as a mother—I walked. For days. I just picked a highway that I knew would get me out of the state and didn’t deviate. Hitchhiking was dangerous but I had to make time at the start. I had no choice. That was imperative. I didn’t want to think about what they’d do to me if I was brought back by the police. I was, after all, their largest if not the only means to an income to supply them with their drug money.

Most of the drivers who stopped felt pity for me. All I had to tell them was my father beat me and whoever was behind the wheel left me alone. Only once did it not work. I still got away, less one shirt. By the time I was picked up, I was a year older and a lot wiser. I defied the authorities at every turn. The threat to run again if they sent me home wasn’t an idle one and the authorities caught on to that real fast.

I was enrolled into a school for wayward girls, which was an adjustment, let me tell you. I was lucky in one way that I was sent there rather than some juvenile hall lockdown. I wasn’t the crux of

the entertainment. I wasn't the one the others ganged up on. I had an opportunity to better my situation and damn it, I was going to run with it.

It was a dark time in my life, but I survived it. Once the teachers realized I wasn't a lost cause, they began to better my education. They worked with me, and I doubled my efforts to learn. I finished my high school education two years ahead of time since I didn't have to take mandatory summer time. I managed to get a job and into a small college. Within two years, I'd improved my situation enough to advance my courses and my lifestyle.

I never looked back. I also knew how rare my situation and the success of it was. One thing my parents did teach me in all their despicable behavior was I could rely on myself. There was no one else.

"We're here," Brandon said, breaking into my unpleasant reverie. He'd parked in the driveway of a cozy single story.

"Whose house?" Although I feared I knew without asking.

"Mine. I got it after the divorce." He rocked a shoulder. "Come on, gorgeous. Time to show you a few things."

The trunk opened and he grabbed a bag in each hand, tossing the cape over an arm.

I followed more as an automaton than with any desire to see what was on the other side of that door. My feet faltered, yards behind him.

"I can't do this, Brandon." Ice coated my veins until I knew if I didn't stop the reaction, I would shiver with the absolute fear. I knew what he was asking. I knew the trust he was giving me to bring me here. He was practically laying it at my feet.

He dropped the bags at the door and unlocked it. "Sure you can." Then without even looking at me, he went into the house, a bag in each hand. Lights came on, the porch light and the front room lights. He didn't return to ask, to prod, to poke, to demand. Nothing.

I felt like such a coward, just standing there in his front yard, staring at that beautiful home. I had a condo. A sharp, sterile walls and floor place. This was a house, a home. My mouth felt dry. I took a step.

*It's just a house*, I berated myself. I took another step. I'd been in no house but my own since I was eleven. I'd slept in a dorm at the school, and there was no way that barracks style dormitory could be called home. I hadn't stepped over the threshold of another *home* in twenty years.

*Be brave. You can do this. You don't even need Victoria to do this.* I heard the words and almost stumbled. I wanted to scream at the voice at how wrong it was. The soft strains of an Italian ballad wafted through the door. It was his way of saying he knew. Music was always around me. If I walked through that door, it still would be. I would still be safe, even here.

I swallowed hard and climbed the three steps to the front door porch. Light welcomed me. I crossed the door's boundary and with a hand that trembled, I shut the door behind me. My own statement.

"Come here, baby," he whispered. He stood in the middle of the room, bare-chested now with no shirt and the cape gone, his arms opened wide. I almost ran for the comfort of his hold.

I sobbed as he crushed me against his body.

"Shh." He crooned and stroked, petted and soothed. "It's going to be okay. You'll see." Murmured words cascaded around me as he just held me. He tipped me up and brushed his lips to mine. "Say my name again."

I did, even managing to not say it with the squeak in my voice and he shuddered, pleasure rippling across his shoulders.

"Damn that sounds good. When you cry my name out tonight, I want to hear it. Loud, shouted. My name," he said, his voice growing deeper and tighter with his desire. His gaze blazed and found mine. "Mark this, though. I'm never calling you Victoria again. I want the real you and until I get it, I'll find every delectable nickname in the dictionary to christen you with."

I shook my head. I felt safe as Victoria.

He pressed his cheek to mine. "It's okay baby. You will always be safe with me," he answered as if he could read my mind. Maybe he saw the fear. I don't know. At this point it wouldn't have surprised me if he could see the terror streaking through me, either. "I'd never hurt you, and no one would ever get close enough to hurt you. You don't have to hide with me. I don't want you to hide, either." His expression lightened, a playful grin rising. "Unless it's hide and seek and you're naked when I find you."

I giggled. Seriously. I laughed. His grin blossomed into a full blown smile and he looked like I'd just given him the best gift on Christmas morning, but I couldn't help it. I knew he had a playful nature—the costumes were proof of that, but hide and seek? I swallowed but the laughter wouldn't be held back.

His hands stroked my back as the last of the laughter died away, the music giving us our own private haven.

"You should do that more often." He pressed a kiss to my temple. "Come on. I'm getting horny just standing here like this and the thought of you naked is killing me."

He wasn't lying. The ridge of his erection was impossible to hide in the skin tight pants. I dropped a hand to cup his impressive size and he sucked in a sudden breath. "God, baby." He swelled and jumped beneath the material, filling my palm. I licked my lips, imagining the way he'd feel filling other places.

"What do you want?" I teased him, raking my nails up the solid length, watching his eyes grow dark and sexy.

"Are you being a dirty girl tonight?" The air grew heavy with anticipation, a sultry decadence permeating it.

"I think so," I replied. I needed a release. A *serious* escape from my emotions.

His gaze sparked and I knew if there was anyone who could give me what I wanted, what I needed, it was this man.

## Chapter Eight

“Suck my cock,” he ordered.

I didn’t hesitate, unsnapping the top of his pants and pulling the zipper down, letting him pop out in all of his raw glory. His fingers gripped my hair, not painfully, but nothing like the gentle lover he usually was. My pussy clenched at the sheer animalistic domination. There was no cruelty, just a hard passion. An excited passion.

I licked at the swollen head. His dick jumped in answer, the liquid taste of the moisture bead sitting on the end of my tongue.

“You’re fucking beautiful,” he said. “I love telling you how sexy you are.” His voice gritty, with barely a shallow restraint as I sucked on his length, taking him into my mouth with slow pulls. “Do you like hearing it dirty?”

I nodded. Tonight, without a doubt. This wasn’t the time for soft and loving. Maybe later.

His head fell back on a rushed gasp as I worked my throat around the head. “Just like that, baby. Swallow me.”

Both hands twisted into my hair and he pumped once. Twice. Wrapping my lips around his tip, I rolled and twisted my tongue all around him, feeling the tension in his thighs, in his fingers in my hair as his length thickened in answer. I released him before he could come. Yeah, I’m cruel that way, but he wasn’t going to complain. I was far from finished with him.

I looked around and spotted a large dark beige recliner. He saw where I was looking and backed up to it, dropping his pants around his ankles to fall back on it. He kicked his boots off and peeled the pants down to be tossed out of the way.

I prowled. It was how I felt, animalistic and on the hunt. I had his undivided attention as I stalked him on my hands and knees, not blinking, not losing his gaze with mine.

His legs were long and strong stretched out before me. I couldn’t pass them up. Starting down at his ankle I licked upward, mimicking the motion with my hand on the other leg. He tasted male. Completely. His body stood at attention, still craving, still unsatisfied. How little he knew that it wasn’t going to be satisfied for some time, and he’d love every minute of the torture.

Fitting between his thighs, I wrapped a hand around him, pumping him slowly, licking at his scrotum. I sucked his balls into my mouth one at a time, rolling them like decadent gumballs on my tongue. He moved my hair aside, watching me as I worked my mouth over his flushed skin.

“My cock, baby,” he groaned. “Suck me. I want to feel your hot mouth tight around me.”

I shuddered, desire coiling tighter. Each movement dragged my nipples against his hard thighs. He slipped the spandex edge of my blouse beneath the swollen mounds of my breasts. I pulled the other arm loose to not tear the material in our rush of lust, then both breasts were free to the cool air in the house. They puckered with their own need, my hard nipples brushing against the coarse hair of his legs.

He slid downward in the chair, reaching until his hand rested beneath my breasts. He played with them and I moaned hard and deep.

“Suck me baby. I want to watch you.”

So, I wasn’t the only one with a voyeuristic gene? I was fine with that. If my enjoyment increased his, and his enjoyment increased mine, it was an unending circle of sexual Xanadu. I rose up on my feet, bent further to get a better angle at his length. It left my breasts swaying freely for his hands. He loved playing with them. Another thing I wasn’t going to complain about. I was so wet, so hot, it wasn’t going to take much to make me come either.

I quaked at the feel of his fingers tugging and tweaking at my breasts. His cock slid easily between my lips and the rocking motion sent him right to the back of my throat.

He groaned, so long so low, it sounded like music to me. Rich, deep, passionate. He flexed his hips, driving deeper into my mouth. I raked him with my tongue, sucking him harder with each breath. He showed his appreciation.

“Shit. Yessss. Suck my cock with your hot mouth. So fucking hot.”

My eyes closed as he punctuated his passionate words with his hands on my breasts. Between my thighs I was soaked with cream.

His fingers dug into my hair and I anchored myself to his thighs. He was going to come, and I wanted every drop. He shouted, my mouth pistoning up and down his rigid length, my tongue slurping against him as the first gush hit the back of my throat. I didn't slow down, drawing him as deep as he could go until he was spent, gasping in the chair, coated in sweat again.

He slipped from between my lips with a gentle pop, and a huge grin from me.

"We're not done," Brandon warned me a moment later, his gaze lingering on my bared breasts as I stood before him. "Strip. My dirty girl hasn't come clean yet."

I licked my lips, feeling the aroused trembling sensation underneath the motion.

"I can't tell you how much it turns me on to watch you, to tell you how fucking hot you are." It wasn't a lie. It was more than apparent in the blaze of heat in his gaze. He pushed one hand beneath his head and palmed his semi-flaccid cock in the other. "It's just you and me baby. I want to see you."

It wouldn't be hard considering all the lights were still on, but even as I made that mental note, I had a feeling it wasn't exactly what he meant. Before I could think about it, he distracted me from traveling further on that thought path.

"Your top. Take it off."

I grinned back at him, tilting my head at his tone. "Bossy SOB."

He shook his head. "You need a man who can be in control without making you less of a woman. Pay attention, darling." I swallowed. It was like every move was calculated to batter at my defenses, every statement. Because he nailed that on the head. I had to feel in charge, but even when he was in charge, I didn't feel threatened by him. I realized with a shocked thud of my heart that he'd always done just that. He flicked a look to my blouse.

I met his gaze from beneath my lashes. "So you like me being a little dirty?"

"I love it." Not even a hesitation.

I lifted my breasts, one in each hand and pulled on my own nipples.

His eyes were fixated on my hands. "I love watching you, baby."

With nimble fingers I carefully removed the skin tight blouse, laying it nearby. My slacks were next, the fine bands of my underwear quickly following.

"Beautiful," he breathed. He shifted, spinning the chair on its support. "There. Lay down there. Use the pillows."

He pointed to the couch and I quickly stacked the pillows until I was supported in the corner, facing him. He made himself comfortable again, his hand rolling over his reawakening flesh.

My hands were not close to any part of my body. "Now what?" I planted one foot on the couch and the other on the floor, well aware of his desires, but I wanted to hear them. As much as he wanted to express them.

"I love how wet you get," he breathed, his gaze lingering on my pussy. "Play with yourself. Make yourself come for me." I was more than willing to oblige. I was so hot and wet. I needed a release.

Sliding my fingers between my folds, I pulled them back out glistening with my cream.

"You mean like this?" I purred, sticking my wet fingers into my mouth like a Popsicle.

He nodded, his chest rising and falling with hard breaths, watching my every move. He made me feel so sexy, his gaze glued to me.

I relaxed into the pillows, fondling my breasts and pinching at the hard nubs. Electricity zapped my nerves, cascading to my womb in escalating waves. I felt the heat of his gaze and found it highly arousing to know I had his undivided attention with nothing more than my body and my own pleasure. I found my clit and rubbed at the sensitive mass of skin and nerves. My sex was hot and slick with desire, the heated essence pooling and dripping down toward my ass. Plunging fingers into my channel, I ground into my clit, my hips rising in adamant hunger for the orgasm I was creating.

I became lost in the tight wrap of my climax and didn't hear him move. He pulled my fingers free of my drenched body, sliding his thick cock into me, prolonged friction leading to ecstasy that made



me explode right then. I gushed over his length as he filled me, stiff and solid, not moving, being bathed in the liquid heat.

He growled a low male sound as I relaxed, the last shakes of my body sucking on his length in fulfillment.

Brandon found my mouth as he stroked me to new heights, stretched out over me on the couch. Wrapping my arms around him, I floated on the euphoria he created.

The feel of his hard body, sweat-slicked skin, and the hard rasp of his breathing against my ear drove me crazy. I rocked against him, needing more, wanting all of him. He didn't disappoint me, sending me spiraling higher and higher with each climax until he stiffened, shouting out his own orgasm as I climaxed again. He throbbed against my slick walls with furious energy until I thought we'd both die from the pleasurable sensations.

"I can't get enough of you," he said sometime later between kisses. He nuzzled against me, then hefted himself to his feet. "Come on, sexy. Time for bed."

"You want me to stay?" I knew this was coming. I guess I still wasn't very prepared for it though.

"Honey, haven't you figured it out? I never want you to leave." Then he kissed me. Long and deep, wrapping his arms around me until I was a melted mass all over again. "I know this much. If you can't trust me by the end of the weekend to at least give me your name, then there isn't much more I can do to convince you."

"Brandon—"

He pressed his lips to mine. "Shh. I'm tired, therefore handicapped. I need all of me to convince you and my brain just isn't available at the moment."

So he's cute, too. And I followed him. What else could I do?

\* \* \*

"How long were you married?" I asked over breakfast the next morning.

He even cooked. Brandon—twice I'd had to remember he wasn't Cory—had made waking up a leisurely affair. Sweet words and tender kisses. He didn't even try to have sex. Just lots of touching and whispered words. I still wasn't entirely sure how I felt about anything. I was playing it by ear.

"Seven years. Divorced for almost three now. I met her and married while I was still in school, college," he elaborated. He gave me that knowing grin with a wink. I guess my thoughts were right out there. "I think that's why we didn't last. We were really too young to begin with. We hadn't grown up all the way. I'm still not all grown up, but I'm a better adult now."

I chuckled at his light self-teasing. The table sat in a small area off the kitchen with a nice overhead lamp but it looked rarely used, half of it covered with stacks of mail and papers. He'd had to move some to make room for two rather than just one.

"You have a nice house." A stout single story three-bedroom from what I'd seen that morning.

He glanced around. "I've always liked it. I'll show you the back later." There was something wicked in his expression and it made me curious. I'd have to see what was back there before I left. But in the meantime, I'd play along.

"Why didn't she take it? Don't the women usually get the goods in a divorce?"

He rolled a shoulder. "She moved. No sense in taking it. She's in Maine now, I think. We don't keep in touch."

I nodded, kind of understanding that mentality. Long gone and buried.

"What about you?"

He dug into more of his hash browns. The man was a good cook surprisingly. Although it would be hard to ruin scrambled eggs and bacon, it could be done.

"I have a condo." I was surprised he hadn't asked me for my name again. I wasn't sure what his plan of attack was, but for the moment, I was living in the now.

"Somehow, I could believe that."

I blinked. "What's that supposed to mean?"

He gave me that sexy smile. "Nothing. Go ahead and finish. I need to shower, unless you want to help. I have plans for today."

Wow. He was going to kick me out. Just like that. Not even a warning. I guess he hit the point of no return between last night and this morning and I didn't see it coming. I set my fork in the middle of the plate and rose to place it on the counter, refusing to admit how much it hurt. Well, what was I expecting anyway? Nothing. *Stick to it then, dammit.*

"I'll go change then. Are you sure you don't need me to take you to go get your car?" I fought to keep my voice even. I *did not* hurt over this. I refused to hurt.

"Nah, I already called to have it picked up." He cleaned up his spot, finishing his coffee with a contented sigh. "Otis should be here soon."

"Otis?" People really still used that name?

"It's his nickname, honey, but that look is priceless. You'll see when you meet him. His name is Paul and he's my older brother."

"Meet him? I thought you just told me it was time to leave."

"Whoa!" He blocked me at the counter with his arms on either side of me. "No one is leaving. Where'd you get that idea?" Brows drew together like dark thunderheads over his eyes.

"You said you have plans." Confusion was making me dizzy. Was he playing me?

"I do. They include you, but if I take a shower with you to help, I'll never get out of here alive." He fingered the cotton of my tank top that I'd slipped on rather than sit at the table naked. "I've had hell all morning as it is, but I'm trying to be honorable, or at least reasonable to not keep you naked and in bed for the next two days. I deserve a fucking scout badge for this much restraint."

"Brandon—"

He pressed a finger to my mouth. "At least you finally got my name right," he murmured just before he stole a quick kiss, the pungent, sweet taste of coffee still on his lips.

He was breathing as deeply as I was by the time he let me go. "Yeah, I can't shower with you. Baaaad idea. Really good, fantastic idea, but a bad one." He glanced down in sheer disappointment. "See?"

I saw his predicament standing proudly against the form of his sweat pants, the view between my arms where I cradled his waist in my palms.

"Would it be so bad?" I asked, a breathless, needy sound in my voice that was something I didn't think I'd ever heard before.

"Honey, I could spend hours naked with you. It's the only way, and I don't have those hours before he's going to be here. If you want to shower first, you can."

I think he was pleading, but something in his voice made me push. It was a powerful feeling. That I could make this man crack with lust.

"Probably a good idea." I looked down. Then looked up with a stare that would have melted butter. "A quickie?" My thighs were shaking I was so turned on by his blatant arousal right there in front of me.

"You deserve better." He swallowed and the muscles strained in his neck. He was fighting it and I didn't want him to. I wanted *him*. *Now*.

"I deserve what you can give me for right now. You can make it up to me later." Then I took matters into my own hands.

"Oh God," he gusted when I formed my hand around his thickness, the soft knit giving much easier than the hot pants he'd worn the night before. "You turn me on like no one else."

His lips slammed into mine. More coffee flavor and Brandon. It was a yummy combination. He kept me pinned against the counter, his hand falling to slide a finger beneath the crotch seam of my thong.

"Oh shit," he gasped. "How long have you been like that?" Slick with my own arousal, he slid along my heat with ease, filling me with his fingers as he deepened the kiss. "I tried," he whispered and I knew he'd given in. "I tried to behave."

"I don't want you to." I threw my arms around his neck and held on as he fingered me to an orgasm.

“Come for me, baby. I love it.” He purred deeper when I creamed his hand. “Yes!” He spun, grabbing my hand and pulled. He yanked down his sweats and bent me over one of the kitchen chairs. “This is going to be a quickie, baby. I’m sorry.”

“Just fuck me, Brandon!” I cried, so hot and needy, I was practically sobbing. I felt the thong I wore give and disappear with a faint ripping sound. The smooth intrusion of his cock at my sex had me widening my stance, begging him to fill me. And in one solid stroke he did, hard and deep, stretching me.

We both groaned.

“So good,” he grunted. “Hot, tight. Shit baby. I can’t get enough of you, just like this.”

He punctuated his words with deep thrusts, my pussy walls clenching hard with his rhythm. It was a wild coupling, passionate and abandoned. Neither one of us lasted more than two minutes but he waited until I’d hit my highest peak before he began to ram his dick into me like he was going to explode.

I screamed his name and he came.

Wrapping an arm around my middle, his hips flexed, shooting the final spurts from his body into mine, sucking in air. He sagged against my back, brushing kisses to my body. “We really need to work out this trust problem.”

“Rayne.” I spilled it, without waiting to think about it, without arguing with my conscience. “My name is Rayne,” I gasped.

“Beautiful.” He stood me carefully on my feet, using his sweats to wipe my body off, then tossing my panties in the trash. “You’ll never regret telling me.”

“Don’t.” I gave him a look full of pleading to not continue with that thought. I *couldn’t* even *think* in that direction. The repercussions... My world was crumbling and I didn’t know how to stop the fall.

He kissed me, slow and easy. “Go shower. Paul will be here soon.”

Shaken, I did as he suggested.

## Chapter Nine

“So if you weren’t drunk, why’d you make me go get it?” I heard the gruff teasing in the other voice from where I stood just out of sight from the living room. “Unless you bought that new Lexus in the driveway and didn’t happen to have your car at the same time.”

“You’ll see.” *Brandon.*

My damp hair was pulled up in its typical curl, held with enameled sticks this time. I tugged at the bottom of my shirt, wondering if he really wanted me to meet his brother. Better yet, why?

“Okay, I’m holding you to that. I have to get to the store and back home before the woman has a cow, or the baby, whichever comes first. You comin’ to Mom’s tonight?”

Mutual laughter floated to her. “I’ll be there.” The front door opened and closed. “It’s okay, baby, he’s gone.”

He knew I was listening? I shook my head. Of course he would. It’s his house. Of course he’d know when I was done in the shower.

I shot a look at the door. “See, Victoria could handle meeting him,” I told him with a shame-filled glance and apology. “Rayne is a chicken shit.”

His hands cupped my face. “Rayne is a beautiful woman.” He kissed me on the forehead. “You don’t need Victoria. Rayne is perfect.”

“Victoria knows how to enjoy life, knows how to—”

He pressed a finger to my lips, shaking his head with a softening in his gaze that wrapped me in a blanket of warmth. “Rayne knows how to do that too, but is used to Victoria getting all the attention. Rayne is vulnerable. Victoria isn’t. Rayne is used to hiding because she doesn’t want to be hurt. I want more of Rayne. She’s the only one, *you’re* the only one that matters. Victoria’s strength, her smarts, her goals and dreams, they’re a part of you, sweetheart.” He linked his fingers through mine. “Come with me. I want to show you something.”

He stopped at one of the spare rooms and opened the door to an office. A computer on a desk, and all the accoutrements that could be expected. A printer, the lone coffee cup filled with pens sitting on his desk, bookcases filled with books and odds and ends. I guessed it looked like many small home offices around anymore. My gaze flowed around the room until it landed on the frames hung on the wall. Looking at him, he nodded, saying it was okay to go look.

I did. Curiosity had been known to get me in trouble but I didn’t even see this one coming. My jaw dropped.

“You’re a freaking Ph.D. in Psychology!” I blinked, stunned. He sure as hell didn’t look like any professor I’d ever had!

“Two peas if you ask me,” he said with a light grin, lounging against the open door with his arms crossed over his chest. He’d donned jeans and nothing else. “I know what you’ve done and after hearing of your childhood, can actually see the why behind most of it. My only question is, why do you continue to do it? You don’t need Victoria as much as you think you do.”

“Rayne is a boring person.” There wasn’t even room to backpedal in that small space.

“No, Rayne hides in plain site. She’s energetic, beautiful, an awesome dancer.” He dared to grin again. “And the hottest lady I know. I don’t want Victoria.”

“You don’t understand!”

“I understand more than you think. You’re looking for acceptance in one job, while hiding the real you in whatever it is you do when you’re not doing the sex therapy, to protect the part of you that still feels wounded and damaged. There’s nothing damaged about you, honey. By the way, that’s an ingenious twist on the degrees.”

“Don’t mock me,” I snarled. “I’ve worked hard, paid my time in blood to have those degrees.”

“I’m not mocking you. You’re a success miracle with your history. What I’m saying is, I want Rayne. *Only* Rayne. She doesn’t have to hide, and she won’t have to rely on Victoria to get her what she wants because I honestly believe she’s strong enough to do things for herself.”

I opened my mouth to scream at him when his words sank in. I staggered back in pure shock. "You do?"

He nodded, his lips rising into a gentle smile. "Rayne is incredible. It's time you knew that. She's likeable, loveable, patient, human," he stressed. "There's no reason to fear being human, honey."

"Rayne *was* a prostitute," I whispered on a choked sob, unable to look into his eyes and see damnation in their depths. The things I'd had to do... *Wounds*. And he knew them all.

"What is Rayne today?"

I snickered. "A librarian supervisor. I work for the county."

"Seriously?" I nodded. "Damn. Talk about innocuous."

I rolled a shoulder, not looking him in the eye. "I told you I was boring."

"No." He stepped up and pushed me into his chair, kneeling next to me. "You're hiding. I want you to stop hiding." He scooped up one of my hands and held it between his. "I want to let you meet my crazy family, but only if Rayne is going to come with me. Victoria is the knock out I met last weekend but I knew there were more layers to you than you showed then. I was proven right when you let me stay with you. I was so bowled over by you, attracted in the worst way. I don't think I made a lick of sense all week in any class."

"What would you have done if I'd not gone yesterday?"

"Tell Brad to set up another night."

"See! It is Victoria. She appeals to everyone." I grabbed onto that like a lifeline.

Brandon drew a disgusted breath. "Not hardly. I'd let him set it up but I'd be the only one to show up. She's appealing, yes, but Victoria is only a part of you. You do know that, right?" I felt like he was studying me. Seeing if I needed a little time in my own padded room. I knew I didn't.

I blew out a breath. "I know. I do know I'm not schizophrenic."

He seemed to consider that. "You've just never had the reason to tell Victoria goodbye then."

"I guess." God, did he have to pick me apart so damned well?

"This is my deal. Get rid of Victoria, *all* of what she does, and I'll help Rayne get back on her feet. Who knows? She might even meet a guy who loves her for herself."

"You're insane. Rayne doesn't have that ability." No one had ever loved Rayne. Not even her parents.

"Are you sure?" he asked, looking at me deeply. "I know of at least one."

I stilled, taken completely by surprise. "Brandon—"

"Rayne," he mimicked. "See? It even sounds like you. Tempestuous like a thunderstorm, or as sweet and gentle as a summer shower. That's you to a 'T'. What does Victoria have? A sex drive to scare a diesel engine. I can handle that. I've always had a higher than average sexual drive, even for a guy. And that was Rayne this morning in my kitchen, wasn't it?" He brought her hand up and kissed her fingers. "I know it's scary, but this is only going to get better for you. I made my promise to you and I don't break my promises. I'd never hurt you."

"What if I hurt you? What if I don't fall in love with you?"

That seemed to set him back on his haunches. "You mean you aren't yet?" He rubbed a finger along his nose, giving me a humoring look. "I'll have to try harder then."

"What if I can't change?"

Sobering and more than a little scary. "That will take time, to know the confidence you have is yours, and not a shadow personality, but it's not really changing as much as just accepting. Rayne is a multi-faceted person. It's okay if she also happens to be a sex maniac, and vulnerable, and loving."

"Would you ever want to expand our sex?" It's probably an odd question for most, but then I'm not *most*. I'm me, and highly sexual and sex-driven.

"I'll be honest. The thought of you getting it from another guy makes me see red right now. I tend to personalize things pretty deeply. I do know how you worked your therapy and still see it being helpful to others, but the physical part..." He stopped and glanced down to where he clasped my hand. Silence stretched for what felt like an eternity and I felt the odd need to hold my breath. "Okay, maybe all of it at once is drastic. I know you feel a satisfaction in your work, even without the sex."

"I do," I admitted quietly.

"And it'll be a big change to remove all of that from your life." He played with the back of my hand beneath his thumb for several seconds, lost in his thoughts. His next words... Would the man always surprise me with his insight? "I can't ask you to give up the sex just because I don't like the thought of another guy touching you." He huffed a breath. "Damn it. And I thought it would be so easy, but I can't ask that of you, even if I say it's in the name of helping you."

"We can find a middle ground. I'd hate to give up all of what I do. I could focus more on the marital side of it," I said, not sure where the suggestion came from, or why I made it. Like a real partnership was being hewn between us. "I don't need Victoria for that."

He looked up at me, and the love in his eyes was breathtaking. "It's a perfect start."

"If it takes off, I could quit the library and quit being so..." I stared at him, lost for the right word.

"Restrained! That's it! That's why you do it!"

"What?" I shook my head, playing catch up on the merry-go-round.

"Think about it, Rayne. Are you happy as a librarian?"

"I guess so. It's the work I could get while I went to school and my degrees advanced me up the ladder."

"Then why did you push on to do the therapy if you were okay there?"

"Because I wanted more." I gasped, plastering a hand over my mouth. Like that wasn't a can of worms to open. "I'm never talking on your couch, mister!"

His chuckle was kind. "I think you need to reevaluate the librarian part of yourself, too." He stood and lifted me with him. "But that's enough for today. You do understand where this is going, I hope?"

I closed my eyes and took a breath. The scent of his skin filled my head, a male musk that was him, only his. "Say the words."

"Are you challenging my feelings?" he asked, cupping my face with his hands.

I didn't have to look to feel the tinge of hurt, the growl in his words gave it away. I could break him in more ways than I knew. Lust wasn't alone in that camp.

"I'm not." I swallowed the lump that felt frighteningly close to being a sob. "I don't remember ever hearing them from someone who mattered," I managed in a choked whisper.

He brushed back my hair. "Ah, honey. Rayne." He lifted me with such tender grace and I opened my eyes. "I love you. Never doubt that."

And I cried. He just held me as I sobbed for what felt like hours, purging pains and hurts from a lifetime of hoarding.

"I just want you to be happy, but I want you for me. I know it's a shock. I know it sounds demanding to give up a part of yourself that is even larger to you because it's such a presence to who you are. But I honestly think Rayne, the woman you are, is perfect without Victoria's influence. I see a woman who doesn't need anything, yet needs so much just to be herself. Does that make sense to you?"

"Sadly, completely."

"No regrets, baby. You'll never be alone again."

I looked up from his strong chest and saw the deeper promise in his gaze. The one that was cradled in the warmth of his love. A love that I felt, but was still too raw and shaken to share. Where I had doubts, he had none. Where I had strengths, he championed them, buoying my weaknesses until they were manageable. It was a start.

*Eighteen months later*

"You sold your condo?" Paul sputtered over his tea.

I guess through their eyes, I had changed quite a bit since that first night. I grinned. Making that announcement probably was a jaw-dropper. I hadn't started as the most open person with them.

I was ecstatic that I'd sold it. I hadn't been living there for more than six months now. I had a *home*, a real loving home, that was so much better. I purposely held onto Brandon's hand and searched his eyes. He nodded, his approval apparent.

His family sat around Mama's table gaping at me. Even his dad was grinning. I adored his parents, and his crazy, noisy family.

"Well, it doesn't make sense to have a married couple living separately, don't you think?" I quipped, sliding Paul a sidelong, meaningful glance.

He'd been supportive of the relationship since the beginning, since that fateful night I met them all, with all their own idiosyncrasies. And realized that Brandon was right. I was safe. Oh yeah, and I'd never be alone again. Not with this family around.

"She said yes?" one of them shouted.

"When?"

"What's the date?" came an excited feminine voice.

"Brandon's getting married!" Whoops and hollers escalated the noise by a factor of ten.

A wooden spoon pounded on a pot, quieting the raucous. "Now then," Mama said. Charlene, my soon to be niece, wiggled in her chair next to Dara, Paul's wife, clapping her hands. "I guess that makes it official. Rayne, you're now in the line-up for dishes. Only family gets that privilege." She grinned from ear to ear with happiness for her son.

When I'd met her, she took one look at me, up and down, and said, "You can call me Mama. You'll be family before too long." I was shocked, and a little taken aback, but you can't beat age-earned wisdom. And that was the beginning of falling for his family.

I closed my therapy office. I found the more time I spent with Brandon, the less I craved just *any* sex. Oh, don't get me wrong. I still have a passion for it. I can definitely make Brandon earn his stripes, but as the months passed, the yearning, the unfulfilled feeling ceased to exist. I guess in a way, he helped me to heal.

Victoria never did come back after that first weekend when he 'kidnapped' me. Brandon cemented me, he grounded me. He'd offered twice to bring a friend to play with us, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't stand the thought of *him* touching anyone else either. I began to see his side of things pretty clearly when that bomb hit me.

I had my fears. I can't lie that I didn't. I am a stronger woman than I'd ever given myself credit for. Brandon saw more in me than I'd seen in years. It was humbling that he loved me for so long, *knowing* he was right, and that I was the right woman for him. I took a while, but I fell head over heels for the man at my side.

What happened over the last year and a half? A lot actually. I'd buried Rayne pretty deep to protect myself, kept my wounds close like a second armor, one I soon found out I didn't need. His family accepting me so openly, helped in ways I'd never thought to imagine. I'd spent two-thirds of my life alone.

Then I started taking courses again, not exactly at a loss for what to do with myself, but searching for Rayne. I discovered that I enjoyed learning. I ate up books, textbooks, manuals, it didn't matter. I took that hunger for learning and decided to share it.

Yeah, I'm a teacher now. I teach at a junior college while Brandon teaches at the university. I also volunteer at the school library. I practically get the red carpet treatment with my background. I've also found out, I secretly crave that kind of attention, but now I can admit it, I don't need to be someone else to get the compliments. Rayne is just as worthy, and damn, but I love getting compliments.

“What are you grinning at?” Brandon whispered close to my ear. Conversation had settled down between his brothers and sister and the kids.

“Just thinking.”

“Oh?” He gave me that sly, sultry look.

“Not about that,” I admonished him.

“Damn,” he breathed, not looking at the least repentant. “What then?”

“Just how much I love you.”

He blinked. I loved stunning him. He still gets this deer-in-the-headlights look whenever I tell him, or like he’s opening the biggest Christmas present under the tree. I owe him a few, considering how long it took for me to realize that all that emotion I was fearing was actually a beautiful thing, and it was just waiting for a chance and a place to happen. And the right man.

“I love you so much,” he groaned, burying himself into my neck. My hair was down my back and loose. He loved playing with it. I loved it too. I rarely wore it up anymore. Another sign that I was changing, not hiding. I was also happier than I could ever remember.

I hoped he didn’t change his mind after my next request. “I was also thinking about the meeting the director had with me last week.” I hadn’t mentioned it because I had been thinking on the offer.

“Oh?”

“She wants me to spearhead a teen runaway program.” I gripped the napkin on the table. Nerves were never going to be my best friend.

“Rayne,” he said, a whispered sound of approval, his voice so low, if he’d been sitting any further away, I doubt I would have caught it. “You’d be perfect for the position.”

“You think so?”

He tipped me with his knuckle. “I know it.” Then he kissed me.

I ignored the renewed whistles and hollers in appreciation. Let them get their own. I was perfectly happy with mine.



## BIO:

Diana DeRicci is the sexy, flirty pen name of Diana Castilleja. A romance author at heart, DeRicci's writing takes you into a saucier spectrum of sensuality and sexual adventure, where a happily-ever-after is still the key to any story.

Diana lives in Central Texas with her husband, one son and a feisty little Chihuahua named Rascal.

You can catch the latest news on all of Diana DeRicci's writing and books on her website: <http://www.dianadericci.com>,

Feel free to drop Diana an email. She'd love to hear from you.