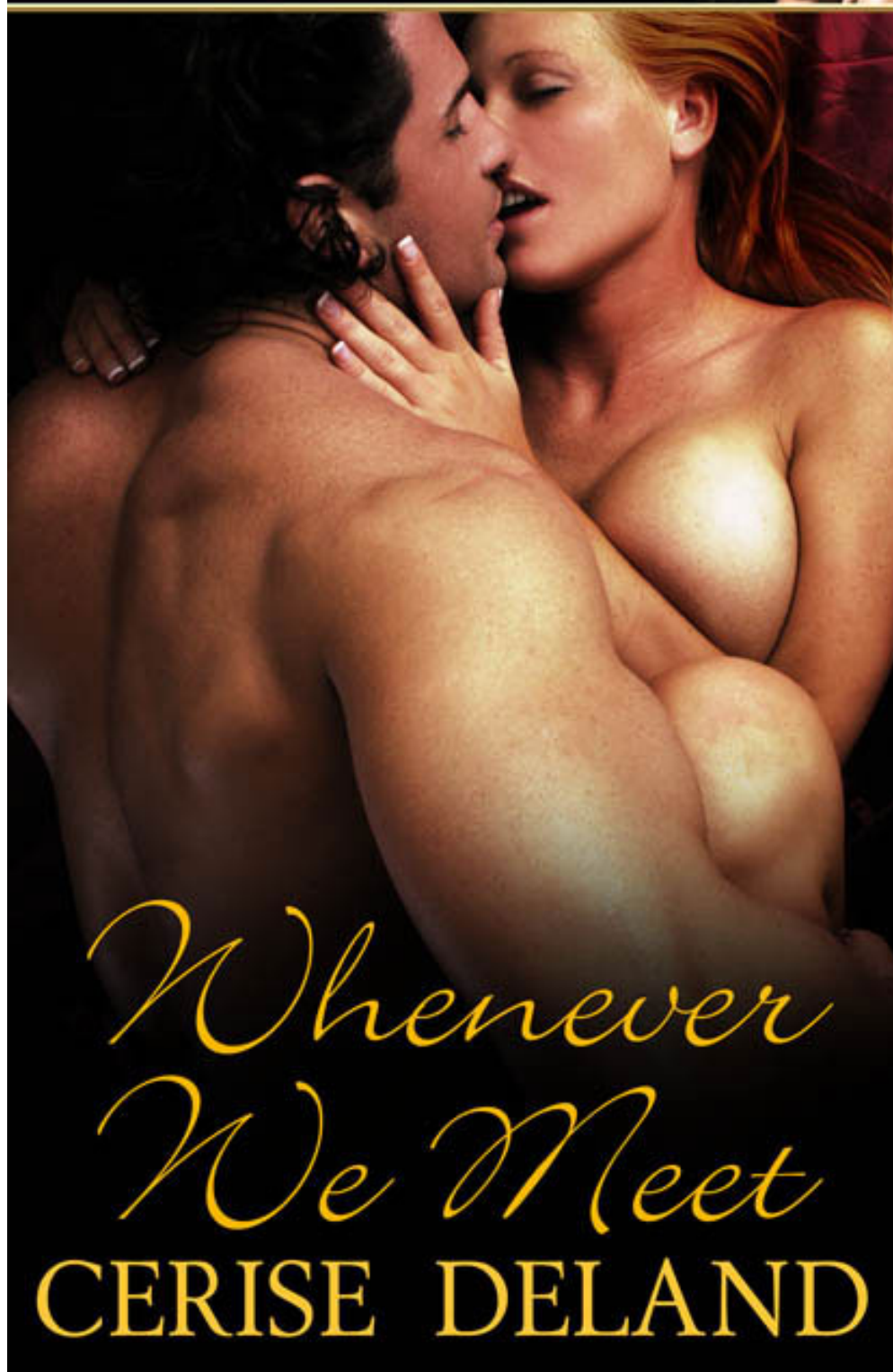


ELLORA'S CAVE **BRANDED**



*Whenever  
We Meet*  
CERISE DELAND

## **Whenever We Meet**

*Cerise DeLand*

Young widow Angela Reynolds doesn't need a gorgeous older man pursuing her while she asserts her independence professionally and personally. But hotel magnate Stephen Montoya won't permit this sweet, vibrant beauty to escape him. When he demands she kiss him each time she enters and leaves a room, the two of them discover that some passions cannot be denied — or tamed.

When Stephen asks her to marry him, Angela knows she wants his tantalizing body inside hers for heart-pounding intimacies she's only imagined. But she's unsure if she can surrender completely to this dominating man...or give up her newfound freedom.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Whenever We Meet

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# *WHENEVER WE MEET*

**Cerise DeLand**

### *Dedication*

To Helen, Editor Extraordinaire, who polishes my imperfect prose. My great thanks!

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

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Jacuzzi: Jacuzzi Inc.

Mercedes Benz: Daimler AG Corporation

*The New York Times*: The New York Times Company

## Chapter One

Angela Reynolds made a hasty check of her lipstick and threaded her fingers through her auburn waves one more time as she waited for the plane's passengers to disembark. "Remember now, no affairs!"

The elderly gentleman in the row of airline seats in front of her turned to grin at her. "I will, honey! But I had hopes!"

She burst out laughing—and so did he as he struggled up from his seat to make his way toward the exit.

*Nothing like making a fool of myself!*

She chuckled at her joy at being here in Guadalajara, Mexico in the middle of November. Being in the sun, instead of rainy Seattle. Being recognized for her talent with color and style. *And being wanted.* By a mouthwatering, dark-haired Mexican dreamboat of a man. To decorate the flagship of his new hotel chain. And to decorate his arm—and his bed.

*But I won't let that happen.*

She snapped her compact shut and dropped it in her purse. She had promised herself she'd not get involved with Stephen Montoya days before he had made her the offer of becoming his head decorator last month. That was an offer she did not want to refuse. An offer that should have come without the obvious promise in Stephen's eyes to make her his own. *Even if I need to refuse myself the luscious opportunity to become his lover.*

"Miss?" A passenger behind her pointed toward the door. "Are you ready?"

"Sorry. Of course, I am." She slid out of her seat and strode down the aisle toward the gangway.

The extra moments gave Angela time to try to calm her racing heart. She wondered if she'd light Stephen's eyes once more as she had the first time she'd met him. That had been in his office in the city near the gorgeous old cathedral. He had been looking down over the spires and turned toward her, a smile gracing his generous sculpted lips. She entered and paused, overcome by his magnetism. His powerful frame. His height. More than half a foot taller than she. Darker than she. With glistening ebony hair and brilliant jade eyes. A deep tan. And a mouth made to kiss a woman...everywhere.

Yes, Stephen Montoya was in this terminal waiting for her. As he had promised her he would be before she left here last month—and on email early this morning.

"I am delighted you agreed to be the head decorator for my hotels. I personally will show you everything you need to learn about my expansion plans—and my hopes for the future."

The promise thrilled her, made her breasts tingle and her pussy pulse with excitement. She hadn't felt desire so strong since she'd fallen hard for Wade Reynolds when she was twenty and naïve about marriage and love—and how life can change all your plans.

Her plans since the death of Wade in Afghanistan over a year ago had changed drastically. They didn't include dashing men. Or affairs with them. Still, since she'd met Stephen, he walked in her dreams. And lived in her daytime hours since he'd offered her the job of spearheading the interior designs for his hotels.

"Return to me, Angela," he had beseeched her the night a month ago before she left him to return to her headquarters in Seattle. "I know you alone have proposed the right concepts for our décor." Two other decorators, older colleagues of hers with sterling credentials, had failed to please him and he sent each packing within a day.

"Even though I don't speak Spanish," she asked him, "and before coming here last week, I had never been to Mexico?" She voiced her biggest reasons that she might not be the best consultant for her boss to assign to this project.

"What the heart knows, the mind does also." He sat beside her on the veranda of his hacienda overlooking Lake Chapala—and in the velvet night, his large jade eyes flowed over her every curve and absorbed her into that big muscular body.

"Yes." She looked up toward the moon to break his mesmerizing spell and forced herself to recall what her mind had told her seven years ago when she'd been suddenly and magnetically attracted to a man. "Though sometimes it takes a while for both to become synchronized and admit the truth."

"Time can be irrelevant, when instinct rules."

"I am a big advocate of reason and control."

He had examined her gaze and her expression. "One day soon you will tell me why that is."

She glanced away, knowing to address that meant she would be promising to share her innermost torments of love and loss. She reverted to his topic. "Your instinct tells you I am the best one for the hotel, does it?"

"Your instinct does, too. You know it. I see it, feel it. You will tell them you want to be the consultant for us?" he had asked, with the look of a man determined to get his way.

"It will take nerve."

"You have that," he had asserted.

He was right. How he had known that, she concluded now, meant his famous instinct was at work.

*Her* instinct said she could make a mark doing this. Her mind said she was the best person for the task. She understood Stephen's vision for the hotels. For tourists who had the time to spend in a luscious hideaway. What she did not understand as well was how she could be so instantly attracted to a man. Again. After all her orders to herself, here she was, wanting this man. And she had to constantly promise herself she was strong enough to resist the temptation of the demanding Stephen Montoya.



Could she? For how long? How well? She was committed for a year's consulting. Subletting her condo in the Queen Anne section of Seattle, she told herself she hadn't lost her momentum to make a new start after her husband's death.

She shook her head now as she threaded her way through the terminal. She reminded herself that following her instinct had almost ruined her life. She had her ducks in a row professionally. Her personal goal was objectivity. Even if it dissolved with one look at Stephen. He was such a dashing combination of every dark hero she'd ever heard of. Sophisticated, disarming and fierce. Rhett Butler and Zorro. Double oh seven. Cary Grant and Hugh Grant. She chuckled at that last duo.

She rounded the corner and there he stood. Better than all those men because he was real. Here. Heart-stoppingly gorgeous. *And my client.*

She walked forward through the crowd, a grin on her face and her hand out to greet him. Her traitorous eyes absorbed him like water for her parched soul.

So tall and imperious, he stood out from the crowd. Impeccably attired in a charcoal gray suit and snowy shirt, he did not smile at her but welcomed her with the spell-binding focus of his wide, jade-green eyes. He had to be older than she by at least a decade. Suave. Secure in his skin. Savvy enough to launch his own hotel chain in this rocky world economy. With a dimple in his left cheek. A jaw that defined determination. And a smile spreading across his lips now in a welcome that sucked the breath from her lungs.

"Angela," he said in that rumbling bass voice, his English perfect but with a Spanish lilt that heated her to the core. "Welcome." He took her hand and drew her forward so that their thighs brushed. "How was your trip?"

*Trip? How's my brain?* She stood, rooted to the floor. Where she found her voice, she had no clue. "After the hour delay getting off the tarmac in Seattle, it was wonderful. Smooth."

"Let me take this." He reached for her carryon, his fingers warming hers, lighting fires of desire for him that she had warned herself she shouldn't feel. Then he did more.

He wrapped his other hand around her waist and led her forward. "How many bags do you have?"

"One. Rather large, I'm afraid. I brought as much as I dared. Subletting my condo, I put most of my things in storage." *Rambling on, Angie?* "I'll buy more suitable clothes for the warmer climate here, I thought."

"Wise," he told her, as they stopped in front of a luggage carousel.

She examined his profile. Strong. Roman. Was there anything about this man she didn't like? She licked her lower lip. *Not much, babe. In fact, not anything.*

"Do you?" he asked her, his eyes taking a lazy tour of her mouth and her throat, and obviously inquiring about something she had missed as she fantasized about him.

"I'm sorry." She pushed her hair behind her ears. "What did you say?"

His eyes darkened and narrowed. He knew she was flustered and he was damn pleased about it, too.

*Way to go. How transparent am I?*

"I asked if you would like a drink or something to eat? Plane food is so horrible these days."

"No thank you." She heard the carousel begin to turn and crank out passengers' suitcases, but she couldn't look away from him. "I'll be fine until I get to the hotel."

"I have a better place for you."

Fire alarms clanged in her head. *Not too close to you. That would be so dangerous, so quickly, before I have my bearings.*

He looked rueful, as if he could see her mind questioning what he had in store for her. "Do not worry. I have arranged for you to have one of my penthouses in the city. It is in the same building as our offices and you will be near your work and the architectural plans. Day or night."

"That's very efficient and thoughtful. I'm grateful."

"You are also nervous about taking such a powerful job, jumping over your senior consultants."

She rolled her eyes to the ceiling. "Do I wear a sign?"

"Every emotion you possess is in your face, Angela."

Her lips parted at the idea that he read her so easily.

"You are charming to observe. You must not worry that I see things I mustn't."

*But I do. How will I maintain any distance if you can read all of me?*

"Do you need to rest?" His black hair dipped over his brow. He raked it back with long, strong fingers. "Angela?"

"Ah. Rest?" *What was that?*

"Nap? Sleep?"

*How can I when you look at me like you are about to eat me up?* "No. No, no. Definitely not. I'm wide awake."

"Good. Then perhaps you won't mind coming with me to a party?"

*I have to share you?* "Oh, but—" That first thought absolutely stunned her. Where the hell had that come from? *Smarten up here, Ang.* "I'm not dressed." She indicated her pants suit. Pale gray check. Bland emerald silk blouse.

"You look wonderful to me."

The way he said the words, the way he zeroed in on her gaze with his own, had her wondering if she was still breathing. "Where are we going?"

"To my cousin's daughter's quinceañera."

"A teenager's coming-out party? I have never been to one. I would love to go." *Lots of people around us will give me time to calm down. Get used to being around you.* "I look good enough?"

He arched one long black brow. "Trust me, Angela. You do."

## Chapter Two

*Good enough to eat.*

Stephen told himself to stop devouring her with his eyes.

He took her luggage, her arm and led her toward the doors and the parking lot. He had waited for thirty days to have Angela Reynolds back in his power. And now that she was here, his hands on her lush body, he felt his strength drain from him. This weakness in the knees was new to him with a woman. But he understood that with this one, such a condition was no infirmity.

It was a sign.

His grandmother had confirmed it when he had described it to her two weeks ago as he visited her in the hills. The eighty-year-old lady who had guided him along with his father after his mother died when he was ten, laughed as she so often did and told him the feeling was the special one. "Sent from God, my boy," she had told him on the patio of her hacienda. "She sounds innocent. You must take care with this one that you do not run her off early with the revelation of your machismo."

"No, my sweet one," he had agreed with her assessment of his character. "I promise to be careful. I will not lose her to that."

That of which she spoke was his undisputed domination of all things he touched. All he cared for. All he desired.

And God in His Wisdom knew that Esteban Giorgio de Montoya desired Angela Reynolds more than he had any woman in years. He would treat her well. Treat her right. Treat her oh so gently. To take her and possess her, teach her his ways and open new realms of desire for her. That was his plan.

And his plans never failed.

Never.

He opened the passenger door of his sedan for her and assisted her inside. Inhaling deeply, he walked to the driver's side. His blood raced. His cock twitched. The image of her here within his reach stirred him. The deep brown hair with red highlights that hung to her waist told him of nights he would wrap those waves around his wrists and bind her to him. The elegant legs in the slim trousers brought visions of her beneath him, her knees splayed wide, her buttocks up on his own thighs as he explored her sweet folds. The breasts, rounded and firm. Ah, those he would treasure and caress, possess them in his hands and his mouth until she cried out in delight to have him take her again. And again. In all ways a man owns a woman.

She smiled at him as he climbed into the car.

She was trying to be professional, friendly but cool.

Ah, was that what she thought this would be? All business?

*Cara, my angel. There is much to learn about me. As I have to learn about you. More than your company profile. Twenty-seven. Eleven years younger than I. A talented decorator who even in college won awards for your daring and drama. And sadly, too, a widow. Those griefs we will chase away.*

"Tell me about a quinceañera." She pierced his reverie as he headed them up through the hills toward Lake Chapala, his large family's summer compound and the site of the party for his cousin's girl, Maria.

"A huge celebration. With dinner and good wine, mariachis and a regular band for dancing."

"Sounds wonderful. I'm ready. I haven't been to many parties in the last year."

"I understand," he said with finality. He would not broach a subject so private as her husband's death or her marriage without having established first some intimacy to their own relationship. "You are not a visitor here any longer, Angela. Today you must have fun."

She turned toward him. She waited until he could meet her gaze before saying, "Thank you. I've looked for a chance to have some joy in my life again. I'll take this opportunity."

"I'm glad." He wanted to reach across and squeeze her hand, but he held back. Instinct told him he must. He always went with what he felt. It was what contributed to his business' success. He would not fix perfection. He would not spoil the best thing he knew would be possible with Angela Reynolds. She was at core vibrant, joyful, talented and so heart-rendingly lovely her image seared his soul. But she was also hurt.

He knew he would learn why.

But how he would learn—and how he would help her to live and love again, he had no idea.

Not yet.

\* \* \* \* \*

Angela took a sip of her second glass of sangria and swayed to the raucous mariachi band. The upbeat music of the trumpets and accordions roared across the huge patio down to the shores of Lake Chapala. More than two hundred people had come to this party for Maria Montoya's fifteenth birthday. The trees were hung with gaily colored lanterns as the sun set. The dinner buffet was finally cleared away by waiters and supplanted by desserts of every shape and size. The popular band was setting up on the raised stage in one corner of the patio and Angela breathed deeply, a new contentment sinking into her day. Her life.

"Do you like the sangria?" Stephen returned to her from an extended conversation with his father and grandmother.

"I do. Not too sweet." She tapped her toe to the mariachi music.

"I think it is the freshness of the lemons. Picked off the trees this morning." He tipped his head. "You like the music?"

"Bright. Happy. Yes, I like that. I'm beginning to think there is nothing I don't like here!"

He laughed with her. "Good omens for your success." He took her glass from her and gave it to a waiter passing with a tray, then took her hand. "Come dance with me. The opening number all the family must dance."

She stood her ground. "I haven't done this in years. Wade didn't—"

"We must then." He tugged at her hand, the idea of being held in his arms a luscious inducement.

She went into his arms like a positive to a negative, like sun to sea. His body was a tempting bulwark she wanted to press against. But didn't dare. The tune the orchestra opened with was breezy, light, easy to keep time to. Cole Porter. *Night and Day*. She hummed the melody.

"You know the words?" Stephen asked, his voice a husky breath of air against her ear.

"I do. Do you?"

"No. Tell me."

She picked up in the middle of a stanza, hitting the notes perfectly and wondering when she had last sung.

He moved her more securely into his embrace. The strength of his body made her moan. He squeezed her closer. "How do you know the lyrics?"

"My mother trained to be a singer on Broadway," she told him happy for the conversation. "But she never rose above the level of the chorus. She married my father, and sang to him around the house." Angie pulled back in his arms to admire the contours of his handsome face. "I can do a repertoire of American composers at the drop of a hat."

"You sing well, too. Why then did you not become a singer?"

"No range," she confessed on a laugh. "I'm a contralto of dire limits."

“Ah, but I like your voice. It is rich whiskey.”

Her gaze flew up to his face. Her lips parted. He examined them for long moments then he raised his eyes to hers and held her even more tightly. Her forehead to his cheek. Her breasts flush to his chest. Her thighs moving in syncopation with his. His cock rising in appreciation. Her mind terrified. Her body enchanted.

The song ended and they both stood, torso to torso, for a few delicious seconds. She didn't want to part. He must have read that in her as he circled his arm around her once more and asked her about the new number the orchestra began. “Do you know this one?”

“*Besame Mucho*. Oh, yes, lovely melody,” she told him, noting how breathy her voice sounded.

“And the lyrics?” He began to lead her in time to the melody, a sensuous cha-cha that had her hips feeling the strength of his, her pussy flooding with creamy desire.

She didn't draw away. Didn't want to. “I could sing it, but I would murder the Spanish! I have no idea what any of it means. *Mucho* is easy. But *besame*?” She shook her head.

“*Besame* means kiss me.”

He slowed them even more, his body moving only fractionally so that the two of them ultimately stopped at the edge of the dance floor. Other couples swayed past them.

*Kiss him?* She wanted to. She yearned to. But if she did, she'd ruin everything. Her job. Her promise to herself.

She looked over his shoulder. “Stephen, I—”

“We are to be friends, Angela.”

“Friends?” This attraction she felt for him felt nothing like friendship. He was dangerously masculine. A man who commanded. She didn't know him so how could she trust him? Hell, she couldn't trust herself. Her nipples beaded and her cunt pulsed



just looking at him. What she felt was raw and needy. Wild and sweet. All rolled into an insatiable hunger that consumed her from the inside out. And all she had done so far was dance with him. What would her feelings become if she decided to chuck her promise to herself and do more?

"Can we not be?" he asked, his sharp desire blatant in his tone.

"For now, we are client and consultant." *But for how long can I hold that line?* She caught back a sob of sorrow that she'd never have him. Never enjoy such a virile man in her arms. She stepped away, quaking with her conflict. "Perhaps I should go home to Seattle." *Chicken.*

His features drained of joy. "No, you should not."

"This won't work, Stephen."

He caught her wrist. "It will. You are here. You will work for me. You are the best person for the job. You will live in that apartment and we will go on as we planned."

"I have to be clear, Stephen. You and I will not have an affair." *Oh, did I just say that out loud?*

He stilled and stared at her, as if he stripped her of her clothes and could see through to her mind and her soul. "No, you are right. We won't," he affirmed to her astonishment.

"You agree?" She knew her shock reflected her own disappointment as well. What was wrong with her? Wanting one thing and the other!

He chuckled. "Of course I do, *mi corazon*. Why would I not?"

"You agree, but then you say lovely words like..."

"*Mi corazon?*"

"Yes."

"Means 'my heart'."

"You see!" She waved a hand. "That's not right, Stephen, to seduce me with lovely words. That is not fair." What in God's name had happened to her diplomacy? She was going home to Seattle and soaking her head in a vat of ice water!

He cocked a long, winged, black brow. "You want me to be fair?"

"Of course, I do."

"Very well." He took two steps to stand so near to her that his body heat melted into her skin. She could inhale the aroma of his cologne and pined to taste him everywhere the scent lingered. She could see his gaze drill into hers, his mouth descend, not to take hers but to speak in a tone so low she barely heard it above the orchestra. "You will come and go as you wish. Work as you wish, when you wish. You can and should work in the condominium I have given you, where the architect's plans are at your disposal. But know one thing."

She held his gaze, knew that whatever challenge awaited her from him, she would do it not just to please him, but, heaven help her, to please herself. At the expectation of him in her bed and her body, her breasts tingled, her pussy creamed, traitorous little cat that it was.

"Every time you enter the same room with me you must do two things."

She fought the urge to swallow hard and lost. "What are they?"

"You will kiss me hello—"

She sucked in air.

"And kiss me goodbye."

She licked her lips then, dying to kiss him now and end the temptation of his flesh so near to hers. "So simple to do."

His beautiful eyes twinkled like the devil's. "It is."

She wiggled her brows. "What if I don't want to?"

His mouth curved, his dimple deepened. "My angel, you want to."

"You are right. No lies between us then."

"None. Ever."

"Comforting, but still, if I'm kissing you and you are responding, sooner or later, you –"

He shook his head once, adamant. "I never break a promise. To myself or to anyone else."

"You won't try to take control? You are not the kind of man to let others lead."

"You know me well already."

She hooted. "Not that well!"

"Then you must learn more."

"Learn to trust you?" she challenged him.

He grinned so rakishly she had the impulse to throw her arms around his shoulders and laugh with him. Why? How could he do that to her? Make her young and free and happy?

"How do you suggest I do that? One kiss leads to another."

"Not ours."

She tipped her head, surprise, dismay and wonder warring in her brain. "Why not?"

"Because though you may want me inside this delicious body of yours and though I desire you as I have never wanted another woman in my life, I swear nothing will come of your kisses to me. I will let you work your way. Have your will. There will be no affair. Only kisses."

This sounded reasonable. So why did she feel she was sliding down a slippery slope? "No affair. Only kisses," she repeated and hated the knowledge that those statements left her forlorn.

"I will not touch you."

*Really?* "Why not?"

He smiled for only a moment. "You know one touch would lead to so much more."

She felt stabbed, broken. “I do.” She shook back her hair, feigned victory in a battle she knew suddenly she hadn’t totally wanted to win. Still, this made her feel safe. But safety had a price.

“*Besame mucho, Angela,*” he whispered and turned to greet a couple who appeared at his elbow to talk.

She stood there, acting friendly as Stephen introduced her to his friends, conflicted in her hollow triumph—and alive with her ravenous yearnings.

Only later that night as she lay spread out alone in her new master bed, did she grin to herself as she realized that his words meant *kiss me a lot*.

## Chapter Three

She took the stairs down to the Montoya corporate offices on the first floor of her condo building on a run. She had overslept. Not part of her plan certainly. But hey, that's what jet lag, three cups of sangria and a mostly sleepless night pondering a sensational man in her life had done for her.

Eight-sixteen it was by the clock on the receptionist's wall when Angela swung open the glass doors. "*Buenas Dias, señora,*" she bade the young woman. "I am Señora Reynolds, here for Señor Montoya."

"*Si, señora.* Right this way please. I will show you to your office."

All right then. Her own office here as well as upstairs in the sumptuous three bedroom condo that had spoken to her of modernist comfort the moment she had opened the door last night.

"Is Señor Montoya in?" Angela asked the receptionist as the young woman prepared to leave her to settle in.

"*Si,* he told me to tell you to come to him when you are ready."

*Ready to kiss him, you mean.* "Right. *Gracias,* I will. "

"But he said not to take too long, *Señora.*"

*Got it. "Gracias, Señora—"*

"Gonzalez. Yolanda." She smiled in invitation to use her given name.

They said thank-you to each other and Yolanda went back to her duties at the front desk.

*Time for all good girls to go kiss their bosses.*

*No time like the present.*

Angela yanked down her suit jacket, lifted her chin and recited what had she planned for this first kiss until the wee hours of the morning.

A peck.

On the cheek.

She marched herself down the hall and knocked. The door was thick, ancient carved wood he had preserved from some old treasure of a building, and behind it she heard nothing.

She knocked again.

"Come, come!" he called to her from far away.

She turned the knob and pushed it open slowly. Now as the first day she'd come here, he had his back to the door, facing the ornate sixteenth-century cathedral across the street.

He turned slowly, his arms crossed, one hand across his mouth as he looked at her, all warmth and hunger in his exotic jade gaze. "Did you sleep well?"

"Not until dawn." *No lies. No secrets. Ever.*

"I slept very well," he teased her.

She chuckled. "You have me at a disadvantage! You give me this challenge and leave me to decide how to carry it out."

His gaze swept down her body. "You are up to the task." He strode forward, his arms at his side. Now close but only grazing her clothing with his, he whispered, "Show me you are."

Her head fell back to examine his face. He was softly smiling, his gaze rich and hot. His lips smooth and wide and parting in anticipation. He was so tall, how could she kiss him on the lips if she did not put her hands to him and brace herself against his solid form? She got her footing, her balance and rose up on her toes.

She felt his warmth as she approached, his flavor of toothpaste and mint. She felt his breath as he exhaled from his nose, ready and needy. She felt his hunger. And recognized her own for the touch of his lips.

They were lush as satin pillows. Firm and resilient.

She caught herself swaying.

And stepped backward.

"What do you think?" he asked her, as if he were requesting an assessment on some matter of business.

She ran the tip of her tongue along the edge of her upper lip. *No secrets. No lies.* "I liked it."

"Me, too," he said as if he were discussing the choice between tweed and worsted – and turned toward his desk.

That stunned her. After what she'd experienced yesterday, what he had said to her about wanting her, and she gets this...this...short shrift!

After long minutes when she could not move, he looked up from his papers, his gaze afire, his smile serene. "Would you like to tell me more?"

Infuriating man. Smug. He had planned to react this way! Knew she would go for a small offering and he meant to make a point. Very well, she could, too!

Hands on her hips, she tossed her long hair over her shoulders. "I want to do that over again."

His eyebrows danced. "As you wish. Are you going or coming?"

"Does it matter?" she challenged, as she took the two steps toward him and leaned down toward his upturned face.

She put one palm to his shoulder, the other on his desktop. This time, as her lips met his, they pressed together in moist unison. She slanted her head, sighing into the kiss as he let her linger and explore. How long it lasted she didn't measure. But how it tasted she knew. He tasted tender, careful and restrained.

The delight of finding that he kept his word and did not touch her, did not attempt to take her beyond her own boundaries, was intoxicating. She had never kissed a man who just simply let her have her way. Who didn't try to overwhelm her or bend her to his will.

She parted from his mouth and simply stood there, sharing his breath and searching his eyes.

The feral desire she saw there had her dipping down to take another kiss, but she stopped short. Aware she overstepped her bounds, she inhaled sharply and pulled back. Then she gave a laugh, looked at his ceiling. "I think I'm leaving!"

He chuckled. "Escape if you like, but you know, once you step through that door again, you owe me another."

She walked backward. "Very well. I'm staying. But we must work."

"Of course," he told her, one long dark brow arching in humor. "Talk to me about your views of the sizes of the suites."

\* \* \* \* \*

Enjoying each morning's first kiss and wondering how many times they would part and meet again each day, Angela began to dream up kisses to discover him by.

The good morning kiss that awakened the heart with a joyful peck. The other that said *God, isn't it wonderful the sun is shining*. Another that was slow, soft, measured and sweet. A tiny taste of heaven that connoted the day might be delicious even if the best part were only this moment, this meeting of mouths and minds.

Her goodbye kisses had so many different textures. The one that said, *thank you, such fun to work with you*. The other that declared, *my God, I will miss you*. The third type that was sad for the parting, hungered for the next meeting, which *please* must be soon.

How she managed to impart those thoughts amazed her. She had never considered that she might say so many different sentiments with the use of a kiss. Words did not compare.



After a week of hello and goodbye kisses, Angela realized that she had short-changed herself and Wade by never opening herself to the endless realm of kissing with any mental forethought. Just to discover new ones, she yearned to kiss Stephen all the time.

As he poured over the blueprints. As he frowned at the samples of wall textures and floor coverings. As he laughed over a mojito before dinner. Or waited patiently, silently at the close of their day together for her to stand before him, rise up on her tiptoes and kiss him goodnight.

She began bold daydreams of how he would respond to her if and when she ever freed him from his restriction not to touch her. How would his hands feel sliding down her back, cupping one of her breasts, stroking her belly and her pussy? Would his warm fingers rush to capture her? Or would he savor what he discovered, slowly, just to heighten their mutual desire? Would he kiss her back, hold her face, cradle her closer? Would he murmur words of passion?

She wanted him to. Needed him to react. To respond when she gave a little cry of delight as his lips met hers in the first kiss of the day. Required that he grip her arms instead of sitting like a statue as her body smoldered for him. She got to the point where she would coax him to taste the caverns of her mouth the way she carefully, lovingly discovered. He would moan, shift on his feet, but the man was made of steel. He did not touch her. He remained so true to his word she would pull away, her pussy pounding, her breasts pleading for a release that was nowhere in sight.

Oh, *hell*. She just wanted him. Not just beneath her lips. But beneath her fingers. Beneath her body. Inside her high and hot and hard. Touching her with those elegant tapered fingers. Tasting her, taking her to realms she now was certain she had never known. The dark question of what pleasures he would offer obsessed her more and more so that by the end of the first week, she wasn't sleeping. Only fantasizing about having him naked and fucking her.

She had to end their agreement, that's all there was to it! Safety was one thing. The joy of discovery and pleasure was another. Another she desperately wanted.

And the next Monday morning at eight, she ran down the stairs to the office to tell him that, only to learn from Yolanda he had unexpectedly left town on business an hour earlier.

Angie stood in the middle of his office, flapping her arms, whirling in a circle and frowning that she had no one to kiss hello today. No Stephen to savor. Marching off to her own office, she soon wandered upstairs to her condo where she picked up her sketchbook and began to draw randomly. Soon she was bent over a vision of a lovers' hideaway. Pillows and silks. Duvets and sateens. All the comforts to soothe the senses and enrich the rewards of sex with someone she cherished. She stared at it, knowing this drawing represented what she imagined making love to Stephen would be like. Lush and satisfying. Mysterious and...

The phone rang. She blinked, looked at the clock and realized she'd been sketching for more than four hours.

Once more the phone rang and she hurried to pick it up.

"Hello?"

*"Buenas dias, Angela, how are you this afternoon?"*

*Lonely. Wanting you.* "Working on a new idea. Wondering how you are. Where you are."

"I miss you. I thought perhaps you might like to come and meet me. Would you?"

Desire for him blocked out caution. "Yes, where are you?"

"On the coast. Cabo San Lucas. I can have my pilot return to Guadalajara by five and he can have you with me in an hour."

"I'll be ready. Where at the airport do I meet him?"

She flew around her apartment like a maniac, throwing clothes into an overnight bag, showering and hopping in her rental car.

Within two hours, she was climbing down the ramp of the twin engine plane and crossing the tarmac to the entrance to the airport.

She jogged inside, her carryon in hand, and spotted Stephen immediately.

Overjoyed, unthinking, she threw her arms around his shoulders, and as he enfolded her and lifted her up in his arms, she whispered, "Oh, I missed you!" And she kissed him, hungry, yearning, not once, but twice, this way and that, and then again. She hugged him.

He splayed his fingers up into her hair and tugged to draw her head back so that he could gaze into her eyes. "Do that again."

"Ah, if I do," she teased him, her brows dancing. "I'll owe you so many goodbye kisses, we'll never get it straight."

"I promise not to count."

How could a man be so dear? "I promise not to be angry if you touch me."

"Like this?" he asked as he crushed her tightly to his chest and cupped her nape to bring her mouth near his.

"Si, like this." She went into the kiss like a sleepwalker, slowly and gently, each moment an eternity to savor the suspense, the discovery, the need, the joy once his lips met hers and pressed and molded and caressed.

"Oh, God, Angela," he whispered as he tore away. "We must leave here before we have people applauding."

He drove her to the coast. The sun was dying in the sky, the crimson and gold rays glowing in the Pacific Ocean like red-hot beams of the passion she admitted to herself she felt for him.

"Where are we going?" she asked when he bypassed the areas where she knew the major hotels dotted the shore.

"My yacht. Do you like to sail?"

*Alone with you?* “Yes. I like the sea. I grew up in a suburb of Boston and when I was little, my parents would take a cottage for a week in the summer on Cape Cod. My father liked to fish.” She was drifting back to her childhood, recalling days she’d forgotten in the past few years of torment with Wade.

“Do you?” Stephen asked, his eyes on the road.

“No. I like to swim. I’ll leave the fishing to you. I’ll leave the gutting of any fish you catch to you, too!” She made a face.

“Not your thing?” he laughed.

*You are.* She shook her head. “But I’ll cook whatever you catch. I’m a good chef, if I say so myself.”

“Really? Well, I am happy to let you work your way through my modest galley.”

Hours later she did a one eighty in his luxurious galley. “I must remember that you are a diplomat as well as a Type A animal,” she protested as she donned a huge white apron Stephen handed her. “I imagine that what you have stocked in that pantry is also substantial.”

He nodded as he handed her a wineglass filled with *pinot grigio*. “I have the marina concierge keep me well supplied. Just in case I come here without much notice.”

She sipped her drink. “Do you do that often?”

He moved behind the bar, putting distance between them and securing for her a little peace of mind as he did. “I do.” He had removed his suit coat and his tie, his creamy shirt open at the collar and tempting her with crisp dark hair at his throat. “I respond to the land sales I see posted here. There have been good bargains in the past few years. Responding to a—what do you call it in America—a fire sale? I was able to buy the land for the second hotel.” He swirled the wine in his glass but focused on her as she busied herself by pulling steaks from the refrigerator. “You need to see that land.”

“You are assuming I am going to be working on the second site?”

"I am."

"Have you told Tom Greyson?" Her boss was overly nervous about this contract with Stephen. He was on the phone to her daily, discussing details.

"I have."

"But what if I don't please you? You'll have to fire me, you know."

"I doubt that will happen. It hasn't so far." His brows rose in mirth.

"One week is not enough to know if I'm suitable."

"You suit me well. In many ways."

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Where are you leading this conversation?"

"Where it should go."

She braced her arms on the counter and pretended to examine the large T-bones in front of her. "How do you like your steaks?"

"Rare."

She met his gaze. *Oh, bad idea, Ang.* The jade of his eyes burned with molten desire into hers. "How do you like your women?"

"There is only one I like. One I want."

She hooted. "I asked for that!"

He was not laughing. "How do you like your men?"

"I've had only one."

"As I thought. And he was not good for you. Was he?"

That Stephen could instinctively know that frightened her and riled her. She put her fork down on the counter and made her way up the stairs to the deck. The stars had come out since she'd stowed her luggage in her own bedroom aft and changed into cooler slacks and tee. The night air was velvet on her skin, gentle but cooling rapidly.

She heard his footsteps behind her and she shivered, then crossed her arms.

His bass voice soothed her nerves. "Tell me about him and we will be done with that challenge."

"Wade and I met each other in English class in college. He was handsome. The football team's quarterback. Blond and tall and could have any girl he wanted. He chose me. I was hooked. Enchanted with the idea of being his. We went to bed together. He was kind but rough and quick. What did we know about taking our time and kissing?" She whirled to face Stephen.

His face was solemn. "Go on."

"We got married after we graduated, but he couldn't find a job. I had one but it paid little and we had college loans to repay. We were living on a shoestring. He was envious of my job and bitter over his own lack of one. So he joined the Army. Got the sign-up bonus, which was big. Four figures. And he traveled to boot camp and specialty school. I didn't go with him." She shook her head. "Not a good way to keep a young marriage alive. And it got worse when his deployments to Iraq started. And so did the changes in his behavior. Later, after we had been married for four years, he took me to visit his parents in Oregon. I'd never met them, but his mother began to tell me how he had been moody as a child and a teenager. She thought he had outgrown the emotional swings." Angie stared Stephen in the eyes. "He hadn't."

Stephen led her to a deck bench, had her sit beside him as he circled his arm around her and drew her close. "What happened?"

"The moods got worse. The years apart made us strangers. And then, two years ago, before he shipped out on his last deployment, we argued about me moving to Seattle to accept this position with Greyson Design. He didn't want me to go. Forbade me to go."

Stephen put a hand to her cheek to whisk away a tear. "But you did."

She nodded, loving the feel of his hand on her skin. "I told him I was determined. And he hit me."

Stephen went still. Pulled her nearer and nestled his lips against her hair.

"I left Kansas the next day for Seattle. I never saw him again," she said, her words muffled by the fine cotton of Stephen's shirt.

His fingers stroked her hair, each move a small endearment. "You were right to leave. Make your own life."

She sat up. Brushed away the remnants of her silent tears with the backs of her hands. "I was with Greyson less than a year when I got word of Wade's death. They gave me a few weeks off and when I came back, I devoted myself to being the best assistant decorator I could be. They liked my work and let me work on new contracts with other designers who were more experienced. I was thrilled when I was assigned to assist on a new account with a new hotel owner in Mexico." She smiled at him, her lips trembling with desire to kiss him even while she spoke about Wade. "You can understand my reluctance to become involved."

"To have an affair, yes." He stared into her eyes. "You are afraid your desire for me is based only on physical attraction." His generous mouth spread wide. "You control that by denying yourself and me the pleasure of an affair." She would have gotten up to leave, but he would not let her go. "Listen to me, Angela. I understand. You do not want to choose a mate so unwisely again. So for all of this, there is only one solution."

With a jaunty but sad irreverence, she lifted her face to his and smiled. "For us to remain celibate?"

"For us to become man and wife."

The proposal knocked the breath out of her. "You can't be serious?"

His gaze fell to her mouth. "Kiss me and decide."

She should refuse. Leave.

But she couldn't. She ached to have him. She needed to make love with him and his devotion to her was a phenomenon she had heard about from other women. Never thinking she could find a man who wanted her with any steady devotion, she was astonished that one wanted her. He was here. Within her grasp. She had not known

what she was doing when she married Wade. She'd floated through that relationship like a sleepwalker. Now she was older. And stronger?

Standing up for herself for eight years since her parents' death and surviving a failed marriage proved she was. She could take what she wanted here, enjoy it for what it was—irresistible attraction to a charming man. She was a healthy, red-blooded woman. Conveniently taking the Pill, too, more for her own regularity than because she had expected to have any partners. What was she waiting for?

Trusting her own character, she wound her arms around his sturdy shoulders, pressed her breasts to his chest and sent the fingers of one hand up into the heavy silk of his black hair. "Promise me I can leave freely, if we don't..."

He took her in his arms to swirl her over his lap and draw her lips toward his. "That will not happen."

"But if it does, Stephen, promise me you'll let me go."

"I promise."

"Then I think, my darling, you'd better kiss the bride."



## **Chapter Four**

He stood at the altar of the baroque cathedral two weeks later, his family, friends and business associates seated in the pews behind him. More than one questioned his sanity to marry a woman he had known for less than three months. He did not.

Every moment with Angela increased his knowledge that she alone was the one woman who would satisfy his desires for excitement and stability. Yes, he had enjoyed many women in bed and out. Valued women in his life. His grandmother. His cousins. His business associates. Even his lawyer was a woman. He favored strong women. Ones with spine and spunk. And in Angela's case, one who was learning to be strong.

He could help her.

Along her journey of development, he would claim her and keep her for his own.

Surely the first quality that attracted him to her was her inexperience with men. So rare these days to find a woman like that. But to find one who from the moment she laid eyes on him, could not resist him? That was exquisite. She stirred his cock and his heart. He knew it in the way her eyes absorbed him, her voice caressed him and her body spoke to him of long sultry hours inside her sweetness. Her knowledge of her artistry, too, attracted him. Her ability to draw a listener into her creative world and let him see the flow of her concepts had sealed his desire for her. True, her intellect and her articulate abilities for one rather young and new to her profession had not been the first quality that had brought him to full stop. What he had first seen had been the face and form of one who fascinated him.

Her complexion. The roses and cream of a redhead. The round face of a stunning woman with high cheekbones of elegance. The sea-blue eyes, so large and limpid. Her lips. Dear God. Her lips were wide and lush, meant to persuade and laugh. And meant to kiss.

And that last kiss he had shared with her? The one that sealed their bargain on his yacht in Cabo?

He straightened his silver silk vest beneath his tuxedo and saw the priest enter from his chancery behind the altar.

That kiss on his yacht began as one that was so simple. A touch of her lips to his. The whisper of the promise she gave. And then the explosion of desire she had suppressed. The melding of her mouth on his. The heat she felt, the longing she needed to express had flowed into his body like intoxicating wine.

He had crushed her to him as he had yearned to do for so many days and nights since those first minutes in his office. She gave herself up to him, twisting to get closer, pressing him so close he felt her heartbeat through their clothing.

He had been lost. His heart found. He kissed her back finally, fully the way he knew she deserved to be. The way he knew she should be for one so cherished by him.

He had enjoyed her—and pulled away. He had not allowed himself more since that night. He had not dared, lest he lose his control and renege on his promise that there would be no affair, no blending of their bodies until she was his to have and to hold.

*Dios!* He ran a hand over his mouth. The thought of her so soon to be his fired his body. His cock.

*And you are in church, Esteban! Church!*

The organ music swelled. The congregation rose.

Stephen turned.

Angela, her waist-length hair up in a chignon, her face without a veil, stood at the back of the sanctuary in a slim, long mermaid's satin gown of palest pink. She had refused to wear white. Or a veil. But she had loved his idea of a church wedding. She had not had one with Wade. With her parents gone and only her boss and three best friends here from Seattle, she came to Stephen alone.

He would ensure she was not alone ever again. Not lonely. Never surprised by his actions. Never dismayed by his lifestyle. He would bring her along slowly. Delicately.

*And if she does not embrace the pleasure and pain of your dominance?*

He could live with her forever and not have to introduce her to that.

For now and for as long as it took to show her that he was the safe harbor she needed, he would devote himself to her. And over time, he prayed he could show her so much devotion—and such extraordinary pleasure—that she might, of her own choosing, seek new ways to enjoy their sexual unions. And that she might learn to love him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Why she should be nervous amused Angela. She was no novice to making love. *If that's what Wade and I did.* Since she'd met Stephen, she predicted that five minutes of sweaty petting and groaning was not what she'd get here. Not what she'd give either.

She ran her hands down her negligee and laughed out loud. She spun to check her appearance in the tall cheval mirror in the master suite of Stephen's large hacienda deep into the hills of central Mexico.

Oh, wow. Nothing to the imagination here. The ivory silk was sheer enough to make a blind woman blush.

But she didn't. Instead, she turned toward the door and walked out of the dressing room into the suite. The French doors to the veranda lay open, the breeze wafting out, no light but that of the moon. As she strolled forward, she glimpsed a strip of condoms on the bed. They had not talked about contraception or previous partners.

She picked up the packages and continued toward him. He stood, his hands hanging over the balustrade, his gaze rolling over the hills.

He caught her movement from the corner of his eye and smiled at her. "It's warm still. Come join me."

She tried to ignore the way his gaze swept down her torso, but let the thrill of his appraisal fill her with courage. And more desire to have him.

She came to his side and gazed out over the hills herself. "How long have you had this house?"

"My father bought the land when he and my mother were first married. At first, he built only two rooms, plus the bath and kitchen. Over the years, he added to it. And I have too, until you see this now."

"With eight bedrooms, it's big enough for a family reunion."

"Yes. I have held business meetings here, too."

"I saw these." She uncurled her fingers.

His gaze drifted down and back to her own. "There has been no one in my bed for more than a year and I am healthy," he assured her. "It was as if I knew you would come soon and I waited for you."

She shivered at his declaration. "I've never had anyone but Wade. But I had a checkup just to be certain that he was faithful. He was and so —"

"Then there will be nothing between us. No barriers."

She stilled. "I take contraceptives."

"There will be no babies then, until we decide to have them."

They stared into each others' eyes, but he turned and narrowed his gaze on the dark edges of the horizon. "You will have to kiss me, you realize."

She chuckled, a ripple of excitement zinging up her spine. "I do hope so!"

His expression grew stark and needy. "I mean I cannot trust myself to touch you until you are ready." His eyes, lazy with desire, drifted over her breasts and her belly. "The gown undoes all my control."

"Well then." Rash with urgency to have him fill her, she reached down, gathered the silk in to her hands and pulled it over her head. She let it drop to the veranda. "We don't want this."

For one interminable second, he stared in shock, then slowly absorbed the details of her body. Inch by inch, he examined her and moment by moment, his breath quickened, his hands flexed.

She took them into her own and put them around her waist. "I'm very glad I affect you so..."

One corner of his mouth hitched up. "So completely?" He took the condoms in his fingers and let them drop.

"Yes, completely," she whispered, recognizing the truth of that and tracing her nose up his throat. "I think this is so dangerous, but I want you badly. Beyond reason." She ran her hands up his shoulders to frame his jaw. "I have wanted you since the first moment I saw you." She kissed his dimple and pressed herself nearer. "I think I have wanted you forever." She put her mouth to his then, a light touch, a prelude to all she craved from him.

He moaned and bound her close, his hand in her hair, his lips seizing hers, and in his ardor, he bent her back over his arm. His mouth was warm, his tongue swift and insistent as he cherished her. His arms were steel, his torso her only support in a world topsy-turvy.

She dug her nails into his shirt as he kissed his way across her cheek and down her throat. She felt her breasts bead with hunger, her pussy cream in demand.

"I have needed to taste you, my angel, for months." He caught her up in his arms and strode to the bedroom where he laid her gently across the satin comforter.

"Stephen," she whispered as he straddled her and absorbed the sight of her naked body. His smoldering regard made her arch, her breasts rising with her rapid breaths, her core pulsing. "I can't wait any longer." She sent her hands down his torso, tugging at his shirt and his trousers. "Take these off."

"No, *mi corazon*." He bent, his lips to her own. "Now that you are mine, I have an eternity to love you." With one open palm he traced her hair, her face, her throat, one breast, her belly and cupped her core. Two fingers slid along her seam.

She arched and quaked with expectation.

"I will show you what bliss can be," he told her, his words more breath than sound.

*"Si, si, please."*

His fingers sank inside her. She writhed upward, his molten caress along her channel making her groan and spread her thighs wider.

"You are hot to have me." He smiled wickedly at her as he delved deeper and made her twist to get closer to him. "How lucky I am."

She tipped up her hips. "I'm the lucky one, darling. I had no idea...um...no idea a man like you could wait." She clutched at his shoulders as he dipped to run his open mouth along her throat and find one nipple to kiss and lick.

"I have waited years and years to find you, my sweet," he told her as he paused to look into her eyes. "But now," he whispered as he cupped her other breast and sucked her into his mouth, "we wait no longer. We will have all there is from the other." He slid lower to put his lips to her belly. As he trailed kisses down to her core, the memory came that Wade had never kissed her there. Never wanted to.

She arched, ravenous to have more of Stephen's attentions, wondering how she could be so fortunate to find him.

"My angel," he crooned, "I knew there was beauty here." He threaded his fingers through her pussy hair and she purred. "I knew there was sweetness here." He spread her labia wide with two hands and bent to lick her clit with the tip of his tongue. She caught her breath, understanding that this fierce tenderness of his was what she craved. "I knew here was a woman I could possess—" He nipped her clit and then sucked it into the hot cavern of his mouth.

Fearing to move and break this luscious delight of his mouth on her, she clutched at his shoulders.

"I knew that here," he whispered as he pinched her clit and laved her lips with fierce devotion, "was a woman who could possess me." He crawled up to push back

her hair from her cheeks. "Let me make love to you as I wish. When I wish. And in return, you must promise to tell me what you want from me."

"I will. I promise." That kind of sharing, that kind of freedom was new to her too. She traced the outline of his lips, then sent her hand to his hips and the hard high erection that strained the fabric of his trousers. "Show me."

He rose and divested himself of his clothes, returning to her like a darkly sculpted god from some fable.

She ran her hands over the hard planes of his shoulders, the arch of his pectorals, the sweet taper to his waist and the sinewy definition of his loins. His cock stood tall and red, proud and oh so appealing. She caressed his turgid length and thumbed his slit in fascination until he snorted.

"We will finish before we begin!" He clamped his hand over hers.

She teased him. "You have more self-control than that. I have seen it."

He put his cock to the entrance to her channel. "That man is no longer here." He slid inside her, a scalding sensation of liquid fire.

Her eyes drifted closed. Her mouth opened. Her pussy pulsed around his shaft.

He circled inside her warm depths. "In his place is this man."

"I know him," she whispered. "He is my husband."

"He is your lover," he declared. "And you, my darling, are mine."

He reared back and then plunged more deeply, the smooth rigidity of his rod stretching her deliciously wide and sinking into every inch of her core. He pressed inside her with measured strokes, the friction of his cock making her grind her teeth and moan.

He ground against her and held. "Christ you are so swollen! Look at me," he demanded and she opened her eyes.

She had never seen him like that. Aflame, intense, teeth bared, his eyes narrowed on her as he gripped her hips and took her with repeated thrusts. She gripped the

sheets. He hauled her up onto his thighs and spread her legs wide so that she knew he could see every bit of her cunt exposed to him.

His fingers stroked her labia lovingly. "You are beautiful here." He pushed back inside her.

She bucked and fought for breath. "I love your cock inside me."

He gave her another long stroke. "You take all of me. I am grateful."

She caught a note of teasing in his tone. "Keep taking me like that and you'll keep me grateful." But the dark little secret of how few times she'd ever found completion sprang to mind and she froze.

He paused, his hand beneath her chin. "You worry?"

"I don't know if I can--"

He hovered over her, his cock still buried deep inside her. Then he slid a hand beneath her nape and kissed her once, twice, deeply to distraction. "You can, my darling. You are with me and I adore you." Then he slid out of her with a pop.

"No!" she cried. "Don't go," she urged him as he bent to put his mouth to her pussy and open her wide.

"I'm not leaving. Never leaving." He found her clit and kissed it tenderly. She ran her fingers through her pussy hair. He caught one. "Later you can please yourself for me and I will watch. But now, all this is mine to discover." He put her hand to the mattress and came back to sink a finger into her channel and stroked her in a tender spot. "This cunt is mine, this clit is mine and these pretty pink folds," he whispered as he opened her labia and laved her with a rasp of his tongue, "are mine. And do you know what I will do with all this beauty?"

She bit her lip. Shook her head.

"I'm going to make this body of yours flood for me, quake for me so that every minute of every day you think of me fingering you and eating you and fucking you."

She groaned.



He nibbled at her bundle of nerves and she whimpered and creamed for him. "That's right. Give me more of your sweetness." He licked it from her. "Now I'll wear your scent." He sent his tongue inside her pussy and she screamed. "And you will smell like me, come on command for me and bear my brand."

"Yes! Yes!" She plucked at his shoulders. Arched. "Anything. Everything. Do it!"

He caught her under her knees, her legs draped over his arms and drove into her with one stunning shot. Then he seized her in short swift strokes, seating himself each time fully.

She ground her teeth together.

"Now, my angel!" He crushed into her, over and over, her channel swelling with the friction, clenching to hang on to his cock. "Ah, darling, you hug me so well I cannot fuck you as you need!"

He pulled out.

She screamed.

His hands on her hips, he told her, "Roll over."

Frantic, wild, she did it at once.

One hand to her stomach, he pulled her up. "Let me see your swollen pussy."

She pushed up. He praised her with a groan and fingered her pussy, so the room flooded with smell of her musk. Then to her shock, he smacked her on the ass. At once, his mouth caressed her where he'd struck. "Beautiful baby of mine," he said as he caressed her juicy folds from behind. "Pinch your nipples for me."

She did as she was told.

"And let me please your clit." He found her nub and rolled it in his fingers as he pressed his cock between her labia. "Oh, my darling, how giving you are."

She pressed her forehead into the mattress and pushed back, eager to feel all of his cock. "I need you inside me!"

He rolled her over, pinned her arms to the mattress, grinned like a conqueror and then sank into her cunt with a stunning stroke. Shockwaves of an ecstasy she had not fathomed rippled from her core up through her body. Suspended in magic ripples of an orgasm, she went with the ecstasy.

He focused on her face, his rhythm fierce, his face strained, his cock so deliciously hard inside her that she cried for him to finish this, damn it. He grunted, pumped into her hard, once, twice more and then he reared back. She could feel the power of his release as his cum burst into her. He pumped her, his balls slapping at her with luscious power. As he growled and came and came, she knew her own release climbed again and she pulsed in a new and stronger wave. She drifted to the mattress, her cunt pounding in tiny aftershocks until she whimpered and put a hand to her belly.

He took her hand away, spread her out, then slid his hands beneath her to lift up her ass. "There is more delight. Let me feast on you more and I will show you how you come in my mouth." He was insatiable, his mouth to her clit, his fingers in her dripping cunt, his groans reverberating inside her body until she cried out at each delicate touch. As her body sank into euphoria, she went limp and knew she loved him because he had shown her the depth of her own hunger for him. And her own possibilities to please him.

## **Chapter Five**

That she could be so unversed in the delights of the body thrilled him. He had hoped he might be able to enlighten her, but his desire for her was never based on what he could teach her so much as what he could ultimately share with her.

He bent to kiss her mouth. "You are a very good pupil."

She smiled lazily at him and laid her palm to his cheek. "You are an excellent teacher. And tolerant too, that I'm not as advanced as some."

"That matters to me only in that I am the fortunate man to enjoy you." He swept an admiring hand down her body, over peaking rosy breasts and moist pussy. "I would show you more."

She wiggled against the comforter, a grin on her face. "Mmm. I'm ready to learn." Her eyes shifted toward the bathroom door. "I'm going to use the bidet and be back in a flash."

"Better," he said as he rose from the bed and extended his hand, "let me wash you."

He led her to the large circular walk-in shower, turned on the jets and drew her into his arms. The warm water sluiced down her breasts, creating glistening streams over the up-turned tips. He bent to take one into his mouth and lave her gossamer skin.

She shot a hand out to the wall for support.

He smiled as he paid reverence to her other breast. "I have wondered how these looked. Were they pink or rose, pale beige or dusky."

She mewled, her head lolling against the tiles while his fingers sought the succulent silk of her pussy. "And are you pleased?"

“Si, my angel, the rose matches your mouth and your pussy. Beautiful and silken.” He nipped her pointed tip. “I wanted all of you in my mouth from the first moment I saw you.”

In a look that told him she was emboldened by how demanding he was in sex, she arched her brows. “I wondered if you could see how my breasts beaded for you.”

“There is nothing about you I did not perceive.” He pinched both nipples, feeling her buck. “In your body and your mind.” He trailed a hand down her ribs to her leg. “Come closer.” He lifted her thigh up over his hip. “I want your hot cunt near my cock.”

She moaned and tilted her mound up toward his shaft. He pressed against her to satisfy himself as he found the soap gel. “Take some of this in your hand.” He squeezed out a few drops. “Now wash me.”

Behind his shoulders, she rubbed her hands together and stroked his throat, his back, his waist—and then she paused. Her limpid blue gaze melted into his. “Continue,” he told her and she circled her hands around his buttocks, defining the contours and finding his cleft.

What she found in his eyes told her to sink and do as she wished.

On a moan, she knelt, pushed him away to gain access to his penis and his testicles. Shocking the hell out him, she found his head and kissed him. He felt his shaft rise to fill her palms. He braced himself, wanting to thrust inside her. But her gentle hands were warm, her stroke smooth, her tempo increasing as she circled his cock and then his balls with a devotion that made him grind his teeth.

And just as she pushed into the spray to rinse him and he thought he would now perform the same service for her, she gripped his hips and held him in place. Her mouth, so deep and expressive when she kissed, was now so much more devastating to his willpower than he had ever imagined.

She sank over his shaft in a mewl of delight. Settling to the tiles, she grasped him at the root and drew him to her with an arm around his thighs. “Stephen,” she murmured

when she drew away and gazed up at him, her long auburn hair wet and decorating her breasts, her eyes gleaming, "do you like this? Am I doing this right?"

His cock grew longer in her hand and he gave a chuckle. "I think you have a talent that my body craves."

She smiled with intense blue eyes of passion and took him in her mouth once more.

He stepped backward, one arm flat to the wall, one hand to her hair as she stroked him. First with her whole mouth. Then, with her tongue to his length and his tip. As he felt his world tilt, she thumbed his slit and sank her mouth to his helm to suck him into her sweet depths.

He growled. "I must be buried in you." He dragged her up his body, draped her leg over his hip once more and sank into her.

In ecstasy, she arched backward and cried his name.

He caressed her with his cock. She was on fire and he would fan the flames. He backed her to the wall and pounded into her, not gentle this time, but commanding. Her rise to her fulfillment took only a few strokes of his cock. He felt her swell, cream and clench her teeth. He bit her earlobe. "Come for me now!" He rocked into her and she grinned, pulsing around him in wave after wave of delicious orgasm. He tumbled after her, drained of his cum, but only ravenous for more of her.

Gasping for air, she melted against the wall, the water still raining down on them.

He groaned, his lips against her cheek. "I must taste you all over again."

Now on his knees, he faced the dark red hair that he'd glimpsed all too briefly in the bedroom. All this was his. He put his fingers to either side of her pussy and rolled her labia open. The aroma of her need for him shot through his body like a tornado. She was hot rose, bright with the friction of his fucking her and her wicked need of him.

"Oh, yessssss," she moaned, "eat me."

He snarled in feral satisfaction, put his mouth to her and let his tongue discover at leisure the slick desire she had for him. He sank one finger up inside the core of her, all

his again. She undulated. He pulled open the hood of her clit and noted how large and how inviting her bundle of nerves appeared. He'd made it bigger. Needier. He sank his lips over her bud and sucked her until she keened.

"God, Stephen! I need you again. Your cock, darling."

He slid up her body, wrapped one arm around her and led her out to quickly dry her off with a towel. Then he pulled her toward the dressing room. The large center aisle there, covered in granite, was the right height to possess her. He pressed her over it, her lovely ass facing him, her heavy folds sweetly open and awaiting his claim.

She shivered at the cold stone. He bent to lick one ass cheek, fingering her clit and hearing her groan. Hungry, he positioned his cock at the entrance to her wet pussy and plunged in, claiming her with a shout of triumph.

He held there a long moment, the two of them locked in rapture.

She sent her fingers between his legs to his balls and stroked him, an endearment of possession.

He showed her his own endearment. Slowly, leisurely, he pulsed into her luscious cunt. With each stroke, the room filled with the liquid declarations of how dearly she wanted him.

He paused. And for the first time in his life, he knew humility in the act of sex.

He lost his control then. His mind as well. He pummeled into her with a madness she met with a groan and nails clawing at the granite. He came with a roar, recognizing suddenly that this was only the beginning of a love affair with her. An affair he knew now was within the boundaries of her need for stability, but beyond any experience he'd had with so many women, none of whom he had never loved.

\* \* \* \* \*

She stretched on the huge bed the next morning, smiling at the sunshine piercing through the sheers on the French doors. She'd slept and had never moved, she was so exhausted from making love with her husband.

Her husband and his inventive ways.

Her heart danced. She needed more of that excitement with him and jumped out of bed, headed for the bathroom.

Minutes later, teeth brushed, pussy washed in the bidet, she lolled back in the bed, awaiting the man she predicted would come looking for her soon.

She grinned at the memory of things they'd done last night. Here, the shower, the dressing room. Him eating her pussy until she screamed with joy. Fucking her until she came like a wild animal. Her sucking his long hard cock. Swallowing his seed. My God, he was scrumptious. Would he let her do that again? Or was that only for brides and eager grooms?

"What are you laughing about?" Her husband strolled into the bedroom, barefoot, but dressed in navy chinos and a red polo top. He carried a breakfast tray piled high with pastries and a huge pot of coffee.

She indulged herself in the sight of in his dark handsomeness, the red shirt complementing his rich complexion, the dark trousers tailored to the powerful muscles of his hips and thighs. She sat up, allowing the sheet to drop to reveal her naked breasts.

He pursed his lips. "Shall I have you for breakfast, my darling?"

Her gaze locked on his. She shifted, her pussy well plundered, sore but oh, so creamy still. Her nipples swelled. Could he see, from this distance, how she wanted him again? "I hope so."

"My wish fulfilled. And tell me, how do you feel?" he asked as he put his tray on a table near a wing chair, then poured coffee from a silver pot.

"Wonderful."

He walked to her and handed her a cup and saucer, the streaming brew filling her senses with hungers of so many types. "I know you feel wonderful, my darling." He leaned over to kiss her lightly on the lips. "You taste delicious, too."

He pulled away and turned for his tray again. She felt deserted, petulant as a child denied candy.

She rose up, put the cup aside and strode toward him, naked.

He turned just as she reached him and sat in a huge chair near his tray. "Sit with me." He patted his lap.

She arched a brow. On a whim, she spread her thighs over his, facing him. Her nipples grazed his chest as she bent forward and pecked him on the cheek.

He caught her head with two hands, held firm as he zeroed in on her gaze and kissed her with deliberate need.

She drifted in his sensual kiss, his tongue that plundered her mouth and discovered her teeth, her palate and her taste for him. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and kissed him back.

His fingers plunged inside her pussy to stroke her and make her moan. "How succulent you are."

She sank, letting him feel more of her so that it was her turn to sound feral. "I'm hungry for you."

"I can tell. See how hungry," he instructed as he lifted his fingers from her cunt to her lips.

Bristling with excitement at the novelty, she sucked them clean and learned her own essence. When she lifted her face and looked at him, he was focused on her mouth, his fascination with her a hard brilliance on his features.

"You are a wonderful pupil, my darling wife."

"I want to learn more."

He seared her with a narrowed gaze. "We have a lifetime to enjoy each other."

Was that true? They had come so far so fast, from business associates to sparring friends and now marriage partners. Bed partners. *And I did not marry you just for that.* "Still you make me impatient."



He took two handfuls of her long hair and wound them around his wrists, then tugged her forward to kiss her. "How impatient?"

Assured, she felt free. Sassy. She lifted a shoulder, dropped a kiss to his cheek then reached down to caress his cock beneath his trousers. "I need you this minute."

His fingers sank inside her once more to stroke her clit and she gasped.

"You are not sore?"

Against his mouth, she admitted, "Tender, but wet and wanting you again. See what you've done to me?"

He set her to her feet, his thighs bracketing her legs, his eyes wild with need. "Show me how you want me."

She inhaled and began to hum a love song, moving to the melody. She ran her fingers through her hair, piling it up on top of her head and letting the waves spill over her shoulders. With open palms, she caressed her cheeks and her throat. Throwing her head back, she lifted her breasts and pinched her nipples and on a tiny squeal told him she wanted him inside her. She let her hands dive down her ribs, circle the rise of her hips and sink into her pussy hair. God, she had never felt so free.

"Don't stop, my angel," his deep voice vibrated over her skin.

She sank her fingers to her mound and parted her wet lips for him. "I need you, Stephen. I'm ready for you, darling." She tapped her clit and moaned. "I need you here, deep." She plunged two fingers in her cunt and held herself open with the others for him to watch.

"Turn around," he rasped.

She spun and bent over, her pussy lips, she knew, displayed for him. "Touch me, darling."

He sank a finger inside her.

She bit her lip. "Stroke me."

She expected his fingers. What she got were his lips and his tongue lavaging her.

"Oh, God, Stephen!"

She felt him rise, unzip his trousers and grip one of her hips. She expected his cock, high and hot in her pussy.

What she got was one finger caressing her asshole.

She did not move, expectation warring with naïveté. But he plunged the other hand into her cunt then bathed her rosy hole with her pussy juice. She caught her breath as he grabbed her around the waist and plunged his finger inside her ass. "This is mine, too. I will show you."

In deft strokes, he put the tip of his cock to her flesh and teased her with the promise of it. Gasping, she lost her balance and he caught her.

"Come to bed." He withdrew and led her to the mattress.

He shoved a pillow under her tummy, then ate at her asshole and fingered her, stretching her until she cried out, "Have me, Stephen! Now!"

He sank in and she balked.

He swatted her ass cheek and she blinked. She wasn't hurt, but shocked. Thrilled.

"Again," she pleaded. "More!"

In a few short strokes, he was inside her. She breathed deeply.

"Caress your clit for me, my love."

Oh, to do it was bliss and she came at her first touch, pulsing and pressing back to him.

He came inside her with a cry, his hands finding her breasts and sinking over her. "You are a treasure," he murmured. "Christ, I cannot believe how willing you are."

He withdrew and she felt empty.

On a cry, she rose up and turned to him.

He opened his arms to her and she embraced him, her body alive in every nerve, her senses drugged and satisfied.

She gazed up into his face. He smiled, and brushed her hair from her cheeks. "I did not mean to do that so soon. I meant to bring you to it more slowly. But you are so eager, I lose my mind."

She smiled and enjoyed every feature in his handsome face. "I want everything you can teach me." She caressed his cock and his testicles until he left her to enter the bathroom. She heard running water. Within minutes he was back with washcloth and towel.

"Allow me," he whispered and caressed her with the thick nubby cloths until he put his mouth to her breasts and his fingers inside her channel.

"Insatiable," she concluded and they both laughed. She sought his shaft with her fingers. He rose up on his knees to let her fondle him. His cock was high and hard and red with thick blue veins. Her mouth watered. Her cunt became sopping wet. Her nipples ached for his touch. She slid her hand around his girth. "God, Stephen, you're huge, darling. How can you want me so often?"

He plunged one hand into her hair and sank into her. "Because you are sweet and smart and juicy. A rare enticement." He ground into her. "And you want me just as badly."

She fought to get a better feel of his shaft, and she whimpered in frustration.

He did not make her wait but plunged inside her, filling her, thrilling her, making her moan and wrap her arms around him. He blessed her breasts with the homage of one kiss each, then rose to press her thighs wider. In a rocking rhythm, he stroked her cunt and with such force, drove her up the bed. Growling, he hauled her up over his forearms and circled her feet around his shoulders. He rocked into her as she screamed with the first pulses of a new and violent orgasm. He pumped himself inside until he shouted with release.

Minutes later, her stomach growled and she curled into him. "At this rate, we'll be skin and bones."

He harrumphed and caressed her ass. "I will feed you hourly then. I like your skin and bones plump and energetic!"

She stroked his long, beautiful cock. "The better to make love often?"

He grabbed her hand and headed for the shower. "And now!"

## **Chapter Six**

The house was made for making love in so many places that Angie began to wonder if she could remember them all. The Jacuzzi in the master bath. Poolside in the back among the red and purple bougainvilleas. Against the walls, anywhere, her leg up over his strong thigh as he pumped into her with an agility she could only admire and loved to appreciate anytime of the day or night.

They were alone in the mansion, totally cocooned. Stephen had told his outside caretaker to enjoy a month's vacation so no one was on the grounds. His housekeeper, who ordinarily came once a week to clean the interior, he had told to stock the freezer with food and the pantry with supplies, then take a holiday, too. Every other day, Stephen and she would walk down to the town's square and buy fresh vegetables in the Mercado. Every night, she cooked their dinner. After they finished the dishes, they'd go into the music room where Angie showed him she could not only sing but play the piano. She'd sing him Tin Pan Alley songs from the thirties and forties, most of them love songs that spoke of happy love affairs. And while she taught him the English lyrics, he taught her how to tango. He was learning that there was more to Angela Montoya than a way with color—and an insatiable desire to make love to her new husband. Meanwhile, she was learning that he had a determination to make her fall in love with him.

She didn't tell him he needn't work so hard.

And as the days and nights blended into each other in a haze of passion, she discovered little things about him that she had always assumed all new brides knew about their husbands long before they married them. The way he liked his coffee. Very strong. The first cup with a dash of cinnamon. None after noon. The way he devoured three newspapers each day. "Usually in the morning," he told her one day as he shut

down the computer in his office in the huge house after digesting *The New York Times*. "But not on my honeymoon." The way he enjoyed sunrises and bundled her up to take her out on their bedroom veranda to view the golden dawn.

"Shall we go for a drive?" he asked her one morning as he brushed away her hair from her cheeks. "I will show you a view of Mexico City."

On that trip, she learned he had an intricate knowledge of land values near the capital city. The same understanding that he had of land in Guadalajara and the Baja.

"Do you want to continue to expand the hotel chain?" she asked him that night back at their house as she donned an apron to begin dinner. "Beyond those on the drawing boards?" She wondered if he was one of those men who devoted himself to empire building at the cost of his family. The concept worried her.

His dark eyes met hers and he paused as he mixed a pitcher of sangria. "Until three months ago, I would have answered yes. But now with you, I think I have found a better way to spend my life. Making love to you."

"Ah, and you are very good at it, too!" She removed a band from her wrist to pull her hair up into a ponytail.

"Look at me, Angela. I am thirty-eight years old and made a life for myself filled with work because you were not here yet. Now that you are, you must tell me how much you want me with you."

His words of endearment undid her. That he also made the assumption that this marriage of theirs would work stopped her heart. Walking into his arms, she reached up and took a sample of his lips. "I want you with me often. Call that selfish, but I won't build my life on success in my profession but on pleasure in my family. I never thought driven men or women had much happiness in their lives."

"No variety?" he offered as he handed her a glass of wine.

"No love," she affirmed, realizing she intimated that she might one day declare that for him. And soon because she knew she was enthralled with him. Putting the nagging

question away of when she would declare how deeply she cared for him, she smiled and kissed him again. "I'm afraid you've created a voracious woman, darling."

He took her glass from her then and led her to the bedroom.

With reverence, he pushed down the straps of her thin cotton day dress and pressed his mouth to her shoulder. "I have enjoyed this dress today." He skimmed the bodice over her breasts, his big hands cupping her, his thumbs abrading her nipples and making her squirm. "It is quite transparent in the sunlight."

"Mm-hmm," she moaned as she arched back and encouraged him to trail lower. "I knew."

He cursed in Spanish.

She clutched at his shoulders as he sank to his knees and rubbed his cheek on her belly. "I must learn your language."

"I said you are a witch."

She hooted. "You've made me that way! Look what you do to me!"

By this time, he had slid her panties down to her feet and was kissing his way up her thighs. "I can tell by your fragrance," he whispered as he dove two fingers inside her wet and willing cunt, "precisely what I do."

"I want to see what I can do for you." She sank to her knees and took his massive cock in one hand and rolled his balls in the other.

"*Si*. There is the proof."

"Not quite," she told him and pushed him to the floor. "I want to love you the way you have me."

His eyes turned to liquid jade as he reclined on his elbows and watched her caress him, then take him in her mouth. He was huge, long and wide. She'd known it from the magnificent way he stretched her channel and filled her up. Despite his impressive size, she wanted to give him the pleasure he had bestowed on her. Circling her hand around his root, she took all of him into her mouth. He was hard, his skin silk over steel. He

was warm and musky, his personal fragrance killing her with its power. She stroked him, trying for a sensuous rhythm that he would enjoy. She licked his length, listening to him moan, dig his fingers in her hair and mutter more craziness in Spanish. She smiled and fixed her pursed lips over the head of his penis. A deep purple, his cockhead wept for her. She licked away the drops and savored the heady flavor.

He shifted back away from her, unwilling to allow her the ultimate release into her mouth. But she followed him, mewled in objection and showed him her own determination with her mouth diving over him once more. He groaned and fell backward to the carpet, an arm over his face as he let her take him over the edge. A huge cry erupted from his throat as he panted and pulled her up his body.

She swallowed his cum as he massaged the back of her head and buried his lips in her hair. She crushed him closer, satisfied that she could devastate him with the power of her desire for him.

*And was all this passion love?*

She kissed him freely and often. She was suffused with a joy she'd never known. He noticed. She could tell by the way he grinned at her with a new look of intimacy as she leaned up to hug him or caress him whenever she felt the urge.

They began to have a rhyme and rhythm to their days. The dawn together on the veranda, their walk to town, their time in the kitchen preparing dinner. Amid it all were hours and hours of breathtaking kisses and heart-stopping unions. Instant, spontaneous rapture. For a woman who had never indulged in impulsiveness with a man, Angie consumed the joy. She ran to it. Stephen not merely accepted her affection, he fed it and returned it twice over. She even thought he was surprised by it, but he never said. Instead he just welcomed her with open arms and open mind.

She took to having him in her mouth often and became rather proud of her agility. Stephen never refused her.

And what she got in return blew her mind.



His ability to love her astonished her. She'd always heard that men had a recovery period after orgasm. Stephen Montoya did not fit the rule. He could hold off his own orgasm until she had come with more than one ripple of release. His stamina astounded her. Their lovemaking became longer and longer. Her delight higher. She grew constantly hungry for him. Her pussy wet and swollen, driving her insane with need for him. He never refused her, never failed to respond to her every touch.

"Did you think it would be like this between us?" she asked him one night as they enjoyed a second serving of her pasta with shrimp.

"I hoped."

"I didn't have the experience to even do that," she admitted, her inability to talk frankly with him about her private thoughts disappearing.

"You are surprised then. But are you happy?"

She stared at him, her heart in her throat. "Utterly."

He examined her closely, but did not pursue the topic.

It wasn't a declaration of love. But she knew she was coming closer.

\* \* \* \* \*

He drove them back to Guadalajara two weeks later in his Mercedes, the top down, his hand in her lap.

"You're quiet. Not ready to go back to work?" he asked as they wound their way up the mountain to her new home.

"I'm not ready to share you with anyone yet." She glanced to the side of the road and pushed her sunglasses up her nose.

"Look at me," he urged her with a tug on her hand. "We will have no one visit until you wish it."

"No. I didn't marry you to change your life."

"But you did." He gave her a lopsided smile and returned to navigating the streets. "I am no longer a bachelor who looks for the one woman who will satisfy him."

"Do I," she asked, suddenly wary of how her life had changed so quickly, so dramatically, "satisfy you?"

His gaze riveted her. "Say you do not know this."

She folded her hands. Jitters hit her stomach. "I wonder if I am too young, too inexperienced for you." *How can I feel this way after all we've done together? All I enjoyed? Welcomed? Because he is so aggressive?*

He scowled, turning into the parking garage for his condominium and circling around to park in his assigned spot. "You are younger than I and you were inexperienced." He pulled the car into its slot and turned to her, his fingers raising her chin. "But the youth and the naïveté were part of your charm. I will not deny it."

"And now? Now that I'm more experienced?" she tested him.

He traced the outline of her lips with his index finger. "You come to me willingly, completely. Do you not see that that thrills me?"

"Yes. I'm sorry. I'm being silly." But she had to think about this trepidation she felt before she talked more with him about it. She got out of the car and headed for the elevator. At the penthouse floor, she left the elevator, Stephen right behind her. He opened the foyer door with his key and let her pass. She took four steps inside, stood in the center gallery, the house dark and still. She had been here only once. She barely remembered where to go or how to get to a bedroom.

He came to stand behind her, his big hands on her shoulders taking her back into his arms. His lips drifted over her shoulder, and he dropped a kiss to her nape. "I love you."

She shut her eyes.

He turned her around and cradled her against his hard body. "I love you. Our lives will change. We will grow older and maybe wiser, but this care I have for you will never change."

She kissed him, her embrace a terrible frightening thing. "I'd love to hold back tomorrow. I want this, what we have right now." *I don't want this to change. You to change. But how futile that is. How unexciting.*

"All our tomorrows will be filled with this." He took her mouth in a savage kiss and lifted her in his arms. He took her through the apartment and back into the master bedroom. She hung on to him, desperate, knowing their lives were changing and hating herself, wondering if she was wise enough and smart enough to hang onto him, keep him forever. By the time he laid her on their bed, she vowed to herself that she would work to make that happen.

Without a word, he stripped her, laying bare her breasts and her belly, her cunt, and loving every bit of her with his mouth. He took his time, petting her. She savored every moment, every move, each kiss. He parted her folds, sucked her clit and played with her cunt until she came once in a long ripple of release.

She plucked at his clothes, wild to feel his skin on hers. He batted her hands away until he finally unwound his belt from his trousers and tied it to the bedpost, the loop around one of her wrists. He loved her until she writhed and pleaded with him to take her, have her, fuck her.

But he would not do it. Instead he tore off his clothes and threw them to the floor, then he reversed his body, gave her his cock and his balls to enjoy. He savored her pussy and toyed with her clit. With words of raw delight, she took him in her fist and laved his testicles. She held his cock and with a rhythm that had him growling, she brought him to the point where he pulled away. She was bereft. But he turned over her.

"No, no!" she demanded. "You've got to come back to me!"

He shifted up, his hands lifting her shoulders so that they faced each other. Perspiration shone on his face. "I am never leaving you. Not here. Not for many decades to come."

This was the truth. She had known in her heart since the first day she met him that he wanted her, he was determined to have her and he would never let her go. That he loved her, too, and he had told her, astounded her. The words gave her power over him. A man who never allowed anyone to have that. A man with so much charisma, so much drive and intelligence that men bent to him.

And women too.

His dominant nature was the biggest reason why she had worried and refused to have an affair with him.

She wouldn't have survived something so fleeting. She had to assert some power over him to be his equal. She had demanded it. He had allowed it.

He had welcomed it.

Had married her.

Had adored her for weeks with his reverent body to show her how much he cared. What more was there left for him to say to prove his devotion?

No diamonds or pearls could match what he'd offered her. He was the safe and serene stability she had needed in a mate.

"I love you," she told him on a whisper. "I love you."

He pulled her against him, his lips buried in her throat. "Thank God, you can say it at last."

## Chapter Seven

Angie saw an even bigger world opening for her over the next two weeks.

She signed up to take Spanish classes each Saturday morning at a local adult education school. That opened her eyes wider to the feelings she wanted to convey in the décor of the hotel chain. She decided that maybe next year, she'd take a cooking class, too, to learn the secrets of Mexican cuisine.

Meanwhile, Stephen's large extended family became her own. An only child, she welcomed the warmth and generosity of the Montoya clan. Although Stephen, too, had no brothers or sisters, he had cousins by the carloads. Almost every weekend, someone among them had a birthday, a christening or an anniversary.

During the week, Angie and Stephen worked in his offices but kept to business hours. As promised, he invited no one to dinner nor did he have meetings after the day was done. "You tell me when you want this and if you never do, I will not object. I don't want to share you either," Stephen had repeated.

Each night, the two of them came home to their condo to cook...and *cook*.

She chuckled to herself as she hoisted up from the floor of her office another book of fabric samples that Tom Greyson had sent her from the home office. Leafing through them, she made a few notes of fabric numbers and the quality of the weaves when her phone rang.

"Señora Montoya," Yolanda began, "this is Mister Greyson for you. Will you accept?"

"Of course," Angie told her. Tom was still her boss and she was still being paid by his company to do this work. Tom had been less than pleased when she told him she was marrying Stephen. The conflict of interest worried him. In fact, he had wanted to fire her. Stephen had been livid and would have called him, but Angie had stopped

him. Tom was her boss, and this was her problem to solve. Stephen had backed off and she had promised Tom the fullest attention to the project and no prejudicial actions on her part.

"Put the call through, Yolanda." She heard the click. "Hello, Tom. How are you this morning?"

"Not well, Angie."

"Oh?" She sat in her chair and swiveled around to view the skyline. "What's wrong?"

"I won't mince words with you, Angie." Tom was known for his hot-headed knee-jerk reactions. But he was a damn good designer. His anger had intimidated her in the past, but her experiences with Stephen had helped her build a strong backbone.

"Well? What?"

"Stephen keeps changing the sizes of the suites. Which means that our original timeline and cost projections on materials are —"

"No longer valid. I know, Tom." *Aside from the fact that the materials are all bought at wholesale prices and passed through to the client. So what is your problem, big boy?*

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Tom, I have talked with Stephen about it and —"

"I bet you have."

At his suggestive tone, she bristled and sat straighter. "There is no need for that, Tom. Just calm down and listen to me. I have looked at the architect's blueprints for the top floor suites. They are too small."

"And Montoya agrees?"

"He does."

"I saw those prints. They looked fine to me. If you think you can run this show and give away your expertise while you drag this process on and on —"

"Whoa, Tom!" She shot up from her chair. "I am doing the job I was paid to do."

"Really? I did not ask you to sleep with Montoya. I only told you to do the job within the original contract. You are taking too much fucking time!"

"Tom!"

She heard her office door open and whirled to see Stephen entering. She put a hand up to beckon him in and have him take a seat.

"Listen to me, Tom, I have not suggested anything that is out of line here. If Carol or Suzanne had been assigned to this job —"

"Montoya didn't want them!"

Angie watched Stephen come to sit in one of her chairs facing her desk. He could hear Tom's voice and probably his words, too. His brilliant eyes flamed with perception of what was going on here and his mouth was firm with distaste for the topic.

"I know he didn't. He wanted someone who was more —"

"Submissive!"

"Tom!" She braced an arm on the window jamb. *Was he right? Is that what Stephen had seen in her among so many other things, of course?* If that was true then, it no longer was. This conversation proved it to her. "I think this discussion is one we should have in person. I will get on a plane today. As soon as possible."

Stephen got to his feet, reaching to take the phone from her.

She shook her head at him. "I'll let you know when I get in."

"You are not going to change my mind, Angie."

"I am interested," she declared through gritted teeth, "in making certain you calm down and listen to facts. Then you will see that I am not doing anything to make you lose money. Goodbye, Tom. I'll call you from Sea-tak."

"His problem," Stephen growled, "is he jumps before he thinks."

"I'm going to help him think," she told Stephen as he wrapped her in his arms.

"You go get him, sweetheart." He grinned, pride in his gaze and his kiss.

She left the office less than an hour later. Stephen had wanted to fly with her to Seattle but she put her foot down.

“This is my career. My boss. My problem.”

“If I go —”

“If you go, darling, you solve my problem. I can’t let that happen.”

Stephen accepted with a nod. “Promise me you will call if you need me.”

She had reached up and given him a kiss. “If I need you, it won’t be to knock some sense into Tom Greyson.”

She let herself into the condo, waving to the maid who came once a week to clean. She kicked off her high heels and went to the bedroom. Throwing a few pieces of lingerie on the bed and finding a business suit fresh from the dry cleaners, Angie went in search of her overnight bag. A suitcase would be too big, too unnecessary for what she predicted would be a short trip. But she had no idea where her overnight bag had gotten to. In the hasty arrangements to get married to Stephen, her move out of the other condo and into this one had been swift and delving into his three storage rooms near the utility room had not been her priority.

She went looking for her bag now. Not in her master closet. Not in the utility room.

She walked over to open one storage room. Filled with boxes of Christmas decorations and china and serving pieces, she closed the door on that one. Then, went to the other door. It was locked.

She knew where Stephen kept the utility room keys and hoped that others might be on there that would let her in to this room.

Jingling the keys, she strode back to the locked door and turned the knob. She opened it up to see it was a shallow closet with shelves. Almost a pantry, the tiny room had only a few pieces on the shelves. And they stunned her.

Leather ties. Long, lean. Black.



Clamps. Brightly colored or steel. One studded with small pale blue topaz jewels.  
She touched a fingertip to one bevel. *Are these the color of my eyes?*

She snatched her hand back.

Her gaze traveled over whips of various lengths.

A set of tiny balls strung together on strings.

Oddly shaped items of steel.

Two blindfolds of black velvet.

And a mask.

She stepped backward out of the closet.

*What was she going to do with all of this?*

\* \* \* \* \*

Stephen worked late. With Angela gone on the 2:20 flight to Seattle, he had no reason to go home. The condominium would be so empty and he admitted with a rueful shake of his head that he did not trust himself to know how to be alone. Without her.

He let himself in, dropped his briefcase at the door and went to the bar to mix himself a drink. A shot of some good *anjeho* and a fresh lime might be just the thing he needed to help him sleep tonight. Without her in his arms, her luscious body opening for him, he wondered if he would be able to sleep.

She had become so much of his life.

He was astonished at how much she had become a part of it. She enjoyed his family. His business associates loved her. Her youth, ah, yes.

He strode out to the veranda and scanned the old city that he loved. His eyes fell to the plot of land, still a vacant lot, where his first hotel would be. She would make it a landmark for future generations to enjoy. He had been right to hire her.

More right still to marry her.

He took a long pull on the tequila. Right to fall in love with her.

She was good for him. Filling his life with shared passion for life and work and success. If he questioned whether to bring her to a knowledge of his dominance, it was rarely. If he ever found she wanted the sensations of that, he would give it to her. Give her anything. But now and maybe forever, he saw no need to reveal to her what he had once thought was necessary to his enjoyment of sex.

What he had with Angela was more than that. It was sex with the strongest aphrodisiac of all. Love.

He strolled back into the kitchen and decided he wanted no dinner. Dinner without his charming partner would bring him little satisfaction. Plus his luncheon with his banker had been hefty.

He walked into the bedroom.

And jerked to a full stop at the foot of their bed.

What he saw there made him swallow hard.

A leather restraint. An ass plug. The nipple clamp he'd had made with tiny topaz jewels to match her eyes. One blindfold. And a mask.

He ran a hand through his hair and cursed roundly at himself in crude Spanish. What kind of a fool was he to keep this around? Not to tell her?

What was she implying by leaving it here on their bed?

Would he ever have the chance to ask her?

And would he ever have the chance to tell her why he had kept this from her?

\* \* \* \* \*

Angela did not return her husband's calls. One man at a time, became her motto for this trip. And she certainly had her hands full with Tom Greyson for two days. A more irrational man she hadn't met since dealing with Wade!

"Why does my being married worry you so, Tom?" she argued with him when he started yelling at her in their first meeting after she arrived. "Are you afraid I can't do the job or you think I'll change Stephen's mind by fucking him blind and the work will be crap?"

He blinked. He was shocked at her vehemence. *Wise to do that, Tom boy.* "Angie, really there is no need to yell."

"Why are you doing it then?" *Fire with fire, Angela.* "You think you can intimidate me. Make me crawl because I sleep in Stephen Montoya's bed?" She waved a hand, disgusted with his impertinence. "Get over it. I'm the one he wanted. I'm the one he needs."

She floored herself with that truth. Whatever else Stephen was, he was her perfect lover. And her husband.

"If you think I have no integrity to do a superb job of consulting with him, then fire me."

"He made me put it in the contract that I couldn't!"

*That was news.* "Did he?" She smiled rather like a feral cat, she thought, and tossed her hair, as proud as hell of her husband. "He wanted to ensure that I had a position. A career." *Even if our relationship failed. He wanted me to have the one thing that had propelled me forward. Kept me sane after Wade and I broke up.* "He wanted to protect me from you."

"He did."

"Not entirely, obviously." *Because who can do that totally for another person?* "So now I suggest you listen to me. I saw the architect's plans. The suites are too small. Stephen and I have told him to enlarge them. The new plans involve re-estimating the top four floors only. That will take them approximately four months to redraw. If your contract with Montoya Enterprises runs out before we can accomplish the initial goals we listed, then we will redraw the contracts."

"You speak for your husband on this?"

"I do." She crossed her arms.

"And how can you do that? You've been married less than a month. Known him only a little longer than that."

"My husband is a rational man, Tom." *More than I can say for you.* "And he has no problems with the work I've been doing for him. He takes his time to consider his challenges and tries to work them out in a logical manner."

"You do know him well then."

"I think so." *But I have to go home and test that.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Angela called him two days later at the office after lunch. "I'm home, Stephen. I'd like you to come talk to me now."

He had dropped everything within minutes, wild to get to her but damn reluctant to hear what she had to say.

She could undo him with a look, a touch. If she left him, he was not certain if he could survive. It had been hard enough to breathe since she'd gone to Seattle. He doubted the pain he felt in his heart would ever go away if he could not have her and kiss her ever again.

He entered the condo, threw his keys on the foyer table and looked around. Not in the kitchen. Not in the living room.

He slowly pivoted. She waited for him in the bedroom. His eyes fell closed.

*Don't leave me, Angela.*

His feet led him toward the door. He pushed it open. She had closed the sheers, leaving the room dappled in the bronze rays of late afternoon.

"Angela?" he called to her.

"Just a minute," she responded from her dressing room and came out, a towel wrapped around her head turban style, a silk wrapper she was securing around her

waist. She stopped, her gaze falling over him, her beautiful lips parting in a brief but strained welcome. "How are you?"

"Terrible." He hadn't slept, had hardly eaten after he'd found the items on the bed.

"Honesty always, Stephen?"

He nodded and stepped toward her.

"No." She put up a hand to ward him off. "I need some distance to say this."

His heart crashed to a stop. "Angela, you must let me —"

"Don't talk." She squeezed her eyes shut. Opened them again. "I know what all those things are. I went on the internet and learned about each one." She walked forward and began to circle him.

The fragrance of her freshly showered body wafted over him. He felt the familiar weakness she brought out in him. The longing to be buried inside her. He flexed his fingers, itching to take her, command her, make her submit to his will. But he knew he couldn't. He loved her. And he had to wait for her to tell him what his future was to be.

"You tell me about their use," she demanded when she paused behind him.

He ran through the explanations like a man running a marathon.

"Why do you use them?"

"Because that is who I am. A man who likes his will done. Always."

"But not with me?"

"Not always with you," he said, turning his face to one side, wishing he could watch her expression as he revealed these things about himself.

"Why not?"

He gritted his teeth. "Because you were so lovely to me. Young."

"Naïve?" she demanded.

"Untouched. Yes! Unschooled. I wanted to possess you but I did not want to change you. I learned that I loved you as you are." He spun and gripped both her upper arms. "I saw you grow, learn how to command yourself and others."

Her gorgeous lips curled in a smile of delight.

"How was the meeting with Tom?"

She arched both brows. "You would have been proud of me."

That gave him comfort. *And was he wrong if it gave him hope?* "You gave him hell."

She grinned, tipped her head to one side. "I did." And then she walked out of his hold. "I calmed his fears."

"Calm mine."

His voice, he knew, was a wreck. But she heard him and narrowed her gaze at him as she faced him once more.

"Did you plan to tell me about all the whips and plugs and things?"

"I did."

"When?"

"When – *if* – I thought you would want to try them. Or learn."

"Must you use them to enjoy sex?" she asked boldly, her head high.

"Not with you. No."

"Why not?"

"Because with other women, sex was just that. Never more."

Her features became mellow. Her lovely eyes glistened with tears. She sniffed them back. "And with me, were you bored?"

"Never."

She lost her composure at that and bit her lower lip. Her body began to shake.

He crossed the room and dared to take her in his arms. He almost groaned when she let him hold her. But the embrace was brief.

She stepped away. "Do you think that you will be bored with me in years to come? That you'll want a woman, want others who will like this kind of thing?"

"No! I made a promise to you when I married you to love you and keep you and to honor you. I am done with other women. I plan on loving you, making love to you for eternity." He could bear this no longer. He walked forward and pulled her up against him. "Let me!"

"And if I don't?" she shot back. "If I can't?"

"You will leave me a broken man." He wrapped her close, cupped her cheek. "*Mi corazon*, you will be broken too, yearning for the one man in this world who adores you and would move heaven and earth to keep you."

She turned her face and pressed her lips into his palm. And then she walked backward until her legs hit the mattress and she could go no further. She reached for the sash, pushed her silk robe to the floor and stood there totally, beautifully naked. "I know. Come make love to me, darling. I've missed you and I want you as you are in whatever ways you want me."

He was across the room in two strides, picking up her into his arms and crushing her to him. "I love you."

He felt her smile against his throat as her lips skimmed up to his own. "I know. Prove it, please, quickly, *mi corazon*."

He lifted her to the bed. "How would you prefer I do that?"

"Well, for starters," she said coyly as she unlaced his tie and began to undo the buttons of his shirt, "I thought you might show me how long one of those leather ties is."

He blinked. "*Pardon?*" he asked in Spanish.

"And then I thought the blindfold might be interesting."

He barked in laughter. "You did, eh?"

"Followed by one of those cute little thingies made of steel. No clue what they do, but hey, I'm a woman willing to learn."

He captured her lips then in a wild silent mating of breath and tongues and teeth.  
“Anything else?”

She traced a fingertip inside his shirt and sank her whole palm over one of his nipples. “I thought the nipple clamp with the blue rhinestones were nice, too.”

He growled. “Rhinestones?”

“Mmm. Yes. That is what they are, right?”

“Damned expensive rhinestones, my wife!”

“Of course, they are. Because you wouldn’t give me anything that wasn’t the very best.”

He rolled his eyes. “What have I created here?”

She sent her fingers around his nape and sank them into the wealth of his satin hair.  
“A woman who adores you, my sweet husband.”

“Thank God,” he breathed, but noticed that she knit her brows together. “What? There is something else?”

“Much more.”

“What? Name it.”

“You must promise me that every time you enter a room, you will kiss me hello.”

He chuckled. “And as I leave, kiss you goodbye?”

“*Besame mucho*, my darling.”

“*Besame mucho*, my love.”



## About the Author

An award-winning author of more than two dozen romances and mysteries, Cerise DeLand creates heroes readers crave. Cerise has met many men in her worldwide travels and created the best of the best from all the wonderful places she's lived and visited. Today, she lives – and writes – in wild west Texas, where a never-ending stream of cowboys, vaqueros, para-military types and diplomats stroll into town and fuel her imagination for red hot affairs.

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

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