

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*

DESIREE HOLT  
ALLIE STANDIFER

*Steamed*  
Turn Up the Heat

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

**Steamed**  
Desiree Holt & Allie Standifer

*Book 4 in the Turn Up the Heat series.*

Kira Jacobs is sick of always being the bridesmaid, never the bride. Sick of dating hot studs who have no more depth than the water in her sink. She's determined to find a lasting meaningful relationship with a mature, suit-wearing man. But her goofy, stay-at-home neighbor sends her all kinds of hot signals.

Grant Havers left the high finance rat race after having a heart attack at thirty-eight. He's done with living up to everyone's expectations but his own. It's time to go after what he wants. What he wants most is sexy Kira. He's convinced her to try him out in bed, but she's determined to leave it as sex only.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Steamed

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# ***STEAMED***

**Desiree Holt & Allie Standifer**

## Dedication

To all of our wonderful readers. You're the ones we "Turn Up the Heat" for, because you're the reason we write our stories. Thank you for your loyalty.

## Chapter One

As far as Grant Havers was concerned the party had gone on long enough. He had to limit his drinking these days, most of the people in attendance were boring, and what he really wanted to do was go home and hide from the world. Having open-heart surgery at thirty-eight gave you a totally different perspective on life. He couldn't remember the last time he'd been to a party. Or stayed out until dawn. Or even gotten laid.

That was a hell of a note. Dr. Harper had told him it was okay to resume sexual activities, but Grant hadn't found a woman yet to tempt him out of his self-imposed shell of fear. What if he had another heart attack in the middle of fucking some woman? What if he collapsed on her? What if he died in the middle of an orgasm?

He could see the headline now. *High-Powered CEO Dead at 38 with an Erection*. Never mind that the CEO was retired, had sold out his share of the company at a huge profit—more doctor's orders—and had been flying solo with his dick because he was scared shitless. Anyone who'd known Grant before the surgery would be laughing their collective asses off.

Shit. He was scaring himself enough to cork off right here on the spot.

Not that he didn't want to celebrate the engagements of two of his cousins. The Brody brothers—Skyler and Reed—had somehow managed to find the perfect women for them. And if what he saw transpiring in an opposite corner of the room was any indication, River, the third brother, wasn't going to be far behind. Grant was very glad for all of them but enough was enough. He lounged in a corner of the big room, trying to make himself invisible and figure out how much longer he had to stay before he could make a polite exit. He had just slugged down the last of his club soda when he

spotted a woman who had entered the room. For a sharp moment his breath caught and he wondered if he was having another heart attack.

She couldn't have been more than five foot five but she wore heels that gave her another four inches of height. Thick, curly black hair tumbled wildly down past her shoulders and rioted around a heart-shaped face. Unlike the stick-figured women who'd been hitting on him all evening, this one had plenty of curves and in all the right places. His palms suddenly itched and his dick stood up at rigid attention.

*Shit!*

Just what he needed. A hard-on in the middle of an engagement party.

Grant pressed the cold glass against his cock, hoping the ice would work through the fabric of his pants to subdue some of the heat. When he felt it was safe to move, he threaded his way through the crowd to where he'd seen the luscious bit of womanhood heading. There she was, hugging the Jacobs cousins—Kendra and Kasey, the prospective brides—and exchanging kisses with them.

Was she a friend? A relative?

He had to get an introduction.

Muttering, "Excuse me" five or six times as he maneuvered around people, he finally made his way to where Skyler and Reed were leaning against the bar. Both looked disgustingly self-satisfied.

"Hey!" Skyler held out his hand. "I didn't see you earlier and I wasn't sure you'd actually made it. Glad you showed up."

That was because Grant had kept to himself as much as possible. The brothers were in the midst of a bunch of fellow cops when he arrived and his new antisocial tendencies had kicked in. He'd quietly left his presents on the gift table, gotten his glass of club soda and consigned himself to a corner. Every ten minutes he looked at his watch to see how soon it would be polite to leave.

But now he had a mission.

"Couldn't miss seeing you guys finally bite the big one," he joked, shaking hands first with Skyler and then with Reed. He nodded at the three women still chatting together. "I see you both picked winners."

"More like they picked us," Reed said. "Thank God for that."

Grant couldn't help smiling. "I never thought I'd see the Brody boys roped and tamed."

Reed punched him lightly on the arm. "It happens to the best of us." Then his face sobered. "So, how's the ticker working?"

"Fine." Grant wished people wouldn't ask him about it. It made him feel as if he had a sign that read "Invalid" on his forehead. "I'm doing great. No complaints." He plastered a smile on his face. "Enjoying my new lease on life."

"Not bored sitting around the condo?" Skyler wanted to know. "I can't imagine you hanging out in front of the plasma television all day."

"As a matter of fact, I sold the place and bought a house."

Reed's eyes widened. "No shit! You? A house?"

Grant shrugged. "I needed a change. Everything in the housing market was upside down so I figured it was a good time to buy some real estate. Anyway, change of lifestyle, change of living space. Whole new start, right? And who knows? Maybe I'll find a new business to go into. Something less stressful."

"Yeah, making money is very stressful," Reed laughed. "Try living without it."

Grant forced a smile. They'd all grown up together. The Brody boys had gone into law enforcement and Grant, fascinated with all things technical, had invented a piece of software that it seemed no police department could live without. From there things had exploded, including his body when he had his near fatal heart attack. Lying in the hospital he'd have given anything to change places with any one of his friends.

Time to change the subject.



"So who's the looker talking to your future wives?" He waved his glass in the direction of the three women, hoping he sounded casual.

"My about-to-be sister-in-law," Skyler answered. "That's Kira. Kasey's sister." His mouth curved in a slow smile. "Want an introduction?"

Did he? His cock was telling him yes. Definitely.

"No." He tried to appear nonchalant. "Just asking out of curiosity. She's...a good-looking woman."

Reed burst out laughing. "Good-looking? Hell, the Jacobs women are flat-out gorgeous."

"Come on," Skyler insisted. "I think you two might hit it off."

Yes, his cock said again.

"Well, okay then. Sure. If you don't mind."

"Grant, my man, it would be a pleasure. Come on."

Up close Kira Jacobs was even sexier than at first glance. Hazel eyes glimmered beneath thick dark lashes and one tiny dimple winked at the left corner of her mouth. Her red dress was made of some kind of soft fabric. It fell easily over her breasts and caressed her generous hips the way Grant wanted to. He had to touch this woman, even if it was just for a moment.

She smiled when Skyler introduced them and held out her hand.

"Nice meeting you."

Grant set his glass down on a nearby tray and took the small hand in his large one. "How about a dance?"

Now where had that come from? He saw Skyler and Reed exchanging amused glances with their fiancées but he just ignored them, leading Kira out onto the dance floor. The DJ had switched to something slow and smooth and he pulled her against his body. Her full breasts pressed against his chest and his groin tightened. He put both arms around her and slid one hand down to the indentation at the base of her spine,

splaying his fingers against the soft flesh. He wanted to drift lower, to the curve of her ass, but he figured on a four-second acquaintanceship he was already pushing his luck.

He rested his head against the top of her head, inhaling her scent. Something spicy but light. God, she smelled fantastic.

"So, um, are you a cop like the brothers?" she asked, tilting her head back to look at him.

"No, no I'm not." Grant maneuvered one hand up to loosen his tie. The room had suddenly gotten very hot.

"So then what are you?"

"Just another friend. The Brodys and I go way back." He didn't want to talk about his friends or what he did for a living. He was imagining what she'd look like without her clothes, and realized his hands were wandering up and down her back. He had to stop before he disgraced both of them on the dance floor. A sliding glance told him Skyler and Reed were watching them with huge, shit-eating grins on their faces. "Listen. Would you like a drink?"

"Oh." She sounded startled. "Well, yes. Sure. That would be nice."

Her voice had such a soft, musical quality to it he thought he could listen to it all night long. He hated breaking the intimate contact with her but he was afraid he'd embarrass himself in a minute if he didn't. He got another club soda for himself and white wine for Kira.

"How about if we go out in the hallway and drink these?" he asked. "It's really hot and crowded in here."

She looked at him a little strangely, but then she smiled and he knew he was sunk. Smitten. Bitten. Whatever. In a few brief minutes. He guided her out into the wide hotel hallway, with furniture placed strategically here and there. He found a small table with two chairs against the wall and led her over there. When she smiled at him over the rim of her glass and that little dimple winked, his cock stood up and saluted.

Holy hell!

"Has anyone ever told you what a beautiful woman you are?" he asked, and then wanted to smack himself for such a stale line.

Kira stared at the man across from her, wondering what it was about him that had turned her on the moment he'd taken her hand. He was definitely good-looking but it was more than that. There was a raw masculine power about him that instantly made her thong wet and her nipples harden to painful points. And when they'd danced, she could feel his erection pressing into her and the heat of his hand on her back.

No! This was not going to happen. She'd had enough of sexy men with no substance. Great sex was just that—great. But she was tired of playing the game. She wanted a lot more out of life for herself. She wanted what her sister and her cousin had, a relationship with a solid man, a forever kind of man. Grant Havers was giving off all the same signals as every other man who'd been in her life. Hot today, gone tomorrow. She'd come here tonight hoping to finally meet that button-down, safe, stable man who would want forever after and finally place that ring on her finger.

So why was she sitting here with this man instead of inside at the party where she could look over the single men? Find one who looked like he had possibilities. Instead she was wondering if she could pull Grant Havers into one of the little meeting rooms and rip his clothes off.

*Stop it, you idiot! That's how you always get into trouble. One glance and you're sunk. One week later and you're another notch on someone's belt. How many times do you want to be a bridesmaid instead of the bride?*

But she couldn't turn off her thoughts. She could barely concentrate on the polite conversation they were making. The get-to-know you kind of conversation. She hoped whatever she said made sense, because all she could focus on were the crisp chest hairs curling at the neck of his shirt where he'd loosened his tie and two buttons. She blinked when she realized he'd just asked her a question.

"Excuse me? I'm sorry. What did you ask me?"

He grinned, his full, sensuous lips curving into an I'm-going-to-eat-you smile. "I asked if you'd like another drink. But maybe the one you had is already too much."

"Oh. No, no. Yes, I'd love some more wine. Thank you."

She rose from the table when he did and they shifted in the same direction at the same time, bumping into each other. Afterward she could never remember who moved first but one minute they were standing there, the next they were in each other's arms with their mouths fused together. And oh, holy hell, did he taste wonderful.

For one brief minute she tried to think about what she was doing, but then his warm hands slid up her back, his fingers tunneling into her hair, and his tongue, a hot flame, scorched into her mouth as he drank from her. She was lost, that was all. In fifteen minutes she'd broken all her new resolutions and fallen into lust with this man.

She flicked her tongue against his and sighed when he licked the roof of her mouth and the inside of her lips. She inhaled the rich, citrusy scent of him and plunged her fingers into the thickness of his mink-brown hair. By the time they broke the kiss they were both dragging air into oxygen-starved lungs.

"We have to get out of here," he rasped, his voice a throaty growl, and he grabbed her hand.

"No, wait, what—"

"We both know where this is going and I don't plan to fuck you out here where everyone can watch. Come on. I'm sure they have some rooms still left here in the hotel."

*No. No hotel room! She was doing it again.*

She pulled open the first door they came to and dragged him inside. It was some kind of meeting room, with a long table and lots of chairs. And a very thick carpet.

"Lock the door," she told him. "Quick."

"Listen, are you sure?"

"Hurry!" she urged. What the hell was the matter with the man? Didn't he understand what she was offering?

He nodded, flicked the lock closed and pulled her into his arms again. She was trying to tear off his jacket and shirt when he captured her hands.

"Hold it. I'll do it. We don't have much time."

He tossed his jacket to the floor, unfastened his slacks and shoved them down to the floor along with his boxers. Kira breathed a small sigh of relief when he stooped over to fish his wallet from his pants pocket and extract a familiar foil packet, which he stuck in his shirt pocket.

She kicked off her shoes and was about to undo her dress when Grant shook his head.

"Not this time. Next round when we have a bed, I'll touch, kiss and lick every inch of you, but for now I have to be in you."

He pulled her into his arms again and fused his mouth to hers, plunging his tongue inside. All the while he was heating her with fiery strokes of his tongue, his hands were busy bunching up her dress and pushing at her thong. She finally had to help him ease it past her hips and then wriggled out of it, managing to extract one foot.

His hands were all over her, rubbing the cheeks of her ass, squeezing the round globes, trailing his fingers through the crevice. She reached between them and wrapped her small fingers around his impressive cock, stroking the velvety skin and running a thumb over the swollen head. When she felt the drop of fluid beading at the slit lust shot through her and she spread the gel-like liquid over the skin.

Grant had moved his hands to the front of her body, arms bumping into hers as he palmed her breasts and pinched her nipples. Each new touch sent fresh cream from her pussy until she was sure it was dripping onto her thighs. She was so hot for him she was afraid she would climax without him.

He caught his breath when she reached a little lower to gently grip his balls and roll them in her fingers.

"Now," he gasped, tearing his mouth away from hers. "I have to be inside you now."

His fingers were shaking so badly Kira plucked the condom from him, tore open the package and rolled the latex onto his throbbing cock. She would have simply wrapped her legs around him but he shook his head and lowered them both to the floor, rolling so she was on top of him. When she was straddling him she looked into his eyes and saw such carnal desire it nearly undid her.

"Ride me," he growled, using his hands to urge her into position and help her lower herself onto him.

Kira rose slightly on her knees, took his cock in one hand and slowly, slowly lowered herself onto it until he was fully inside her. Oh, god, he felt so good. She closed her eyes for just a moment and clenched her pussy muscles around him. But then he moved one hand between them and pressed a thumb against her clit, rubbing it back and forth.

Icy heat raced through her as her orgasm built inside, rushing, rushing, and she rode his cock like a wild thing. When they crashed together she threw her head back and bit off a scream, shudders racking her body, her hot liquid bathing his pulsing cock. It was untamed, uncontrolled, no less explosive for the quickness with which it had occurred, and it stole the breath from both of them.

And then it was over, and she lay panting on top of him, trying desperately to pull herself together.

When she felt his hands pressing against her she opened her eyes and looked at him. She could see he was still dragging air into his lungs.

"I think you need to get up," he panted.

"Oh!" Of course. With her generous body she was probably crushing him.

Embarrassed, she lifted herself carefully and moved to the side, pausing to take in more air before rising to her knees. Grant grabbed his pants and dug for a handkerchief, removing the condom and wrapping it in the white linen.

They stared at each other for a long moment, as if neither one knew exactly what to say. Finally Kira pulled up the thong hanging around one ankle and smoothed down her dress.

"I'm going to the ladies' room to see if I can make myself presentable."

"Oh, okay." Another awkward silence. "Listen, Kira..."

"It's okay. But you should get dressed yourself. Someone will be looking for us."

Before he could say anything else or she could embarrass herself any further she unlocked the door and let herself out. As she headed toward the ladies' room, all she could think was, *What the hell did I just do?*

## Chapter Two

The familiar heat enveloped her as she opened the door to her studio and Kira let out a long sigh of relief as the steam surrounded her. The wet heat was familiar and comforting, something her sister could never understand. She stepped inside, the door clicked closed behind her and she let out a long sigh of relief.

Nothing could touch her here, not in this sanctuary built from her vision. She'd imagined every inch of it, sketched it out, made changes here, adjustments there, worked every step of the way with the architect. When it became a reality it was like having a fantasy come true. The place she'd dreamed about. The studio where she brought to life the ethereal wisps of her dreams. Shapes and forms burst into existence with her very breath as she blew and coaxed her art to reality.

A quick flick of her wrist sent the furnace blazing, the dancing flames visible through the glass door and reflecting in the big picture window. Kira's palms itched to hold and caress her latest vision. In her mind the colors and shape were already tangible. The bold, strong lines of a well-developed male form, naked in all his splendor.

Grant, the sexy stranger she'd seduced or allowed to seduce her, had been a constant companion in her mind since that night over two weeks ago. Something about the man wouldn't let her go even though she knew he was exactly the opposite of what she wanted in a partner and husband. He was just like every other man she'd taken up with—hot and irresponsible. Looking for nothing but a good time. Still, she wanted to blow the glass into his shape, recreating it from the memory of their very hot encounter at the engagement party.

*Sick, that's what I am. Sick, sick, sick. And obsessed with sex.*



Seating herself on the high stool at the drawing table, she opened her sketch pad and picked up a charcoal pencil. The lines began to flow from her fingers in bold strokes on the page. Distracted by the sounds of the noisy furnace, her own wild thoughts and the drawing coming to life beneath her quick, skilled fingers, Kira didn't hear the creak of the thick, steel door as it opened. Nor was she aware of the heavy footsteps striding her way.

"What the hell is going on here?"

The deep voice startled her and she jerked, dropping her pencil and losing her balance. With an embarrassing girly scream, she slipped off her work stool and hit the hard concrete floor ass first.

"Shit," she cursed and rubbed her aching butt.

"I saw the flames through the window," the voice went on. "Are you crazy, building a fire in here? Of all the moronic, idiotic asinine things to do."

Feeling anger spark hot enough to match that of the kiln at her side, she stood up, ready to tear apart the fool stupid enough to interrupt her work. She whirled around, temper flaring.

"Just who the hell do you think—" She stopped short as the sight of her intruder finally registered. "Oh shit...not you."

There before her stood the man she hadn't been able to get out of her head since he'd slid his cock into her body. A lover who knew how to do it quick and dirty. Something about him stuck in every one of her senses until she would swear she could still taste him on her tongue and smell his musky, male scent in the air around her.

"Are you trying to get yourself killed?" he demanded to know. There was nothing lover-like now in either his tone or stance.

Either he was too mad to recognize her or her image hadn't yet clicked into his brain. Of course, the last time he'd seen her she'd been dressed up, made up, and ready to party. Today she didn't have a stitch of makeup on, she was dressed in a tank top and yoga pants and her hair was scraped back into a ponytail to keep it away from the

flame. Fearing on the one hand he would recognize her and on the other he wouldn't, Kira shuffled from one foot to another, not sure what to do or how to do it. The feeling of uncertainty wasn't one she was familiar with and found it entirely unsettling.

And Grant continued with his rant, apparently too caught up in his own words and actions to focus entirely on her.

"I might have just moved into the neighborhood," he stormed, "but I'm already pretty attached to my house and yard. I sure as hell wouldn't want a woman too stupid to know better setting everything I own on fire, accident or no."

Well, that certainly put her in her place, Kira thought with a thin smile. She ought to hit him over the head with one of her tools. The problem was, nothing diminished his blatant sexuality. Even with his aggressive stance, clenched fists and flashing eyes she couldn't help but feel desire stir within her body and need for him heat her blood.

Faced with the conflicting emotions of desperate arousal or spiked temper, Kira went for anger as she did every time. Less chance of complications or confusion down that road. It helped her match his fury right now. And tamp down those hormones that seemed to have a mind of their own.

"How dare you barge onto my property and tell me what to do?" A bead of sweat trickled down her neck and slipped inside her already damp tank top. She blew upward at a strand of hair that had escaped.

"I dare because—" His voice stopped abruptly as he suddenly moved closer, those sexy, blue eyes narrowing even as Kira tried to step back in the shadows.

Oh, hell. He'd recognized her.

"Wait," he barked and grabbed her arm in a gentle but firm hold. "I know you." He blinked. "Of course. Kira, the mystery lady, who disappeared on me at the party. What the hell are you doing here?" He looked around as if expecting a sign to appear on the wall that would give him an answer.

"And the trophy for most clueless goes to...you, Mr. Obvious," she snapped at him while trying to pull free of his grip. "I live here, you idiot."

A stunned look washed over his face. "You live here? Right here? In this place?"

"In the house. And this is my studio. What else would I be doing here?"

His talented mouth opened and closed several times before words finally emerged. "How-how long have you been living here?"

Kira gave what she hoped was a casual shrug of her shoulders. "Five years give or take a month. Maybe I should be asking what *you're* doing here. Stalking is illegal in all fifty states, I believe."

"So is willfully endangering your neighbor's property," he shot back heatedly, taking a step deeper into her personal space. "It's called arson, in case you haven't heard."

"Whoa, there." She pressed a hand against his chest to keep him from getting any closer. Big mistake, huge mistake as Kira felt the heat of his body and the flex of his stomach muscles wash against her touch. Quickly she let her hand drop and concentrated on not pressing that same palm on her own skin. It was bad enough that the moment she'd seen him, anger be damned, she'd wanted to rub herself all over him.

Bad, bad news. Just touching him brought back all the sexual intensity of their previous encounter and the pulse in her womb throbbed insistently.

*My god, how desperate am I that just touching him almost gets me off? And how stupid am I to walk right into the same old trap again?*

"Umm...I've never had a fire here that I didn't have complete control over," she tried to explain in her most reasonable voice. "I'm a glass artist. This is what I do for a living and this is a monitored environment. And the fire is *in the damn kiln*, in case you haven't taken the time to notice."

She saw the expression on his face when he took a good look and realized what she was telling him.

"A kiln? You have a kiln in here?"

“And a permit for it, by the way. Not to mention two fire extinguishers, just in case. I’d never let my heat get out of control.” She took another step away from him.

Ignoring her obvious desire for separate breathing space, Grant moved even closer to her. “Your heat never gets out of control,” he repeated in a lower desire-filled tone.

“Hey.” Kira’s head shot up to meet the fierce blue eyes as she took a cautious step back. “No using double entendres.”

Grant ignored her unspoken demand and took another step closer. “But if I can’t use my words the way I want to, how will you know?”

Knowing without a doubt a verbal landmine lay ahead, Kira nonetheless jumped in. “How will I know what?”

“How badly I want to sit you on that table, spread your luscious thighs open wide and bury my mouth right at your candy center,” he stated, as arousal darkened his eyes and flushed color to his cheeks.

“Oh, umm.” Kira almost tripped over her tongue she was so shocked by his blatant words and the wave of lust they sent through her.

“You never gave me the chance to taste you before.” His voice deepened with desire. “I’ve woken up every night since we were together dreaming of you riding my face. Now I finally get my chance to do it for real.”

Without giving Kira a chance to protest Grant quickly picked her up, carried her to the long, solid oak table and dropped her down on the hard surface.

Mouth open to protest, she snapped her lips shut at his next words, already too wet and horny to bother complaining about the abuse to her tender butt.

“If you like these clothes I suggest you get them off now, before I tear every scrap of cloth off you.” He leaned down, pressed his nose against the damp crotch of her yoga pants and inhaled deeply. “Fuck it.”

Grant used the palm of his hand to push Kira until her back hit the wooden surface and her legs dangled uselessly off the side.

"Oh boy," she muttered while trying to wrestle her inner slut under control. "Shouldn't we talk about this?"

Eyes blazing with desire met hers. "Talk about what?" he demanded in a low, heated voice. "That the way you smell is driving me out of my mind? Or the cream I can feel soaking through your pants is making me so hard I can barely stand it? You want me, you want my mouth and tongue licking your hot sweetness, even as I coax it from your body. I really, really can't wait to taste you, either."

Shit! What was this thing between them that she was nearly ready to come just from his words? What the hell was she supposed to say to that? Uh, thanks, but no thanks? Hell no, Kira decided. Just because she was on the hunt for Mr. Right didn't mean she couldn't take time out to play with Mr. Right Now.

The man was on his knees practically begging to eat her out. Who was she to deny him?

Spreading her damp thighs wide, Kira looked down at him and smiled. "What kind of lady would I be to refuse to help a gentleman?"

"You are one hell of a lady," Grant responded, right before he dragged her cotton pants off along with her underwear. "Oh yeah, one hell of a lady."

Then his dark head bent down and he devoured her.

*What the hell am I doing? Losing my mind. Right. Going insane.*

Grant could not believe how quickly and easily this woman aroused him. Until he'd seen her at the engagement party he'd been thoroughly convinced that hot sweaty sex wasn't for a man who'd had open-heart surgery. It didn't matter what his surgeon and cardiologist told him. The fear was still there. Yet he couldn't control his reaction to Kira Jacobs. She made him instantly spike-hard. In fact, he'd been so hard every morning when he awakened after dreaming about her, he'd been afraid to bump into something lest he damage himself.

And now... Now! He had her spread out before him like a veritable feast. A banquet. Her luscious, creamy thighs quivering in anticipation. Her musk invading his nostrils. Her cream glistening on her pubic curls like early morning dew. He slid his thumbs the length of her labia, opening her, until he reached her clit. The moment he touched that swollen knot of nerves she bucked, and a low moan hummed in her throat. The sound of it vibrated through him and reached clear down to his balls.

She was just as wonderful and tempting as he'd remembered. Full breasts that begged to have their nipples sucked. Luscious hips that his hands itched to roam and caress. A rounded ass that he wanted to do every imaginable thing to. This woman was pure carnal temptation, no doubt about it.

He wanted to fuck her more than anything, to feel her hot, tight flesh clutching his cock again. But doing it on a carpeted floor had been bad enough. He wanted a soft bed, where he didn't have to worry about damage to his surgically repaired body. Besides, if he just went down on her, he didn't have to remove his shirt. It might be a little tricky trying to keep his chest covered in bed to hide the scar that bisected it.

*Stop thinking, you idiot. You have a treat splayed out before you. Take advantage of it.*

He lapped a slow path along her inner lips, up one side and down the other, drowning in the sweet taste of her. All the while his thumbs played an erotic tune on her clit, rubbing it, rasping against it, stimulating it. When Kira tried to close her knees around his head to pull him in tighter, he simply nudged her thighs apart and held them open with his broad shoulders.

Delicious little sounds of pleasure burst from her as his tongue did a complicated tango on her cunt and his thumbs continued to work her swollen clit. She was so soft and wet, a luscious treat. He wanted to take every bit of her in his mouth at once.

He worked her with his tongue and his thumbs until the jerking of her hips and the steady sensual moan told him she was getting close. He slipped one hand further down and let his fingers trail the cleft of her buttocks. The tip of one finger pressed against the tiny ring of anal muscles and Kira shoved against him.

He lifted his head and looked up at her. "You like that, sugar? Does that make you feel good?"

"Yes, yes, yes," she chanted. "Oh, please, Grant."

"Please what?" He pressed harder with his finger.

"Please...you, know."

"Do you want my finger in your ass?" His throat was so tight with lust he could hardly get the words out.

"Yes I do. Come on, Grant. Put it in there."

"Tell me the words." He circled the tiny hole, teasing at the tight flesh. "If you want it, let me hear you say it."

"God, you're killing me."

He pulled his finger back and slid his thumb away from her clit. "Say it, Kira. Tell me what you want."

"I want your finger in my ass." She practically screamed the words.

Grant gave a low chuckle. He realized how much he loved hearing her say things like that. He'd have to get her to do it more. "All right, sugar. All you had to do was ask."

He scooped some of her copious cream from her pussy and spread it around the tight opening of her rectum. Then, with great care and teasing slowness, he inserted one finger. When the hot tissues closed around it a bolt of lust speared through him and he nearly doubled over with the force of its thrust. Pressing his finger deeper inside her, he bent again to her pussy, spreading the lips with his other hand. Trailing his tongue once more the length of her slit, he stiffened it and thrust it inside her tight, welcoming heat.

"Ohgodohgodohgod," Kira intoned, her hips jerking as she tried to force him deeper inside her in both openings.

With one finger buried deep inside her ass and his tongue clutched by the tight walls of her pussy, Grant was so aroused he hoped he didn't have another heart attack.

He increased his movements in earnest, coordinating the rhythm of his tongue and his finger so he was fucking her with an increasingly rapid tempo.

He felt the onset of her orgasm when the walls of her cunt tightened and spasms began to ripple through them. He pressed harder with tongue and finger, pushing her higher and higher. He knew the instant she crashed. Her entire body convulsed, his tongue and finger trapped by the spasms of her muscles, her liquid pouring into his mouth. He worked her and worked her until the pulsing slowed to slight aftershocks and finally subsided.

He drew back from her and then leaned over her, bracing himself with his hands on either side of her. He saw the carnal satisfaction in her eyes, the flush of heat on her cheeks. Her breathing was still erratic and he knew if he placed his ear against her breast he'd hear and feel her heat hammering.

Bending his head, he pressed his mouth to hers, giving her a taste of herself from his lips.

Kira threaded her fingers through his hair, holding him in place while she licked his lips and the inside of his mouth with her tongue. At last he lifted his head and gave her lips one last brush with his.

"Bathroom," he whispered.

"Wha—"

"You do have one here, right?"

She blinked, and pointed with a limp hand toward a corner. "Over there."

He washed quickly in the tiny bathroom and looked at his face in the mirror. He saw desire burning in his eyes, and the same tension gripping his body lined his face. What the hell was he doing, anyway? He shook his head, wondering if Kira was a witch of some kind. It seemed the moment he laid eyes on her he couldn't keep his hands off of her.



And what were the chances he'd move into the house right next door to her? How the hell was he supposed to handle that? He'd probably end up fucking himself into an early grave. And to complicate things even more, he was still hard enough to drive nails into concrete.

Sighing, he opened the door and walked back into the studio. Kira was still on the table, still naked from the waist down, but she was sitting up with a satisfied smile on her face. She leaned back, bracing herself on her hands.

"You have a very educated mouth, Mr. Havers." Her voice was low and thick with sexual satisfaction.

"All compliments humbly accepted." He grinned at her. "But it's easy when the morsel is so delicious."

She wiggled to the end of the table. "But I'll bet you didn't get everything out of it you could."

He bracketed her with his hands and drifted a kiss over her mouth. "You didn't hear me complaining, did you?"

"No." She drew out the word so it sounded as if it had three syllables. "But you're probably too much of a gentleman." She reached for his t-shirt and started to drag the fabric upward.

Grant clamped his hands around her wrists. "No." He nearly shouted the word.

Kira jerked and let go of the fabric. She hitched herself back on the table. "You don't have to shout at me. What's wrong with me wanting to get you naked? Maybe getting you up here on the table with me." She dropped her voice. "I like having you inside me."

Oh, shit. "I, um, don't have any condoms with me. Didn't think I'd need one just hanging out in my yard." Hell, he pulled that one out of thin air. "I came in here expecting to call the fire department." His lips curved in a slow smile. "Instead I found a different kind of heat."

"But you didn't...you aren't—"

"I'm fine, sugar." *Like hell.* "Next time I'll be better prepared."

She raised an eyebrow. "Next time?"

"Uh-huh. And there will be a next time." Shit, he was just getting himself in deeper and deeper. He needed to keep his distance from this woman, not get more involved with her. Or with any woman.

"So, what did you have in mind?"

*Yeah, Havers, what did you have in mind?*

"Well, how about starting with dinner? I think we've done everything backward here."

Kira burst out laughing. "Ya think?"

He drew in a deep breath and let it out very slowly, then held out his hand. "Hi! I'm Grant Havers, your next-door neighbor and a cousin of the Brody brothers. I'm sure they'll vouch for me."

Mischief danced in her eyes. It didn't seem to bother her that she was sitting on the table half naked, the scent of sex a rich cloud in the air around her. "Okay, I'll play." She took his hand. "Kira Jacobs, sister of one bride and cousin to the other. And *they'll* vouch for *me*."

"Okay, Kira Jacobs. Nice to meet you. Would you have dinner with me tonight?"

She blinked. "Dinner? Tonight?"

"Sure. You know. Where two people sit at a table, order food, chew and swallow it."

Kira giggled, the only word for it. A very feminine sound. "Why, yes, I'd love to have dinner with you."

"Tonight," he repeated.

She nodded. "Tonight. Okay." Then, as if she'd suddenly become aware of her situation, she hopped off the table and picked up her yoga pants and panties.

Grant thought he'd lose it for sure watching her wiggle into them.

"Seven good for you?" he asked.

"Seven's fine." She cocked her head and looked at him as if something had suddenly occurred to her. "I never thought to ask. What are you doing home in the middle of the day? Don't you have a job to go to?"

He turned and headed for the studio door, unwilling to have this conversation. "I'm between...opportunities. When your doorbell rings at seven, I'll be the one pushing the bell." He turned as he opened the door. "Wear something sexy."

Then he was out of the building, pulling the door shut behind him.

Holy hell. Tonight he'd have to figure out a way to keep the conversation away from the job front. He just wasn't ready yet to tell her the truth.

## Chapter Three

Kira brushed stray wisps of hair back from her face and tried to figure out just how things had gotten so out of hand so quickly. One minute she was sketching, the next her neighbor was charging in like a wounded bear. And the next she was flat on her back and he was doing wonderful things to her with his very educated tongue.

*Way to go, slut girl. You've done it again.*

Why was it she just couldn't seem to break the pattern? She wanted real things in her life—a home, a responsible husband, a solid marriage. Even children. So how did she keep getting herself tied up with men who were...between opportunities. Looking for a quick lay.

At least he'd asked her out to dinner, and indicated he wanted to get to know her better. But what did that mean? The relationship would last two weeks instead of a few nights? Kira wanted to put her head down on the table and bang it against the solid wood. Instead she picked up her cell phone and punched in her sister's number.

"Hey!" Kasey said when she answered. "How's the glass business?"

"Hotter than ever." It was the standard greeting they always used with each other.

"And speaking of hot, wasn't that Grant Havers I saw you disappear with at the party?" Kasey couldn't hide the blatant curiosity in her voice.

"Um, well, I didn't exactly disappear." She should have known Kasey would nail her on that. The only reason they hadn't had this conversation already was because Kira had been gone to a trade show for the past week. Probably the same reason she also hadn't met her new neighbor before today.

"Give me a break," her sister laughed. "One minute the two of you are dancing, the next you're both gone and that's the last anyone sees of you."

"We, uh, just decided to leave early." Damn, damn, damn. "You know how I hate parties anyway, and I guess he does, too."

"Uh-huh." Kasey chuckled. "If you say so. How was the trade show?"

"Great. It was great." How was she going to get around to her questions when Kasey was already on the alert? "So, um, anyway, has this guy been friends with the Brody brothers for a long time?"

Now Kasey laughed outright. "Is that interest I hear in your tone of voice?"

"Just...idle curiosity." Kira paced now, trying to choose her words carefully. "What do you know about him, anyway?"

"Not a lot," Kasey admitted. "Just that he and the guys have been close since they were kids."

"Do you happen to know what he does for a living?" *Does he even have a job?*

"Not really." Kasey was silent for a moment. "I asked Sky and he said Grant was making some major changes in his life but he wasn't real specific."

*Great. Just great. Besides being Mr. Hot-to-Trot he's also unemployed.*

Kira cleared her throat. "I don't suppose you happened to know that he bought the house next door to me, did you?"

"What?" Kasey's voice was so loud Kira had to hold the cell phone away from her ear.

"You heard me. He's my new next-door neighbor."

"I had no idea. Wait until Sky gets here tonight. I'll roast his balls for not telling me."

"Maybe he doesn't know," Kira suggested.

"Let's hope not or he's in big trouble. So, I take it you and he have run into each other."

Kira smiled. "You could say that. Listen, not that it's any big deal, but since he's right next door, will you try and worm anything out of Skyler that you can? I want to make sure we don't have an axe murderer in the neighborhood."

*No, just a sex fiend.*

"Sure, honey. No problem." She laughed again. "Oh, this is just too rich."

"Don't go conjuring things up, sister dear. I'm just mildly curious." She paused. "Is he, um, seeing anyone? You know, just wondering if I'm going to see hot and cold women running out of the house."

"Mildly curious, huh?" Kasey was off again in a fit of laughter. "I don't know if he's seeing anyone," she answered, still catching her breath. "I'll make it a point to ask Sky when he gets home."

"No!" Kira almost shouted the word, and forced herself to lower her voice. "I mean, no, you don't need to bother. I was just..."

"Mildly curious?" Kasey repeated her own words back to her. "Uh-huh. Okay, your secret is safe with me." Her voice was still rich with humor.

"Yes. No. Not even that. Okay?"

"Sure, sure, sure. Whatever you say. Talk to you later."

Kira disconnected the call, silently cursing. She hadn't meant to give any real indication of her interest in Grant. Probably shouldn't even have mentioned him. Her sister knew her too well. As a matter of fact, she needed to just wipe him out of her mind. He was so not the kind of man she was looking for. She wanted a wedding dress and a honeymoon. Grant wanted hot nights and...and who knew what else. No job. Just interested in hot sex in the moment.

She should have called Maddy. At least her best friend wouldn't have laughed until after she'd hung up the phone, but Madison West didn't have the same close connection to Grant. Therefore she used who and what she had to get all the information she could. Was he really worth all this trouble?

But then she closed her eyes and remembered how his tongue felt thrusting in and out of her cunt. Remembered the rasp of his thumbs as they stroked her clit and the thrilling intrusion of his finger into her ass. The pulse low in her womb began to beat again and she knew her panties were even wetter than before just thinking about what had happened. Right here. In her studio. On the table where she worked every day.

And how in the hell was she supposed to concentrate when images of him eating her out kept floating in her mind?

Damn!

This was so not good.

How did she keep doing this to herself?

\* \* \* \* \*

Grant cursed himself and his loose mouth. The same damn mouth that had gotten him into this sure-to-be uncomfortable dinner date. Yeah, the sex between them shot off the charts, but a conversation? In public? What the hell could he talk to her about? The numerous and varied changes in his life and body since his chest had split wide open? How he freaked out seeing the scar and couldn't imagine anyone much less a sexy vibrant woman accepting him and all his body's flaws.

So fine, he straightened his jacket-clad shoulders. He'd take Kira to dinner, they'd discuss the weather, vacation spots and whatever other banal topics they could come up with. After their disastrous dinner he'd take her home, lust tamed and head back to his own bed...alone.

Feeling surer of his emotional state, Grant straightened the knot on his tie, switched the bouquet of flowers to his other hand and rang the doorbell.

The flowers were stupid on his part. He'd never felt more like a kid as he stood there on Kira's porch, waiting for her to open the door and get the evening over with. He'd gone down the street where the florist was located this afternoon and without his consent his SUV had driven itself right to the flower shop.

The soft fall of footsteps distracted his thoughts and made his gimpy heart race in a way he was positive his doctor wouldn't approve of. Then the door swung open and all his doubts, self-recriminations and thoughts of an early night in bed alone abandoned his brain.

"Hello," he said as all the moisture in his mouth dried up.

Kira wore a dress the color of flames that hugged her generous breasts and swirled around her sandal-clad feet. Imagining what she had underneath or possibly what she might not be wearing caused his heart to give a few heavy thumps before settling down to its normal, if somewhat fast rhythm.

"Hi, yourself." She greeted him with an open smile that made a dimple appear on the left side of her smooth cheek.

"Um..." Unsure of his footing Grant shoved the bouquet of summer flowers at her. "Here, I got these for you."

Duh! He wanted to smack his own head for the sheer stupidity of his words. Of course the flowers were for her. He sure as shit wouldn't buy such a pansy-ass thing for himself.

Kira dipped her head to smell the colorful blooms. The actions caused a wave of black curls to tumble over her shoulders making his hands ache to tangle themselves in the silky mass.

Grant took a step backward. "We should get going," he prompted, wanting the protection of other people surrounding them.

She looked up startled at the harshness of his voice. "Oh, okay," she agreed. "Just let me put these beauties in some water and grab my purse."

"Sure, no problem."

Had the bypass removed his smooth lines as well as his confidence? Grant wondered, as he watched Kira walk away from him. Nothing about this woman or their situation felt familiar or comfortable to him. He was used to his dates knowing the



score. His wealth and stature in the Austin community had been no secret. The women he escorted to various functions knew it, but this particular female, an artist, had no clue who he was or rather who he'd been.

In a way it was kind of refreshing. The pigeonhole he'd once been so comfortable being confined in had disappeared. In its place a kind of freedom surrounded him. No one other than his cousins knew his specific background. If Kira chose to spend time with him then it had nothing to do with his bank statement and everything to do with him as a person, a man and a lover.

"I'm ready." Kira's reappearance jolted him out of his internal turmoil.

A smile curved his lips. "Then let's get you fed."

The smoldering look she shot him before taking his arm sent bolts of heat straight to his cock. Oh, hell, no he wouldn't be going to bed alone tonight, not with the sexy and available Kira Jacobs sending him all the right signals.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I can't eat another bite," Kira protested and patted her not quite flat stomach. "Everything was amazing, Grant. Thank you so much for inviting me out tonight."

Desire darkened his normally light blue eyes until they were nearly black with need. "It was my pleasure, Kira." The words might have sounded normal and familiar to anyone else, but Kira had gotten to know this complicated man over the past few hours. His response was heavy with knowledge and sexual intentions.

Exactly like everything else about this night. Grant had started seducing her from the moment she'd opened her front door to him. First with the flowers, then an expensive bottle of wine and now a fabulous dinner.

At first she worried that someone with no job shouldn't be spending money like water, but she reminded herself it wasn't her problem. Grant wasn't going to be in her future as anything but a neighbor. The responsibility of taking care of him could fall to some other lucky or unlucky woman.

"Sir, ma'am," A tuxedo-clad waiter interrupted their heated stare. "Tonight's dessert menu."

The twenty-something server handed both of them small leather-bound binders and discreetly left.

"Can I tempt you with a little something more?"

"Really, Grant, I'm stuffed. I couldn't eat another bite."

"Well, I've recently developed a taste for certain tartly sweet cream." Hooded, heated eyes dropped to where the table hid her from the waist down. "But since I can't have a sample of what I really want I might as well go for second best."

With an easy gesture Grant lifted one hand in the air for no more than a second, but almost before he put it down their eager waiter returned.

"Have you found something to tempt you?" he questioned innocently.

Grant never took his eyes off her as he answered the man. "Indeed I have, something very tempting." His slow wink heated her blood and flooded her panties with creamy need. "But I'll settle for the Key lime pie, instead."

The young server said nothing, just nodded his head and rushed away to place Grant's dessert order.

"You don't play fair," she accused while secretly delighted by his game.

His eyebrows rose in a silent question and Kira couldn't stop a small burble of laughter from spilling out of her lips.

"You really are incorrigible."

At the sound of her giggle Grant's face lost its haughty expression and resumed its normal handsome teasing expression. "Can I help it if everything reminds me of you?"

"I don't see how a simple dessert can in any way remind you of...well, you know." If they'd been alone Kira wouldn't have hesitated to speak bluntly, but here in a public place with other diners surrounding them she edited her words.

Grant had no such compulsions. "Eating you out?"

Heat warmed her cheeks at his blunt words, but she gamely kept her gaze on his. "Yes."

"Both are sweet with the lightest touch of tartness that makes me crave another taste, another lick until I'm drowning in the flavor and still can't get enough." Then the devilish seducer slowly licked his lips as if remembering when her cream coated them.

Feeling overwhelmed, turned on and way out of her comfort zone, Kira did the only thing she could. She fought white-hot desire with blazing red need.

She thanked providence—and whatever other benevolent deities floated around—that the restaurant Grant had chosen covered each table with a dark linen tablecloth that almost reached to the floor.

Moving slowly she wriggled her strapless sandal off her foot. Then, as casually as she could, Kira slipped her naked foot between Grant's spread thighs and began a slow sensual massage with only her foot.

At the first touch Grant jumped slightly in his chair, but made no other obvious reaction except for a slight rise in color.

"Like playing with fire, do you?" he asked in a calm almost casual tone, that had Kira wondering if she wasn't actually rubbing something other than what she'd aimed for.

"Unzip your pants, Grant. I want to feel you skin to skin. I want to feel the sticky wetness of your pre-cum between my toes." With every word she spoke Kira wound herself tighter. She'd never been so turned on in her life, all without the man sitting calmly in front of her laying a single finger on her.

"What will you give me if I do?" He challenged her even as she felt his hand slide between her foot and his rock-hard cock. He eased the zipper down slowly, watching her with hungry eyes the entire time.

Little did the man know she was eager to be dared. "I'll let you fuck me anyway you want tonight. As many times as you want or however you want. If you want me to

suck you off all night then that's what I'll do...with pleasure," she told him, her voice low and husky as the flames of need build higher inside her.

"You give so much for getting so little in return. I wonder how I got so lucky." Grant's tone grew strained as Kira's foot grew bolder beneath the safety of the dark linen.

"You haven't gotten lucky yet, but if you let loose a little I can promise you will." More than anything Kira wanted to watch this controlled, unpredictable man come apart for her.

Then the last barrier separating them disappeared and his hot aroused flesh was naked beneath her touch. They both sucked in a sharp breath at the sensual nature of the touch. Grant's cheeks darkened as his nostrils flared.

"I swear I can smell your sweet heat," he growled low. "Tell me you're as wet as I am hard."

"You know I am."

Up and down she caressed his velvet-covered flesh with her toes, even though she was aching to feel him pounding deep inside her while their mouths devoured each other with desperate need.

Suddenly Grant sucked in a deep breath. He reached under the table, grabbed her foot and pressed it hard against his sensitive flesh. "Give me the other foot," he demanded.

Not willing to deny him, not when she could see how close to coming he was, Kira jerked off her shoe then pushed her foot into his waiting palm.

"Fuck, this feels so unbelievably good. I'm so close to coming, honey. Is that what you want? My seed all over your satin soft skin? To get up from the table and know that I know what's coating your ankles and legs is nothing but my cum?"

Both bare feet surrounded his rigid length, acting as a source of friction, bringing him closer and closer to the edge.

"Both hands on the table, Grant, where I can see them." Kira knew she'd pay later for ordering him around now, but she couldn't resist the opportunity to boss such a strong man around. When he obeyed her command her pussy grew hotter and the motions of her feet increased. "Hmm, such a good little soldier you are. I wonder what else you're good at."

Those high cheekbones she'd admired all night grew darker as his need rose. "I'm too close, Kira. Back off, honey, and we'll save this game for when we get to the bedroom."

Did he honestly think she'd turn back now? After she'd worked so hard to bring him so close? "Not a chance, Grant," she murmured back then shot him a smile filled with sensual promise. "Here comes our very prompt server with your dessert, sweetie. Smile nicely for the young man and I promise you a second treat you'll never forget."

When the smiling, oblivious man left them, Kira turned a predatory gaze on her dinner companion. "Now eat your pie like a good boy and we'll finish up our game so long as you don't let anyone know what we're doing."

Grant nodded and hastily grabbed his fork off the table. "Finish this, Kira, because I sure as hell can't get out of this chair with a trigger-happy hard-on sticking out of my pants."

"Then slip your handkerchief out of your pocket and push my dress up," she said in her most commanding tone.

He followed her instructions. The only sign of his growing arousal was his harsh breathing and hollowed cheekbones.

"Now, please, Kira."

Taking pity on him, Kira scooted her chair closer to the table so her feet could take his cock in a hard grip, ready to milk the very seed from his body. She spread her legs open ready to catch his sticky essence with her flesh. Then she sped her movements up and almost came herself as she watched Grant fall over the cliff. His body jerked slightly, a low grunt escaped his lips as his eyes closed and the fork fell from his hand.

“Fuck...yeah...Kira,” he breathed the words out as splash after splash of hot cum jetted from his body and spilled across her feet and legs.

\* \* \* \*

Later he’d never understand how he calmly thanked the waiter for the pie while his whole body drew tight with the need to thrust. Thanks to Kira’s teasingly talented toes Grant was more turned on then he could ever remember being in his life.

He didn’t care about his heart or the scar that crisscrossed his chest. The main thought running through his head like a hamster on a wheel was when could he fuck Kira. The backseat of his SUV sounded pretty good to him right now. Anything, any place so long as he could take her. Hadn’t she promised him just that? That he could fuck her anywhere, anyhow and anyway he wanted? Did the female know what she’d offered him and how much?

The barest brush of the arch of her foot made him strain in his chair. So close, he was so fucking close to losing it. Then he did, jerking in her erotic hold as his seed jetted out in a warm stream coating Kira’s flesh, marking her as his...at least temporarily.

He sat in his chair, his body still humming with mind-numbing pleasure. His satiated cock only half hard now, tucked safely back in his pants. Grant’s mind spun in bright ribbons and patterns, no thought or feeling stopping long enough for him to grasp it. Everything in his world, his universe narrowed down to the sensual woman sitting across from him in the dimly lit restaurant.

Kira destroyed all his preconceived notions of women and the many faces they presented to the world. Publicly she was the consummate professional, allowing nothing but the best in her work. With friends and family she laughed, joked and cared for those around her. In the bedroom or in semi-privacy Kira displayed an erotic side Grant wanted to spend the rest of his life exploring.

“Something else on your mind, Grant?” Kira’s voice teased his heightened senses like an erotic caress across his balls.

"Two questions." His voice was reduced to a low husky mutter.

One delicate, arched, black brow rose and a slight Mona Lisa smile curved her full lips "Just two?"

"Did you mean it?"

He prayed she wouldn't ask for clarification. Grant honestly didn't know if he could sit here and repeat her offer, not without breaking a few public decency laws.

Kira either knew how close to the edge he was or she'd chosen to take pity on him. Whatever the reason she didn't play word games with him. She answered him with straightforward honesty.

"Every word, Grant. However, whatever and whenever."

His repaired heart jerked in his chest and he took several slow, deep breaths before asking his second question. "Do you have any objections to a little light bondage?"

If he hadn't been watching so closely for her reaction he might have missed it. That telltale sign of heightened arousal. But he had been watching and he'd caught the rapid fluttering of the pulse in her neck and wanted to howl in soul-deep pleasure.

He didn't need her answer now, but he waited for it just the same. Wanting to know if she'd be true to her own needs and desires as she'd demanded he be.

"So long as we're not talking about pain, degradation and dressing up like stuffed animals then I'm game for anything."

Hearing everything he needed to know, Grant's hand shot up in air. "Check, please."

## Chapter Four

She was spread-eagled on his bed, silk scarves binding her wrists to the headboard, another folded over her eyes and tied in place.

"Why can't I watch?" she asked. "This isn't fair." Kira wanted to see Grant's entire body naked. Touch it. Run her fingers over the hard muscles hinted at by the fit of his clothes.

"Because tonight I'm in charge." His voice was low and charged with sexual heat.

He pressed his mouth to hers, a light touch at first, then a whisper of his tongue over the surface of her lips. When he traced the seam of her mouth with the tip of his tongue it was like the barest kiss of the torch she used in her studio. Hot. Fiery. Intense. She opened her mouth for him and at once his tongue was inside. He swept every wet surface, licking the roof of her mouth as if he was tasting candy.

His lips shifted against hers, first one way then another as he used different angles to touch different surfaces. Kira grazed the surface of his tongue with her teeth and was rewarded with a sharp intake of breath. She did it again, and Grant's fingers tightened on her scalp, holding her head firmly in place. His tongue plunged deeply and she swore she could feel its tip all the way down to the center of her cunt.

Lust, hot and hard, speared through her. It woke up every bundle of nerves, made her nipples harden into diamond-like points and the walls of her cunt quiver in delicious anticipation. The throbbing in her womb that had set up an insistent beat while she'd driven Grant to climax with her toes was now as heavy and rhythmic as a bass drum.

*Fuck me, fuck me, fuck me.*

It bounced around in her brain like an echo off the walls of a canyon. By the time he finally broke the kiss her head was spinning and she wasn't even sure who she was any



more. All she knew was that this man could do anything he wanted to her, with her, and she'd take it and welcome more. All her careful plans had dissipated, blown away by erotic winds.

"You have the most gorgeous nipples." Grant's voice vibrated against her as he closed his mouth over one taut swollen tip. "Mmmm. Delectable."

He circled the bud with the tip of his tongue, tiny slivers of electricity sizzling from the point through her breasts to her cunt to join the flutters already intensifying there. He closed his teeth over it lightly, tugging at it, biting down and then soothing it with soft kisses. Kira swallowed a tiny cry as he cupped the breast, kneading it rhythmically as he moved his mouth to the other nipple.

Kira tried to shift beneath him, but he was kneeling over her, his thighs bracketing her legs and pinning her to one position. With her hands held captive by the scarves she could do little but writhe in desperation and try to silently urge him to do more. More. More.

But Grant was apparently determined to take his time. By the time he finished with her nipples her breasts felt full, the skin too tight, and her nipples hard and swollen. She flexed her fingers with a need to cup them with her own hands.

Grant's laugh was deep and sexy. "Do you like touching your breasts, Kira? Do you cup them when you lie in bed pleasuring yourself? I'd like to watch you do that sometime but not tonight. Tonight I'm in control."

There was a sudden hard edge to his voice that resonated through her, ramping up the desire already in full bloom inside her.

Kira wet her lips with the tip of her tongue. "Of everything?"

He laughed softly. "Of everything."

He kissed the hollow at the base of her throat where her pulse beat, sucking at the flesh before moving his mouth down through the valley between her breasts. He trailed kisses over her heated skin until he reached her navel. Pausing, he traced the delicate

swirls in the indentation with the tip of his tongue before following a line down to her pubic curls.

When he blew a stream of warm air on them Kira tried once more to move her hips, to lift herself to him, to urge him to do more. He laughed again, soft and low, the sound vibrating through her.

"Don't rush me, sugar. Up to now we've rushed through everything. Tonight I'm taking my time."

"I want to see you," she told him again.

"It's much better with the blindfold. When one sense is removed all the others come into sharper play. This way you can feel everything so much more intensely. Like this."

He shifted suddenly so he could lift her legs and drape them over his thighs. With his thumbs he parted the outer lips of her pussy and blew on the wet flesh as he had on the soft curls. When she moaned he did it again, then brushed his thumb very lightly across the tip of her swollen clit.

"God, you're already so hot, Kira. You're the most responsive woman I've ever met. Now I know what men mean when they talk about a wet dream walking."

"Please," she whispered again, her body silently begging for more touching, more stroking. More...anything.

Grant slid two fingers inside her warm channel and moved them in and out, the tips of them curling so with each stroke he found her sweet spot. The moan morphed into one long sound of extended pleasure as he took his time pushing her up that slow erotic slide. She wanted to come so badly, but Grant kept her just hanging at the threshold. She was caught in a voluptuous web, a net of sensations that zinged through her and stimulated every nerve in her body.

Her pussy ached for him, the walls grasping at his fingers. When he added a third finger she made a little mewling sound of satisfaction and tried to thrust herself down harder on them. He was right. Every nerve in her body was twice as sensitive when all she could do was feel. In a moment she felt his mouth on her clit and the twin

stimulation of his fingers and his lips brought a sudden climax crashing down on her. Her body clutched at his fingers and her hips jerked as she shuddered with her release.

"Good, that's good," he murmured. "I love to watch you come, sugar. Your whole body blossoms. And your cream is all over my hand." He slid his fingers from her body, leaving her feeling suddenly empty. "I'm licking my fingers, sweet thing. You taste better than any dessert we could have ordered tonight."

She felt his mouth on her clit again, tugging at it with his teeth, and just like that she felt the seed of another orgasm begin to flower inside her.

"I want you inside me," she whimpered. "Oh, please, Grant." She tugged at the restraints on her wrists but they held firm.

His mouth continued to do wonderful things to her clit as her desire began to grow and expand. When she'd reached the point where need and frustration were colliding Grant backed off and she heard the familiar crinkle of foil.

"Now, Kira," he whispered. "Now you'll feel me inside you."

He slid in so slowly she was ready to scream as anticipation gave way to hunger. Finally that magnificent cock was fully inside her, stretching her, filling every inch of her greedy pussy. She sensed him over her seconds before she felt his mouth on hers. His lips still carried the faint taste of her cream where he'd licked his fingers. He plunged his tongue into her mouth as he drove his cock deep inside her and she cried out around their kiss.

He moved slowly, so slowly she wrapped her legs around him in frustration, dug her heels into the small of his back and pressed him as close as she could. But no matter what she did he never varied that slow, steady stroke, in and out, back and forth. The climax pushed at her from deep inside, as slow and steady as the slide of his cock in and out of her cunt.

The pressure built and built and built, like the steam inside a kettle, until she was sure her body would explode. And Grant continued to kiss and kiss and kiss her, igniting a fire in her mouth to match the one in her cunt. When she was positive she

couldn't stand it anymore he increased his tempo just a fraction, pushed just a little harder, and like a cloud of steam released from pressure, her orgasm grabbed her and shook her. Every muscle in her body spasmed, her legs tightened around Grant's suddenly taut body and her pussy clenched and clenched around his cock, bathing it with her hot liquid.

He held her until the last of the shudders subsided, until she lay beneath him liquid and spent. She felt his heart hammering in an erratic rhythm with hers and his breathing rasping as he struggled for air. At length her arms and legs fell away from him and he slid carefully from her body. She heard sounds from her bathroom, running water, then his hands releasing her wrists. A click of the switch as he turned off the lamp and at last removed the blindfold.

She opened her eyes to darkness. Grant had slipped into bed beside her and now he turned her so they spooned, the covers pulled over them. He brushed stray wisps of hair from her face and kissed her cheek.

"Sleep well, sugar."

\* \* \* \*

"That arrogant son of a bitch."

Kira was sitting straight up in bed—Grant's bed—with sunlight streaming in the windows, a note in her hand that she'd plucked from the pillow, and no Grant.

*The evening was great. I have to be gone for a few days. Maybe we'll get together when I get back. There's coffee in the kitchen.*

*Grant*

She was so outraged she was afraid she'd have a heart attack with the force of her fury. How dare he? How *dare* he! How dare he treat her like some casual piece of fluff and toss her aside. She stormed downstairs but the kitchen was empty. A coffee pot sat invitingly full on the counter.

"Damn!"

In a rage she picked up the carafe and smashed it in the sink. She'd had bad luck with men before, but none had ever walked out on her *in their own house*. Storming next door, she raced through a shower, scrubbing to remove any trace of him from her body, pulled on cutoffs and a tank top and drove to Skyler and Kasey's as if the hounds of hell were after her. Maybe they were.

"Look." She thrust the note at a very sleepy Kasey when her sister opened the door. "Look here. This is the note that asshole left me."

She shoved the door inward and rushed past Kasey into the house. Skyler was standing in the kitchen in jeans and no shirt, drinking from a coffee mug.

"Nice of you to visit, Kira," he smiled.

"And you can go to hell, too," she raged, stamping around the room.

"Kira?"

She heard Kasey's voice behind her. "I'll kill him. I'll dismember him. Piece by piece. Oh, damn it all to hell, anyway."

"Sit." Skyler pushed her into a chair at the table and Kasey set a mug of coffee in front of her. "Drink. Then talk coherently."

She didn't want to talk. She wanted to scream and shout and break things. But obediently she sipped the hot liquid while Kasey sat across from her and Skyler leaned against the counter.

"Now," he said. "Would you care to explain what's going on?"

"He walked out on me, that asshole cousin of yours. Left me sleeping in *his* bed, if you can believe it. With this stupid, insulting note." She thrust the piece of paper at Kasey who read it and passed it to Skyler. "He's just like all the others. No, worse." Inexplicably she felt tears crowding in her eyes. "All I wanted was a nice, stable man who wanted to get married. Is that asking so much?"

"We have to tell her," Kasey said. "It's not fair. And I might just kill him myself."

"Tell me what?" Kira looked from one to the other as the couple exchanged a silent communication. "What exactly is going on?"

"I'm going to tell you what Grant should have told you himself," Skyler said, "and explain why he ran the way he did. Kira, he's not your typical love 'em and leave 'em jerk."

So he told her. About the heart attack at thirty-eight. The open-heart surgery. Having to step back from his company because of the stress factor, the long hours and demanding travel schedule.

"My guess," Kasey said after Kira pried the rest of the details out of her, "is he's afraid. He wouldn't let you see him naked because of the scar. Men can be just as vain as women, you know." She sent a wink Sky's way then continued. "He's worried he might have another heart attack and die on top of you. He doesn't want you to think he's an invalid but he hasn't figured out quite how to adjust his life yet, either."

"He was pretty miserable when he came by here earlier," Skyler added.

Kira stared at him stunned. "He came here?"

"Uh-huh. And if ever I saw a guy in love, it's Grant Havers. In love and scared to death," he informed her casually, like they'd been discussing the chances of rain instead of the possibility of her future happiness.

"So...he's not an unemployed asshole?"

Skyler laughed and sipped his coffee. "Maybe an asshole but he won't be getting unemployment any time soon."

"I have to talk to him." She turned to her sister. "Please. You have to tell me where he is."

Kasey gave her that no-bullshit look. "Are you sure he's what you want? Regardless?" Her sister stepped closer to her. "The guy's been through a lot this past year and as much as I love you, I don't want him hurt either. Kira, you have to mean it if you go after him."

Maybe she hadn't been before, but waking up this morning with Grant gone had clarified her feelings. She'd fallen in love with the sexy man. No way would she let a small thing like a scar keep them apart. Kira fought for what she wanted and what she wanted most was Grant. "Yes, yes, yes. Where is he?"

"Okay. How well can you follow directions?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Kira sighed and ran her fingers through Grant's mussed hair. They were on the porch of the cabin owned by the Brody brothers, on the big double swing. Grant lying with his head in her lap. She had made him open his shirt earlier and now she reached down and traced his scar with the tip of a finger.

"I can't believe you didn't think you could tell me about this. What kind of women did you hang around with, anyway?"

He laughed, a soft rumbling sound. "Apparently the wrong kind."

"That's why you've been so careful with sex, making sure you didn't overdo." She stroked his cheek. "Grant, what did your doctor tell you?"

He sighed. "Both my doctors told me I could resume normal sexual activities. But..."

"But you didn't believe them? You, what, thought you'd expire on top of me?"

"Something like that." He reached up for her hand and twined his fingers through hers. "It's a scary thing, Kira. Believe me."

"Oh, I do," she assured him. "But if Kasey and Skyler hadn't given me the scoop, you wouldn't have had to worry about another heart attack. After your disappearing act and that note I'd have killed you with the handiest instrument I could find."

He kissed her fingers. "I'm sorry. I'll apologize for the rest of my life, if it will help."

"Groveling is always good. So." She let out a slow breath. "What happens now?"

"I'd say that's pretty much up to you. For myself, I want a stable relationship with a future. With you. And I need to start looking around for something to do besides counting my money."

Kira laughed. "I think there are plenty of options open to you." Then she sobered. "Do you mean it? About us?"

He sat up, swung his legs down and pulled her against him. "More than I've ever meant anything in my life."

She smiled at him, even as tears trickled down her cheeks. "That's all I want, too, Grant."

He drew her head close to his. "Then I guess we've got a future to plan."

When he kissed her, she wondered if it was possible to be any happier than she was at that moment. Finally, she was going to get her happy ever after. Finally. With the man she least expected, but now couldn't imagine another day without.

Grant was everything she never knew she was looking for, but everything she needed.

As their lips parted Kira whispered, "Here's to a long, long future filled with surprises, love and lots of sex."

Grant pulled away to laugh, his bright eyes gleaming with happiness. "I love you, sugar, with every beat of my newly repaired heart."

"And I love you." She pressed a quick kiss to his delicious lips then tugged him up. "Now, it's my turn to play a little bondage."

Heat filled his blue eyes as they walked into the cabin. "Sugar, I thought you'd never ask."



## About the Authors

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

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

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

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

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

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

Desiree and Allie welcome comments from readers. You can find their websites and email addresses on their author bio pages at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

#### Tell Us What You Think

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

**Also by Desiree Holt & Allie Standifer**

Kidnapping the Groom

Turn up the Heat 1: Scorched

Turn up the Heat 2: Scalded

Turn up the Heat 3: Singed

Seductive Illusion

**Also by Allie Standifer**

Erotic Escapes 1: Tease Me in Tunisia

Erotic Escapes 2: Pleasure Me in Petra

Erotic Escapes 3: Snared in Siberia

Twenty-Four Hours

Also by Desiree Holt

Cougar Challenge: Hot to Trot

Cupid's Shaft

Dancing With Danger

Diamond Lady

Double Entry

Driven by Hunger

Eagle's Run

Ellora's Cavemen: Flavors of Ecstasy I *anthology*

Mistletoe Magic: Elven Magic *with Regina Carlisle & Cindy Spencer Pape*

Mistletoe Magic: Touch of Magic

Emerald Green

Escape the Night

Hot Moon Rising

Hot, Wicked and Wild

I Dare You

Journey to the Pearl

Just Say Yes

Letting Go

Line of Sight

Lust Unleashed

Night Heat

Once Burned

Once Upon a Wedding

Riding Out the Storm

Rodeo Heat

Switched

Teaching Molly

Trouble in Cowboy Boots

Until the Dawn *with Cerise DeLand*

Where Danger Hides



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