

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*

Emily Ryan-Davis

*All
He
Wants*

Merry Kinkmas

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A story in the Merry Kinkmas series.

Marine Captain Keith Moss is home for the holidays and all he wants for Christmas is his best friend's sister, Telly Johnson...and her belly. Her pregnancy is his new obsession.

When he discovers Telly's body is easier to coerce than her heart, Keith finds himself facing the hardest mission of his life – convincing her to say yes.

Because, despite his enjoyment of her hormonally boosted sex drive, Keith needs more than a casual lover. He's ready for a future and a family, and both involve claiming Telly – and the baby – as his own.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



www.ellorasave.com

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ISBN 9781419931611

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Edited by Mary Moran

Cover art by Darrell King

Electronic book publication November 2010

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ALL HE WANTS

Emily Ryan-Davis

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Chapter One

U.S. Marine Captain Keith Moss swung down the steps of the bus, not bothering to take them one at a time. A thick blanket of snow cushioned his landing. The white stuff fell faster than base personnel could remove it.

While men surged forward, Keith hung back to scan the laughing, crying sea of bodies for his family.

A young wife with an enormous stomach sobbed as she embraced her returning husband. Keith swallowed and looked away before his body had a chance to respond to another man's pregnant wife.

Someone clapped a hand on his shoulder. "Hey, Moss, isn't that your girl?"

Keith honed in on her almost immediately. Telly Johnson hovered at the edge of the front line, her slight frame swathed in a scarlet wool coat, black curls loose over her shoulders and distended belly. This time he wasn't able to control his response. Pregnant women had never done anything for him before *her*. Now, two months after she'd first started showing and given in to his wheedling for pictures, two months after he'd found a new favorite jerk-off fantasy, the mere glimpse of rounded tummy drew him to throbbing attention. Watching her, his entire body tightened.

He wanted to spread her out and crawl all over her, marking her with his sweat and semen, reclaiming her from the asshole who'd enjoyed a privilege Keith wanted for himself. He'd imagined doing it, smearing his seed over every inch of her before delving inside and filling her until her pussy overflowed with *him*, until her abdomen expanded with *his* child. Before he joined the Marines, she'd wanted him, not some prick who would fuck her and abdicate responsibility. She'd been too young and he'd been set on the service. Now they were both older, he had an established career, and it was time to reclaim her.

"She's not mine." Beneath his breath, he muttered, "But she will be."

Someone hailed the lieutenant, who broke away at a jog, kicking up puffs of snow as he ran. Keith followed at a slower pace. She wasn't looking at him. A pair of bouncing, squealing kids had her attention, the expression on her elfin face a cross between fear and longing. In her letters, she declared there was no reason why she shouldn't be able to take care of herself and a kid. In others, she confessed to abject terror at the prospect of being responsible for another life.

"Tel," he said. "What are you doing here?"

She lifted her head and smiled. "Hey. You're home."

"Yeah. Where's my welcome-back hug?"

Breaking away from the crowd, she wrapped her arms around his waist, stronger than he expected. Her high, round belly reached him first, lodging square against his groin. Want rocketed straight to the base of his spine. Keith cupped the back of her head and squeezed her more gently than she clutched at him.

"Fuck, Tel." All his prepared lines escaped him. He grasped a handful of her hair and held her face to his chest, overwhelmed by the weight of her in his arms, so different from the flimsy paper of pictures. "Damn, it's good to see you."

"Yeah," she said, her voice muffled by his chest. Her shoulders hitched on a laugh and she wiggled against his erection. "I guess it is. Maybe it's a good thing your parents asked me to fill in for retrieval duty. Wouldn't want to subject your dad to *this*."

Keith snorted. "He's not nearly as pretty as you."

"Pretty doesn't matter much after seven months in Mongolia." She loosened her hold and backed away. Blue eyes twinkled up at him, bright with amusement and framed by snow-dotted lashes.

"Monks have their charms." He reluctantly let her go despite a desire to kiss the snow off her cheeks. "You want to hang out here or take off?"

“Take off. Fireplace is ready to go at home and I’m starting to get cold under this layer of baby fat.” Grimacing, she pulled her coat closed across her abdomen.

Not “your house”, but *home*. Good. He blew out a breath. “Dunno how you can be cold. You look hot.”

“Um. Yeah.” She rolled her eyes.

“Don’t brush me off, Tel. I don’t say things I don’t mean.”

She tucked her chin close to her chest and stared at his buttons. Her playfulness vanished. “You shouldn’t say things at all. I’m not going to be the object of your hero complex.”

Before he could defend himself, she turned away and tried to squeeze through the crowd. Smothering his urge to pull her back and prove he wanted to be more than her hero, he watched her push at the crowd. Nobody paid her any attention, too wrapped up in the joy of reunion. With a curse, he took her hand and drew her behind him. People parted with less resistance when confronted with him instead of the little mother trailing on his heels.

“My car or yours?” he asked over his shoulder when they separated from the crowd.

“Yours. Hope you don’t mind.” Her tone turned wry. “I barely fit in mine right now and my tires are overdue for replacement.”

“I’ll take it in tomorrow.”

“No, you don’t have to. I’ll do it.”

“Yeah, and drive to the garage without treads? I said I’ll do it. You work tomorrow?” The thought of her risking ice storms on bald tires pissed him off.

“Your family will want to see you and I can take care of my own things.” She pulled at his hold.

Keith laced his fingers between hers, trapping her. “Your brother will kick my ass if you have an accident. Do you work tomorrow?”

She sighed. "I have a sunrise class, but the studio might cancel it for weather. I should know before six."

"Wake me up. I'll drive you."

Telly didn't reply. Keith beeped his SUV's alarm until he located the flashing headlights. Minutes later, he had the vehicle unlocked. Snow frosted the windows. He threw his pack in the backseat and held the door for her.

She reached inside and produced a windshield scraper. "I'll just—"

"You'll just get inside and crank up the heat." Keith claimed the scraper.

"But—"

"But I'm taller, my reach is longer and I'm not five months pregnant. You're not so big that I can't pick you up and put you on that seat."

She didn't duck her head this time. Anger flushed her cheeks. "You're not my brother or my father."

"Sweetheart, let's get something clear." He gripped the door and braced his hand on the roof, meeting her eyes. "I haven't thought a single brotherly thought about you since you ran me down on the football field and begged for my gym shirt to cover the blood stain from your first period. The only *fatherly* thoughts I have about you involve smacking your ass while you cry out something like 'Please, Daddy, harder.'"

Her lips parted but she pressed them together without responding and climbed inside. Keith touched the small of her back and kept an eye on her footing until her rear end connected with the seat. Closing her inside, he turned away to hide his grin. Stubborn brat.

Ignoring his persistent erection, he quickly cleared the windows. By the time he slid behind the wheel, the heater was working to melt new snow as it fell. Telly had removed her coat. A form-fitting v-neck sweater stretched over her stomach and clung to the flare of her hips. Her breasts were bigger than they'd been in the last picture. In the dim glow of the overhead light, he could see the pencil-eraser shape of her nipples

standing at attention beneath her sweater and bra. Keith tossed his cover on the backseat and gripped the wheel hard, deliberately blanking his mind. "You need to stop anywhere on the way?"

She stared at her hands. "I don't need anything. Do you?"

"Nothing I can get at a 7-Eleven," he muttered.

He backed out of the parking space and shifted gears, steady and sure in the snow. Ten minutes later, he merged with the beltway traffic.

"Um...want me to blow you to help you relieve some of that just-off-the-bus stress?" Her tone was light and playful again, an attempt to dispel tension.

Keith glanced at her, making note of the expression that didn't match the tone. Small teeth worried her bottom lip. While he certainly wouldn't object to her pretty mouth stretched around his cock, that wasn't the image of her he'd been carrying since he found out about her pregnancy. "Why don't you lift your sweater and let me see the baby?"

Telly turned her head and stared at him. "What?"

"You heard me." Keith focused on his mirrors and the convoy of salt trucks passing them on the left. His shoulders bunched as he shifted gears. Shadow and light from the passing vehicles did interesting things to the planes and hollows of his profile.

He was bigger than she remembered, muscles hardened and shaped by his recent stint overseas. Hugging him earlier, she'd wanted to rub herself against his six-pack abs like an attention-whore cat. She pressed her knees together. Her sex drive was out of control, muddling her head and screwing with her reactions to him. Telly inhaled and side-stepped his request. "Your parents send their love. They wanted to come out to meet you themselves, but it's been snowing for hours in Columbia. They said they'd call in the morning and they expect you to show up for Christmas Eve Mass if the roads are clear tomorrow afternoon."

“Morning’s soon enough. Have you heard anything from Trevor?”

She didn’t want to talk about Trevor. “Jamie’s pushing him to step up and take responsibility.”

“Your brother wants to make sure you don’t have to be alone.” Keith glanced at her. “Do you want to hear anything from him?”

“Not really.” She stretched her legs and studied her feet in the dark below the glove compartment. The shape of his erection seemed imprinted against her stomach. “I told you. Accident happened. Trevor wasn’t supposed to be my happy ever after.”

“Feelings change.”

“Not mine. Not about this.” She moistened her lips, too aware of his scent surrounding her, his strong frame just a few inches away. His fierce, clipped words in the parking lot and the way they contrasted with his controlled, even tone now. She didn’t want to talk about Trevor. His face wasn’t the right face. The right face... She studied Keith from the corner of her eye. Between layers of fabric and the dark of the SUV’s interior, she couldn’t see evidence of his physical want, but she knew he was still hard. After such a prolonged period of celibacy, his first instinct must have been for sex. She couldn’t take his earlier hardness personally.

Oh, she wished his arousal was *really* for her. Despite his denial of familial feelings, she knew the truth. Keith wanted to protect her. He always had.

“Like what you see?” His jaw tightened and flexed as he navigated the slippery road.

She gave up hiding her examination and faced him full-on. “I want you to believe me. The feelings didn’t exist in the first place. There’s no way for them to change. You’ve had casual partners without love being an issue. Jamie has too. Why can’t I have had the same?”

“Nobody’s said you can’t. I’m a modern guy. I’m fully willing to share no-strings sex with women.” His lips quirked and he looked away from the road long enough to wink at her. “Instead of keeping it all for myself. It’s better with love involved though.”

“There wasn’t any love involved,” she said firmly. Closing her eyes, she tipped her head against the back of the seat.

Keith turned on the radio, managing to find one station that wasn’t playing Christmas music, and didn’t say anything else. During the drive to Alexandria, Telly dozed and drifted on the edge of fantasy, a recurring guilty secret, reliving the night she conceived. Instead of Trevor’s lean frame, Keith’s sturdier body moved between her legs. “No” became “more”. *He* claimed her and marked her as his with his climax. As she stretched to accommodate his child, Keith’s hands framed her stomach and mapped the ways she changed.

Instead of the vulgar words Trevor had muttered when he came, she heard Keith’s rough, whispered, “Tel.”

He repeated her name, his touch a light caress beneath her navel. “We’re home. Put your arms around my neck and let me get you inside.”

Telly blinked at the dim glow of the SUV’s interior light, reluctant to leave the wish behind. Her sex throbbed, warm and wanting. She blew out a breath. “Did I fall asleep?”

“Yeah.” He disentangled her from the seat belt, his head bent so close she could almost touch his ear with her lips.

“Sorry. I spend half my time narcoleptic and the other half an insomniac. Don’t take it personally.” She should protest his intention to carry her, but he felt good and smelled better. She twined her arms around his neck as instructed and inhaled deeply, drawing in the scent of his skin. It would have been so easy to slip back into fantasy.

“You were dreaming,” he said.

“Was I?” How long could she keep playing neutral?

“Sure were. Sounded like something good.” He caught her beneath her knees and at the middle of her back. Physical power rippled in the solid tension of his chest, hard against her breast and ribs. Swinging her high, he closed the door with his elbow and

started for the house. Telly closed her eyes. Keith's lips grazed her ear. "You said my name."

Oh God. She hadn't talked in her sleep since college. What had she said? Flushing, she hid her face in the crook of his neck. "Probably because you were driving too fast."

"Pretty sure you were telling me not to stop." He jostled her slightly and worked his key in the lock. Inside, he closed the door with his foot. "You asked me to do something too."

Oh no. Mute, she squirmed in his grasp. Keith ignored her struggles and headed for the bedrooms at the back of the house.

"I've been sleeping in the small bedroom," she croaked.

"That futon can't be comfortable." He passed the small room and entered the master bedroom. His bedroom.

"Want to know what you asked for?" A firm mattress cushioned her back. Keith's dark form hovered above her, bent at the waist over the bed. His chest rested flush against her stomach, his forearms at either side of her head. Strong fingers tangled in her hair, pulled her head back and exposed the underside of her chin.

"I don't think I do," she muttered.

"Telly," he whispered, "I want to do it."

Oh. She swallowed, not certain her voice would hold. "Do what?"

His knee touched her hip and the mattress dipped under their combined weight as he caged her between his legs. "Make you come like you asked."

Her pulse jumped. She slid her hands beneath his uniform, bracketing his trim waist. Still more layers kept her from skin to skin, but his body heat warmed her cold palms. "Did I ask that?"

"Yes. I damn near drove off the road." He drew her bottom lip between his teeth.

She creased his flesh with her fingernails, trying to play it cool despite her sudden inability to draw a deep breath. Huskier than she meant to, she quipped, "I suppose this is my job as the welcome-home committee."

"You suppose." Keith growled against her throat. His fingers drew through her hair, pulling the curls straight in light punishment. "You suppose wrong. It'd be your job to make *me* come and that's not what I said I wanted."

"Umm-hmm. Okay, so how do you want to do it?" Not believing he actually did, but his voice had dropped to a rough pitch that rubbed along her spine like a hot stone massage. Maybe she was still asleep. She was definitely nervous, her pulse leaping as he tasted the hollow at the base of her throat. Keith. With her. She strove for even breathing but was pretty sure she failed.

He kissed her chin before straightening his arms and pushing up to loom over her. "I haven't had a good meal in months. I figured I'd start by finding out what you taste like."

"Oh." Oh God, he was serious. Reasons for saying no flitted in the back of her mind, but she couldn't latch on to them long enough to sort out what they were. She dug her nails into the muscle at the small of his back. Keith arched away from the tiny pain. His cock rode the lower slope of her abdomen and he stiffened with a curse.

"Sorry," she mumbled, heat rushing her cheeks. There, that was one of the reasons. "It's awkward."

Telly dropped her hands to the bed and tried to roll aside. Keith blocked her, his muscular thigh aligning with her waist. He released her hair and pinned her shoulder to the bed, forcing her back in place.

"You're not awkward. Pull up your sweater for me."

Her brain stuttered over the memory of an old photograph. Keith and her brother just back from their first deployment, both in swim trunks, bare and sun-gold at the beach, had flanked her fifteen-year-old bikini-clad body while they waited in line for

Fisher's popcorn. She didn't have that body anymore. Biting her lip, she twisted her fingers in the comforter. "I don't want to."

"Why? You did it for the pictures you sent me."

"I wasn't as big then," she protested.

"I know. That's why I want to see now." He nuzzled the bridge of her nose. His weight shifted, freeing up one hand to crest her ribs and coast over her abdomen. He stroked his thumb across the strip of sensitive skin bared between the hem of her sweater and the rolled-low waist of her yoga pants. "Come on, Telly. Show me."

"It's dark in here. You won't even be able to see anything."

"I can fix that." Keith stretched above her, pulled the lamp chain. A warm pool of light spilled over the bed. He straightened and sat back, trapping her thighs beneath his ass.

He still wore his cammies. Telly followed the line of buttons down the center of his torso. She swallowed, not sure what to do. Fantasies about Keith were one thing. She'd entertained them half her life. From innocent daydreams about cuddling in front of the television while they watched movies to pretending it was her he coerced beneath the bleachers before the homecoming game. Those daydreams weren't as innocent, but they didn't compare to the scorching movies she'd been enacting in her head since his discovery of her pregnancy and his insistence she house-sit for him instead of leasing an apartment.

"Your nipples are hard," he said, freeing the buttons of his blouse. "So hard and long they're poking at your sweater. I wish I knew what they looked like before."

Before her brain had a chance to filter the words, she said, "I have pictures."

Keith paused halfway down the row of buttons. "I want to see them."

Ack. Mistake. "They're...um. They're kind of reserved for lovers."

He resumed undressing, shrugged out of his blouse and tossed it aside. A tan fleece followed the blouse, leaving the last layer. His undershirt clung to visibly defined muscles. "So I'll ask again in a few hours."

"We're not... Keith." She struggled to her elbows and forced herself to meet his eyes instead of staring at his biceps. He returned her gaze, hazel glinting green in the lamplight, eyes narrowed and intent. "We're not lovers. I have...well, you know. Issues. And you have the Marines. And maybe you don't think of me like a sister, but I'm still not going to collapse in your arms and let you take care of me just because you think I can't take care of myself."

"One, you don't have issues. You have a baby. The Marines have nothing against babies. They *love* babies. And women who are having babies. Two...two doesn't matter right now."

Telly stared at him, trying to figure out how to reiterate the "not lovers" part. If she were honest with herself, she didn't want to point out the relationship deficiency a second time. She wanted him and always had. She wanted him even more now, watching him cross his arms, grasp the hem of his t-shirt and whip it over his head. Built didn't begin to cover it. Her mouth went dry. Those muscles would flex and tremble beneath her while she rode him. The only jewelry he wore was a pair of dog tags around his neck. The blond hair across his chest grew sparse and silky. In the lamplight, he practically glowed. Her sex throbbed, eager to receive his cock.

"Now," he said, hands braced on his thighs, "I'm showing you mine. Show me yours."

She opened her mouth to voice another objection but pressed her lips together when the words wouldn't come. Whether Keith wanted her because he hadn't had access to a woman in seven months or whether because he wanted *her* didn't matter right now. Familiar, watchful hazel eyes unwaveringly tracked her as she settled back and hooked her fingertips beneath the hem of her sweater.

“I feel like a stripper,” she confessed, bunching the hem to her navel. Keith’s focus wandered, trailing over her face, lingering briefly at her breasts, ultimately fixing on her hands. Red crept across his cheekbones. Trying not to think about the changes in her body, she distracted herself by studying his.

She’d enjoyed her share of no-strings sex and short-term relationships. Athletes had always drawn her, men who maintained strong bodies and spent time outdoors. None of them compared to Keith. He’d sculpted himself through hard work and intense training, career instead of recreation, self-sacrifice instead of sport. She hadn’t gained anything but baby weight, but she couldn’t help but wonder what he saw in her right then.

“This is the best private show I’ve ever had,” he said, as if sensing her straying uncertainty. His shoulders flexed and he bent over her. The tip of his tongue rimmed her bellybutton. Goose bumps spread across her stomach, tightening already stretched skin to tingling pleasure-pain.

Her fingers clenched in the ribbed knit of her sweater. “What are you doing?”

“I think it’s called worship.” He licked inside the sensitive dip. Strong hands framed her sides, firm and sure. She was no stranger to people touching her stomach, but other touches were tentative and brief, delivered with mindfulness of social boundaries. Keith seemed to have no concept of boundaries with her. Instead of a brief touch, he lingered. His thumbs found her hipbones and pressed into the hollows. He dug his fingertips into what remained of her waist and lifted her, gently arching her back while bringing her belly to his mouth.

“Pretty,” he murmured, old endearment instead of adjective. “Do you think the baby will kick for me?”

She melted at the reverence in his voice and abandoned her sweater hem beneath her breasts. His shorn hair tickled her palms, a silky, sensual rub that tingled to her nipples. Telly stroked his head and squeezed her thighs together, squirming between his knees.

“Keith,” she moaned, straining to rock her pelvis against his erection. “I haven’t had anything except a vibrator in months. *Please.*”

“Please? What can I do for you?” Wet, sucking kisses pulled taut skin.

Telly writhed. “Anything!”

A strained chuckle rumbled from his body to hers. Still clasping her sides, he stretched along her torso and covered her lips with his. The movement shifted his hips, lodged the shape of his cock against her mound. Telly whimpered into his mouth, delighting in the pressure centered over her clit. He was too far away though. She slipped her hands beneath his arms and spread her fingers across his back, trying to urge him closer. Instead of cooperating, he worked his forearm under her shoulders and crawled backward, lifting her as he left the bed.

He broke their kiss, breathing hard. “Come sit on the edge.”

Unquestioning, she scooted forward. Keith knelt on the floor and removed her sneakers and socks. Telly helped him with her pants, briefly self-conscious about her lack of recent grooming until he cursed low and muttered, “Christ, you’re wet. Spread your legs, Tel. I want a taste.”

Biting her lips, she inched up to the edge and planted her feet on either side of his thighs. Keith grasped her knees and pushed them wider. Her labia separated as he opened her. Telly clutched the comforter, entranced by the red flush of lust staining his throat. Without wasting another second, Keith closed in on her, his tongue strong and hot in its swipe from the rim of her vagina to the top of her slit. Telly jolted, an animal sound welled in her throat. He opened his mouth over her nub and sucked hard, the pleasure so intense her vision swam. Calloused fingers swirled in her cream, seeking entrance.

“Oh please,” she gasped, curling her toes in the carpet, straining to tip her pelvis forward.

Keith hummed assent, the vibration tickling after the harsh abrasion of his fledgling beard. He licked the crown of her nub and she jerked wildly. Two thick fingers slipped

inside, filling her, spreading to stretch her sheath. Telly squeezed his shoulders as a tremor rippled the length of her spine. Keith grunted. His free hand left her knee, vanished between their bodies. Beneath her palm, his shoulder jerked a rhythm she deciphered without needing to see. He curled his fingers inside her, searched out a deep spot and honed in with a dedicated focus that wrenched a shriek from her chest. Telly abandoned his shoulders and clasped his head, jamming his open mouth hard against her as she convulsed in release. Before she crested the hardest wave, he jolted in her hands and turned his face aside to gasp a harsh breath.

Telly didn't let go. She pressed her fingertips against his scalp, her hips still moving of their own accord, riding tremors of pleasure. Keith prolonged them by twisting his fingers inside her body and flicking the pad of his thumb across her clit until she moaned an objection. Even then, he withdrew slowly, a series of shallow thrust-and-retreat caresses that teased her to a second climax. Telly tried to bring her knees together to buy some relief, but he wouldn't allow her to shield herself.

He leaned in, his arms loose around her waist, his cheek tight against her stomach, fingertips toying with the ends of her hair. Too high for conversation, Telly lazily stroked his nape until his breathing calmed and the deep flutter of pleasure slowed to something occasional, a sweet reminder of bliss.

Chapter Two

“Mmm.” Keith kissed her breast through her sweater and raised his head. “Is there any meat in the house or have you turned the kitchen into a flower garden?”

Telly rolled her eyes. Secretly, she was relieved he followed that holy-damn experience with a light tone and a wink. She wasn’t sure she could handle tender without dissolving into tears. His hands and mouth had done a number on her head.

“I packed the freezer with as much bloody animal flesh as I could carry,” she replied, matching his no-drama tone.

“You’re a goddess.” He rose from his crouch and headed for the bathroom, groaning about stiff muscles, cold floors and untimed showers.

After the shower started, she released a long breath and righted her sweater. The pale skin of her abdomen glowed pink in places, marked by his late-night stubble. She hadn’t imagined ending her celibacy with Keith. Well, she’d imagined it, but didn’t plan on it actually happening. Fortunately, he was as familiar to her as old shoes and “no drama” really did mean no drama. Maybe they could even try a second time.

Humming beneath her breath, she dressed and padded out to the kitchen. By the time Keith emerged, his mother’s sausage-heavy lasagna should be well on the way to hot. While she waited, she sat and peeled the classified section from the paper. She’d intended to have something lined up by the time Keith came home, but December wasn’t a good month for apartment hunting.

“Smells like my mom’s kitchen,” he said from the doorway.

Telly hooked her thumb toward the oven and circled an “immediate move-in” ad. “It’ll be hot in another ten minutes.”

“Awesome. I’m starving. Are you looking for a new job?”

“No, work’s fine. I’m teaching prenatal and senior yoga and someone else is covering the hot classes through the rest of my term.” She circled another ad and looked up to find him glaring at the newspaper. “Is something wrong?”

“Those are rental ads.”

“I can’t afford to buy. You know that.” Uncomfortable discussing her financial status – another life thing she shouldn’t have screwed up – she folded the paper in half.

“I also know nobody said you had to leave when I got home,” he said, his tone tense.

Telly frowned at him, trying to focus on his face instead of the hard expanse of muscle visible above and below the pair of training shorts he wore. “I know you didn’t tell me I have to go. But what are you going to do with a pregnant roommate? Women are *not* going to put up with me when you bring them home.”

“Are hormones making you stupid?”

She blinked. “Excuse me?”

Keith grimaced and clasped his hands behind his neck. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it that way.”

“Sure,” she said, stung. Lowering her eyes, she claimed the arts and entertainment section of the paper and stood. “I’m going to get some sleep. You should listen for the oven timer.”

Throat tight, she hurried to reach the privacy of her room. Keith cursed loudly. Framed photographs on the wall between the kitchen and living room rattled under the force of a blow. The oven timer chirped as she stole into the small bedroom. Another curse exploded from the kitchen, followed by the bang of the oven door closing violently. Telly slumped against the inside of the bedroom door. Stupid. The worst thing about his question was its accuracy. Her head responded so slowly, failing to make connections she knew she should be able to grasp. Damn it. Tears pricked behind her eyes.

Footsteps down the hall. He stopped on the other side of the door. "Tel, I'm sorry. You're not stupid. I'm just— Fuck. I'm not bringing other women home. How the hell can you even think I would now?"

The panel groaned. She imagined him leaning against it, his shoulder wedged against the wood, and swallowed. What did that mean, "now"?

He sighed when she didn't respond. "Telly. I don't want you to leave. Do you want to?"

Um. Good question. She blinked at the dark. "I have to be practical. I can't live out of suitcases and laundry baskets. I'm going to have a kid."

The floorboard outside the door creaked. He didn't say anything. Telly blew out a breath and tossed her newspaper toward the chair wedged into the corner of the room. Had he gone?

No. "Stay until after Christmas. You won't be able to find anything before the first of the year anyway."

She closed her eyes. "If you want to bring someone home—"

Low and deliberate, he said, "There's no one else I want."

The short statement pulled the rug out from under her heart. Telly's stomach flipped. She shook her head hard and straightened away from the door. He couldn't mean that with the inference she applied.

Keith gently tapped on the door. "Will you come out?"

"I'm getting sleepy. Nobody's called to cancel the early classes tomorrow." She turned and pulled the door open anyway and almost wished she hadn't. Keith stood with his arms raised, gripping both sides of the door jamb. Eye level and up close with his bare chest, she struggled to drag air into her lungs. "Um. So I was going to go to bed. You don't have to be quiet. I'll sleep through whatever."

"Sleep in the other room. My bed's better."

"The futon won't fit you. I'm fine in here."

He released the door jamb and touched her cheek, his fingertip tracing her jaw. "I wasn't volunteering to let you have my bed to yourself."

A low whisper from her mostly defective sense of self-preservation suggested she should back away from the heat in his eyes. Telly moistened her lips. He touched the bottom curve and nudged, encouraging her to open her mouth and ignore the internal warning.

"I don't think this is a good idea," she said.

"Tell me what's bad about it."

"Too many things to list. I'm a big girl and I'm not going to let you take care of my tires. Or me. My emotions are totally screwed up by hormones. And yeah, they are making me stupid. I'm forgetting things. I'm not putting two and two together fast enough. I'm scared and horny and can't decide whether I like the way I look or hate it, whether I want this whole experience to be over or want it not to end. I'm just..." She waved her hand in the air. "You and I, we don't have a relationship. Not this kind of relationship. We shouldn't do that again."

"I'm not convinced." Keith caught her fingers and flattened her palm against his chest. "Hormones aren't doing anything to my head. I'm thinking very clearly and I don't see anything bad. Look, just sleep with me if that's all you want to do."

His heart thudded beneath her hand. She rubbed her thumb across his nipple, which immediately stood at attention. "The problem with that is it's really not all I want to do."

"Thank God," he muttered. "What else?"

"This to start." Indulging impulses, she inched forward until her belly wouldn't let her any closer and licked the flesh she'd coaxed to hardness.

"I love when you do that," he rasped.

"This?" She lingered, biting gently and focusing her lick on the very tip of his nipple.

“No.” He coasted his free hand down her back and spread his fingers at the base of her spine, applying enough pressure to bring her an impossible fraction of an inch closer. “This. Your belly against me. Except you keep wearing clothes and I’m starting to hate your damn sweater.”

“I’m starting to think you have some kind of pregnancy fetish,” she teased. “I’ve read about guys like you on the internet, all begging preggosunshinemama421 for photos and IM chats.”

Instead of laughing, he said, “Telly, you have no fucking idea. As much time as I spent holed up with your pictures, it’s a damn wonder they weren’t confiscated as porn.”

Okay, that was news. She tipped her head back and met his eyes, perplexed, expecting a teasing smile. Instead, his mouth turned down at the corners and his brows drew together. Completely serious. She blinked. “Really?”

“Hell yes, really.”

Oh thank God. She breathed a relieved sigh. She’d misunderstood his attitude toward her. If Keith only wanted someone to break his celibacy with, everything would still be fine. Besides, it might be nice to have access to a hard, interested man for the remainder of her pregnancy—or however long his fetish took to run its course. Still, those pictures... She studied him curiously. “They weren’t even naked pictures. Not really.”

“I know,” he growled. “Now I’m trying to get you naked and you keep shying away. I want to look at you. Are your breasts sore?”

“I...yes, but not too bad, not anymore.” But they were full and heavy, chaffing at the constraints of her bra, as if they’d swelled to the next size up for his enjoyment. Smiling impishly, she asked, “You want to see them?”

“See them, touch them, suck on them as hard as you’ll let me.” He drew her sweater up to her shoulder blades and felt for the hooks of her bra. “I want to see the other pictures you have of your tits before you got pregnant.”

“They’re on my laptop.” Again with her quick tongue, slow brain. As soon as the words were out, she flushed. She thought about retracting the confession somehow, but realized as his cock grew longer and harder between them, that she enjoyed his interest. Maybe she should create a preggosunshinemama421 username of her own. Cautiously, she asked, “Want to see?”

“I already told you I did. Lift your arms.”

Telly reluctantly broke contact and raised her arms. He stripped her quickly, efficiently, pulling her hair by accident when strands snagged on the hooks of her bra. Keith tossed the bundle of cloth into the room behind her and palmed her breasts, lifting the weight in his hands as her nipples began to tighten and elongate.

“Jesus,” he breathed, rolling the peaks between his thumb and forefinger. “Hard already.”

“Almost all the time. It’s embarrassing.” She gripped his biceps. “They’re really sensitive.”

“Does this hurt?” He squeezed, slow and firm.

“No,” she gasped.

“This?” Harder pressure.

Telly dug her fingernails into his skin. “No.”

He tugged, rasping his fingertips over the peaks from base to tip. She breathed a strangled sound and bit her lip as pleasure-pain snaked from her breasts to her sex.

Keith eased the pressure instantly. “Tell me.”

“Hurts, but not... Gah. Do it again.” She rose on tiptoe, rubbing her belly along his thick length, squirming to align their thighs.

“Again, huh?” He shifted his hold and squeezed her breasts together. “Let me fuck them.”

She blinked. “What?”

“You heard me.”

She inhaled and lowered her gaze. Creamy flesh filled his hands, tight and full, areolas dark, nipples long. Her body’s blatant, unrepentant preparation for giving birth drove him crazy with wanting to claim her. She would only get bigger from this point. Keith inhaled and tried to tamp down some savage urge to latch on to her nipple and suck until he prematurely forced her milk. She wasn’t ready for that physiologically or emotionally.

Emotionally...hell. He hadn’t even considered she would resist him. He’d always been half in love with her but kept away because of their age differences, his career plans, his father’s vow to beat the shit out of him if he ever did more than carry Telly’s backpack. He was well on his way to an early retirement, and even his dad couldn’t deny that Telly wasn’t a kid anymore. The increasingly more vulnerable letters she’d written during his deployment had shoved the scale over from half-in-love to full-on-need.

“I’m not big enough,” she said.

“Maybe not before, but I promise you are now.” Still pressing her breasts together, he shifted his grip until he could nudge his thumbs into the valley. His cock twitched, eager to slide between her warm curves.

Telly stared as if fascinated by the depth of her cleavage and the dark skin of his hands contrasted with her translucent complexion. She wanted him as much as he wanted her. If seducing her physically was his gate to seducing her emotionally, well, he wasn’t opposed to using that door.

“I have massage oil,” she said. “Will it work for lube?”

His breathing grew ragged, his hold on her breasts maybe a little too tight. Keith deliberately relaxed his hands. “It’ll work. And your laptop. I want to see how you’ve changed. I wish I’d been here to watch you the whole way.”

“My nipples are bigger,” she offered. “Darker.”

“I want to see.”

"All right." She backed away, farther into the bedroom. Light from the hall provided some illumination. She touched a key on her laptop and the screensaver blinked, shedding more light.

Keith stepped inside. "This room smells like you."

"I should change the sheets."

She folded one arm across her breasts and accessed her photo folder with her free hand. Keith sat on the futon behind her. He hooked his fingers in the waist of her pants and tugged, baring her ass. From behind, the only indication of her condition was the extra cushion of flesh at her hips. She'd always been coltish and thin, barely anything to her body if she wore anything more than a bikini. He'd had daydreams about peeling her halter from her wet skin and rubbing her small breasts raw with his stubble. Now he had daydreams about standing between her splayed legs and watching the baby crown. Both scenarios made him stiff and hard.

Needing to touch her, he shoved her pants to her ankles and reached between her thighs. Thick, milky wetness sucked his fingers between her folds. He rubbed the slippery fluid back into her flesh, using it as lubrication for an intimate, thorough massage.

"Please," she whispered, tilting her hips toward him.

"Please what? You want my fingers again? Fucking you deep, finding more of this cream?" He tickled her entrance. The slick muscle spasmed. Keith kissed her left cheek and inhaled, pulling hard on her scent. "Are you wet like this even when you're not turned-on, Telly?"

She started to turn toward him. Keith stopped her by inserting his index finger and extending his middle finger to pet her clit. She gasped, her spine bowing, and said, "Please...*something*. More than the last time."

"You want it more than last time or you want more of them?" He pushed a second finger inside and rotated his wrist, searching for her G-spot. Telly wailed and

contracted hard, a vise around his fingers. Her hips moved on their own, rocking and seeking friction.

Keith braced her with his free hand. "Tell me. This satisfy what you want? I had two in you earlier. You want three instead? Or maybe you want four. Maybe you *need* four. You're too tight to push out a baby. Should I work on stretching you, Telly?"

He scissored his fingers, demonstrating exactly how good stretching would feel. Her knees wobbled. Keith steadied her and drew her back, his fingers slipping from her body and rising to guide her hips. "Come sit on me, pretty. Put your pictures on slideshow. We'll watch together and find out what we can do about your tight little pussy."

Slouching against a pile of pillows, he insinuated his legs between her knees and pulled her down to sit high on his stomach, above the waist of his shorts. Telly squeaked in surprise and grabbed his thighs for balance. Her hand grazed his cock and he hissed a low curse. "Touch me, Tel."

Too gently, she peeled back his shorts. Not gently enough, she let the elastic snap against his sac. Keith bit back a curse and squeezed her hips.

"You're huge," Telly said. "Good Lord. Where do you keep this when you're not using it?"

"Shut up and stroke it." He swatted her thigh playfully but meant every word. If she didn't touch him —

Soft, small hands wrapped around his cock, derailing his scramble for punishments. He groaned. "Shit. Maybe you shouldn't do that."

"Too late now. I want to lick you." She started moving, stronger and more flexible than any half-term woman ought to be.

"Damn it, Telly. Let me help you." But she'd already repositioned herself, kneeling astride his chest, her ass in his face and her mouth... "Fuck."

The warm wetness of her mouth enveloped his head. Keith glanced up, shocked to see her lips stretched wide over his cock, up close and a little jerky on her laptop monitor.

“Webcam?” He choked, disbelieving. Telly hummed affirmative and opened her eyes for the camera. Keith squirmed, grateful for the elastic across the base of his balls. “Tell me it’s not broadcasting.”

Her tongue lingered, licking as she freed her mouth to say, “It’s not. It’s not recording either. I might be stupid right now, but I wouldn’t do that to you.”

She wouldn’t. He knew that but had to ask, protective of his plans for the future. Their future. Reassured, he raised his hips, bumping her bottom lip with his cock. A smile tilted her eyes and she swallowed him again.

She gave amazing head, her tongue busy and always wet, her eyes locked on the webcam and looking back at him as if they were locked on his eyes. The tip of her tongue swiped across his head and probed at the slit as if she wanted to be inside him as badly as he wanted to be inside her. He clutched her thighs, fascinated by the deepening color of her mouth, the wet-to-dry rasp of her tongue as she licked a long line from cap to root. She closed her mouth and retraced the damp path with chaste little kisses. What the hell had he been thinking, rejecting her half-serious offer in the car?

Supporting her weight with one hand, she gathered her hair and pulled it over one shoulder, baring her breasts. Heavy and pale, they framed his erection and swayed gently when she moved.

“I still want these wrapped around me,” he said. Releasing her thighs, he angled his shoulders until he could trace the line of her ribs and cup her breasts. “Lean forward a little.”

“You won’t let me fall,” she said.

“No, pretty. I won’t.”

Carefully, she planted her palms on his knees and stretched out over his thighs. Eyes glued to the laptop monitor, he spread her breasts and wrapped the swelling globes around his shaft. She held still while he manipulated her curves, pinching her nipples between his fingers, rubbing his length all over with her pale skin. If she were any taller, he wouldn't have been able to hold her like this. His shoulders burned with his over-extended reach. Worth every twinge of discomfort. The head of his cock peeped between her breasts, emerging from the valley and vanishing again. Months from now, he'd be able to do this with the aid of her milk, dripping from her nipples and wetting his cock. Her skin would be slick, slippery, her breasts even more full.

"Keith," she whispered.

He tore his gaze from the laptop screen. In front of his face, her pussy dripped cream. Dipping his chin, he licked one slow-trailing line of wetness, his tongue tracing a line up her inner thigh, flicking into the pouting dip of her entrance. She whimpered, her thighs tensing as she shoved back for more.

"I need more hands," he muttered before spearing deep, his tongue digging into her sheath. A startled, strangled gasp underscored her surprise. She reared up, breaking free of his hold on her breasts, and swallowed his cock into the back of her throat. Keith swore and clutched her ass. His hips rose up on their own, shoving harder, deeper past her lips. Motion drew him back to the camera output and the sight of his flesh vanishing into her mouth ruined him. With a hoarse groan, he palmed the back of her head and pushed her down while he bucked up. Heat exploded at the base of his spine, barreled through his shaft, and he came in muscle-wrenching bursts. Telly moaned but didn't struggle. Her fingernails dug into his thighs and her mouth worked around him, sucking and swallowing while he pulsed in the slick warmth.

He broke before she did, shuddering as her tongue crossed a point of pleasure and into something too sharp, too good to bear. Twisting his fingers in her hair, he drew her head back. "Let go, Tel."

She resisted his pull but, bigger and stronger, he won. Keith drew her to recline against him, chest to shoulder. Her thighs splayed to either side of his. The slightly blurry webcam image picked up on his knees, his softening cock, her wet and spread pussy. Banding his forearm beneath her breasts, he delved into the slick heat.

Telly jolted. She tried to twist in his arms. He pinned her to his chest. The slope of her stomach hid his fingers from view, but the webcam showed everything as he parted her inner lips and sank three fingers to the third knuckle.

“Oh God,” she breathed, scraping her nails down his forearm. Heels braced on the edge of the futon, she lifted her ass and lowered, riding his fingers. Keith caught her clit beneath the pad of his thumb. Her breath caught—half yelp and half moan. She twisted her hips and arched again, fucking herself on his fingers.

“Telly,” he whispered, kissing the side of her neck. “This is the hottest thing I’ve ever seen. Come for me.”

“Touch me,” she pleaded. “Don’t let go.”

“I won’t. Come on, pretty.” At his urging, she surrendered. Slick, strong muscle contracted around his fingers. She shoved her head back against his shoulder, lips parted on a silent gasp. Short seconds later, she collapsed, limp in his hold. Aftershocks raced through her limbs, fluttered beneath the heel of his palm as he gently massaged her clit and drew another cry from her lips.

Keith eased her onto her side and stretched behind her, kissing her nape and breathing her sated scent. “I want to hold you.”

She squirmed in his hold. “I need to pee. Very frequently and right now very badly.”

He heaved an exaggerate sigh and released her, rolling onto his back.

Telly eyed him from her spot between his body and the wall. “Are you going to make me climb over you?”

He grinned. “I’m kind of hoping you’ll accidentally fall on my dick.”

“No, I’m saving that for ‘on purpose’.” She rose to her hands and knees and carefully crawled over him, her belly resting on his stomach when she paused on all fours. Her hair tumbled around her shoulders to hide her breasts and tickle his chest. Telly canted her head and met his eyes in the dim light. “I’m glad you’re home.”

“So am I.” He lifted his shoulders and claimed her mouth, hard and direct. Telly met his tongue and sucked lightly before she drew away.

“I’ll be back in a minute,” she promised.

He steadied her as she finished climbing over him and watched her walk from the room, bare ass a pale cushion below her long, tousled hair. Once she was out of sight, he crossed his hands beneath his head and sighed at the ceiling. Somehow he had to convince her to stay.

Chapter Three

Telly splashed water on her face and ran a toothbrush over her teeth before leaving the bathroom. She'd wrapped Keith's damp towel around her bare frame, suddenly awkward with her nakedness under the bathroom's bulbs. As she passed the door to his bedroom on the way to hers, his voice stopped her.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Telly paused, glancing over her shoulder to find him seated on the edge of his big bed. He'd righted his dog tags between her room and his. The pair of tin rectangles rested between his nipples, their markings indistinct from the hall. She turned slowly to face him. "I was going back to you but you've moved. I suppose now I'm going to find some pajamas."

"The futon frame digs into my back. I'm heavier than you are. Come in here instead. Wear one of my shirts."

"All right." Self-conscious, she crossed the room to rifle through his bureau. The contents consisted of olive Marine Corps t-shirts, Washington Redskins sweatshirts and the occasional pair of threadbare jeans. Aware of him watching her, she chose one of the more well-worn green undershirts and pulled it over her head before letting the towel drop. The sleeves reached her elbows and the hem skimmed her thighs. She turned back to the bed to find Keith propped against a pile of pillows, his cock in hand.

"You're fucking hot," he said. His thumb swept over his cock head.

Her sex softened instantly and new wetness rushed her channel. Telly swallowed. What she was going to ask for could change so many things. A little oral might not ruin a friendship, but anything else might. She looked up from his stroking fingers and met his eyes, which regarded her steadily. "Keith?"

“Yeah?” He raised one knee. The movement distracted her from his eyes and tricked her gaze lower in time for her to see his fingers spread over his testicles.

“Will you...” She stopped and dragged her eyes back to his.

He raised an eyebrow. “Will I what?”

Telly licked her lips and tried again, forcing her throat to work. “I want you behind me.”

His nostrils flared. “Come here.”

She ventured closer, fingering the hem of her borrowed t-shirt. When she reached the side of the bed, Keith clasped her wrist in his free hand and drew her up beside him.

“Kneel here and hold on to the headboard.” He rose to his knees beside her. Telly grasped the edges of the headboard. Wetness made the insides of her legs sticky. She rubbed her thighs together, smearing her cream.

Keith raised the hem of her shirt and settled it at the small of her back, baring her ass. He kissed the back of her neck through her hair. “I don’t want a condom.”

“You’ll come inside me without one?” She flexed her hands on the wood. The prospect didn’t make her nervous. She’d known him all her life.

He spread his hands over her belly and drew her backward, the hot, smooth tip of his cock testing her crease. Telly bit her lip but couldn’t contain her whimper. She wanted him so much. Wished she’d had him sooner. “Keith?”

He nuzzled the hollow behind her ear. “If you’ll let me.”

“Why do you want to?”

He didn’t answer at first, instead raising his hands up to skim her ribs, drawing the shirt along. Calloused fingers found her nipples and squeezed gently. Telly’s head fell back to loll on his shoulder as sensation spiked from the tips of her breasts to her clit. She rocked her hips, wanting him between her legs, deep inside.

“Keith,” she whispered.

One strong arm banded beneath her breasts. He kissed the side of her neck. "I want to come inside you and pretend I've done it before. Let me."

Her sex clenched at his admission. How could his desires so closely mirror hers? "I think I might cry if you don't."

"No crying, Tel." He grabbed two pillows and stacked them between her torso and the headboard. "Push your ass back."

Cheeks hot, she did as he instructed. Strong hands grasped her hips. He rocked behind her, riding her slit, back and forth through the cream coating her inner lips. Her flesh was sore, swollen from the abrasion of his beard growth and the stretch of his fingers. His thick head dragged across her clit and soon she shuddered with every shallow swipe, her pussy clenching hard on nothing at all.

"Keith," she groaned. "Come on."

"Come on what?"

"Come on and fuck me!"

"Such a dirty mouth," he murmured. The head of his cock paused at her entrance, notched inside. Telly whimpered. Slowly he plunged past the rim, his biceps bulging on either side of her as he braced himself against the headboard too. His hard stomach sealed flush to the softer rounds of her ass cheeks. He thrust shallowly, his balls swinging forward to tap her clit.

Telly jolted. "More please. Harder."

"That's not what you're supposed to say if you want me to give you something harder." He withdrew until only his head remained inside.

Confused, brain muddled by desire, she stared at the wall behind the bed. Bare as it was, the plaster offered no insight into his meaning. Keith held still behind her, his lips warm on the arch of her ear. "Please, Daddy," he prompted with a nip.

Her breath caught on the reminder of his earlier denial and clarification. Fantasy momentarily distracted her, but his tickling tongue brought her back to the very frustrating present. She finally said, "Don't play games with me. Not right now."

"You are tight and wet and hot. Coming in my hand and your mouth...I thought the edge would be gone, but it isn't. If I don't play games, I'm going to hurt you."

"If you hurt me, I'll say so and you'll stop." Height and position put her at a disadvantage but she moved anyway, tipping her tail bone toward the ceiling, trying to force him deeper.

"Jesus," he muttered. His hands dropped to her hips. "Fuck. All right. Just hold still for me."

As if she could move. His fingerprints would remain in the morning, little purple bruises on her skin. Sensing the force rising to claim her, she drew every muscle tight and rooted herself in her center of gravity. And just in time. With a low growl, Keith drove deep. Deeper than his fingers, his cock rode over her G-spot, retreated, advanced again. Tingling darts of pleasure speared her thighs. Wet, sucking sounds and his rasping breath coaxed her into unleashing the pleasure that had been building in the back of her throat. High and wild, her moans powered his hips.

The stack of pillows cushioned her breasts and belly when her thighs gave out and buckled. Keith grunted behind her, thrusts becoming jerky and erratic. He was going to come. Inside her. She deliberately squeezed and bore down, tightening her pussy around his shaft. This was what she wanted, the intimacy of his release.

"Telly," he groaned, releasing her hips and spreading his fingers over her abdomen.

She opened her mouth to urge his climax, but a surprised gasp rushed her lips instead. Beneath his hands, the baby kicked.

Keith froze, his cock throbbing inside her. "Was that the baby?"

"Just saying hello," she gasped, awestruck by the dual movements in her body.

Keith's hands roamed her stomach until the baby kicked again. When it did, his hips jerked once before strong pulses of liquid heat pumped against her cervix. While he twitched inside and lovingly stroked her stomach, she released the headboard and slid a fingertip across her clit. The brief, sweet orgasm caught his cock in a rippling squeeze and Keith gasped her name a second time as she came.

Long after she stopped trembling, he continued to kneel behind her, pressing warm kisses to her neck and rubbing her belly and breasts beneath his t-shirt.

She shifted her weight reluctantly. He sighed and raised his head, allowing space between his chest and her back.

"I think you broke me." He groaned to underscore the claim.

Telly repositioned to recline against the pillows. Feeling impish and a little naughty, she said, "I've been working out. Kegels four times a day."

His hoarse laughter melted something inside. Leaving him with a kiss, she left the bed to prove the truth of her constant need to pee.

"All worn out?" he asked when she returned.

"Are you?" She tucked her hips against his groin and squirmed until his cock cozied up to the crease between her cheeks. He began to harden again.

"Doesn't matter what I am." Keith propped his head on his fist and reached between their bodies, adjusting himself so he wasn't poking her ass.

"I'm tired but I'm not finished yet." Her toes skimmed his shin, up and down. "And I bet you aren't either."

"You'd bet wrong. Leave me be, woman."

Despite her denial of tiredness, she let him peel the t-shirt over her head and fell asleep after a few quiet minutes. Her sleep was fitful and restless. After an hour of trying to share the bed with her, Keith extricated himself from her clinging hair and poking elbows. Exhaustion pulled at him as reality settled into his bones. He was home.

Everyone he would encounter would speak English and nobody would regard him as a trespasser. Mongolia hadn't been bad, but the landscape wasn't right, the food wasn't right, the smell of his quarters wasn't right. Tomorrow morning—a few hours away now—he'd wake up disoriented and freaked out. Three maybe four days from now he'd be reacquainted with the shape of his pillow and the sound of his alarm clock. He should start the process and go to sleep, but he didn't want to close his eyes and let her out of his sight.

He sprawled in the old armchair in the corner and watched her toss and turn. Sheets and blankets tangled around her pale limbs. She favored her left side and fussed with the corner of the sheet, trying to cover her breasts. No matter how she pulled the fabric, one hard nipple peeked out from beneath the cotton. She'd smell like him now, but not enough. Not where he needed to mark her, to blur the lines of another man's trespass. The drive to stake claim clawed at the base of his sternum, insistent and consuming.

He tilted his head back and stared at the ceiling, listening to mumbled words, wondering what she dreamed about. Trevor's name in her anxious, slurring voice set his teeth on edge. Keith wasn't a jealous man and he wasn't delusional either. She'd had other relationships. He had too, some less casual than others. He didn't think she was lying about her interest in Trevor. Telly didn't hide her feelings and she didn't back away from going after what she wanted. He'd once experienced her fearlessness firsthand. Presented with her small ass on his lap and her whispered request for a kiss for her seventeenth birthday, he'd drawn on every scrap of willpower, fear of his father and loyalty toward her brother he'd possessed in order to find the strength to turn her down.

The fact she carried another man's child only bothered him in the sense that she resisted his efforts to lay claim now. He wanted to make her and the baby his. What did it mean that she shied away from him, only giving in at his coaxing? His fingers dug

into the battered upholstery. He couldn't have missed his chance. The bundle of letters in his pack weren't written by a woman who didn't want him around.

In her sleep, Telly rolled onto her back. She kicked free of the sheet and drew her knees up, pressed her thighs together. One flailing hand struck the nightstand on her side of the bed. Keith jerked upright. Her gasped "No!" propelled him from the chair. He crouched beside the bed and covered her balled fist. Telly immediately grasped his wrist. He expected her to calm, but instead, she clutched him harder and pulled his hand between her breasts. She rolled back to her side, shoulders hunched, knees pulling in toward her abdomen.

The dream must have changed. Her short nails dug into his wrist and she held tight, muttering, "Eat," over and over again.

Keith brushed damp hair from her face. Upset drew her eyebrows together and pinched her mouth even in sleep. Whatever she was dreaming couldn't be better for her than no sleep at all. Hoping to rouse her gently, he kissed her shoulder. "Tel, wake up."

She loosened her hold on his wrist. Keith brushed his lips against hers and straightened the sheet, draping it over her hip, pulling it high to cover her belly. She sighed, finally calmer, but still whispered the plea to "Eat". She dislodged the sheet. Her fingertips skimmed his shoulder, the back of his neck. He bowed his head to duck away but she once more surprised him with her strength as she spread her fingers at the base of his skull and yanked his face down to her chest.

Off balance, he dropped to one knee. Telly mumbled something unintelligible and shoved his head aside but didn't loosen her hold. Her nipple prodded the corner of his mouth and, hell. He tried to force himself away. Caught in wild dreams, she wasn't aware of what she offered, of how badly he wanted. He knew she wasn't aware. Knew it down to his marrow. Something even deeper drove him past the knowledge and he opened his mouth, drew her nipple inside. Froze, startled by the sweet, creamy slide of liquid on his tongue.

Her sigh warmed his temple. She relaxed instantly, a nonsense sound of approval humming in her throat. Wary of hurting her, so eager to tongue the tight peak against the roof of his mouth and suck, he forced himself to keep his jaw loose. The rest of his body...the rest coiled tight as a tripwire, so taut he was vaguely surprised not to hear his bones vibrating. This was too soon – she couldn't have begun lactating.

Telly's breathing slowed and evened, a steady in, out. She cuddled him closer, firmly holding him to her breast. Forcing himself to exhale, he licked the underside of her nipple. Her flavor lingered but she didn't release a second sip. One had been enough. Exultation heated his blood. She might shy away in wakefulness, but her body wanted his claim.

The deeper she slept, the stronger his craving for touch. The warm perfume of her skin, lightly spiced with the saltier scent of his sweat, drugged him. Only a short time earlier, she'd cradled his cock where she now cradled his hand. He swept the pad of his thumb beneath her breast, relishing her warmth. Telly's hand fell away from his neck. She squirmed her fingers beneath her pillow and a hiccup jerked her small frame. Reluctantly, he released her nipple and raised his head. Her brow furrowed and breathing stuttered. Her body jerked a second time and she pulled on the sheet, free hand coasting over her belly. Low, just above her pelvic bone, the round swell rippled.

"Jesus," he breathed, rocking back on his heels. Light in the room was scarce – a glow from the hall – but her stomach gleamed pale above her dark triangle of hair.

"You can touch if you want," she murmured.

Heat suffused his face. Keith looked to find her eyes half-open, heavy and still blinking as she resisted the pull of sleep. "You caught me staring."

Her lips quirked. "It's not the first time."

"People stare at you often?"

"No, but I've caught *you* staring before. I think you've always been obsessed with my bellybutton." She stretched carefully, straightening her legs and pointing her toes, hiding her yawn in the pillow.

Keith propped his forearms on the edge of the bed and watched her. The sheet slid away again. He wasn't inclined to block his view by covering her and she didn't reach for the blankets when she opened her eyes. She did touch her breasts, repositioning that would've been subtle if he weren't on eye level but was obvious given his nearness.

"Are you uncomfortable?"

"Yes, but there's not much to be done about it until the kicking stops and hormones relax a little."

He grimaced. "No sleep for another four months?"

Telly laughed. "Maybe just another couple of hours. The middle of the night is the worst. I'm not sure whether the baby kicks because I'm waking up or whether I'm waking up because the baby kicks."

"Maybe it's hungry." He gently fingered the nipple he'd licked. "You already have milk."

Silence greeted his comment, followed a few breaths later by her cautious, "Sorry if I got messy on you."

Curling his index finger around the taut stem, he asked, "Did I sound like I was complaining?"

"You sounded...neutral."

"Really? It's totally fake. I'm feeling anything except neutral right now. And you do not apologize for creating life."

She fussed with her pillow, half hiding her face. "What are you going to do if I apologize again?"

"Something very disciplinary." He wagged his eyebrows. "Involving my rod."

She laughed and swatted at his shoulder. "You're all talk."

"Yeah? Go ahead, Telly. Test me."

“All right. I’m sorry I crowded you off the bed. Don’t,” she said when he opened his mouth to protest, “tell me I didn’t. I know I’m a bed hog and you’re not kneeling on the floor because you like it there.”

“I think that qualifies as inappropriate apology. Now you’re in trouble.”

Telly bit her lip, a sly tilt to her eyes. She studied him and he watched her, waiting for cues and signs. He didn’t expect her mischievous, “Is this where I get to say, ‘Daddy, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to do it?’”

Half-hard before, his cock thickened and filled. Keith narrowed his eyes and rose to a crouch. “You’re trying to distract me, but it’s not going to work. Besides, I don’t believe you. You meant every word.”

“What are you going to do?” She rose to sit cross-legged facing him and tucked the sheet beneath her arms.

“Something I’ve been wanting to do since September.” The sheet didn’t cover her knees. Keith cupped both in his hands, slid his palms around her calves and pulled until she unfolded her legs. He arranged her feet side by side, slim ankles aligned, knees together. Telly leaned back and bent her elbows to the bed. She watched him but didn’t say anything about his manipulations. Even breathing told him she remained calm. Good. He wanted to mark her, not scare her. Standing, he admired the picture she presented, tousled hair an inky shadow over her pale shoulders, his—*his*—bed sheet clinging to her breasts and belly. Love for her tightened his chest.

“Are you going to look me into obedience?” She tilted her head, meeting his eyes.

“No. I’m going to rub my dick all over you and come on your belly. Any problems with that?”

Her lips parted, the catch of her breath loud in the quiet room. Keith waited for her response, heart pounding, praying for assent. She studied his eyes a second longer before her gaze wandered, lowering to skim his chest and settle on the thick proof of his intentions.

Slowly, she shook her head. “No problems.”

The husky note in her voice wrapped around his balls. Keith exhaled. "You said you have massage oil. Where is it?"

"Yellow gym bag under the futon."

Anticipation worked him as thoroughly as her mouth had earlier. By the time he crossed the hall to the smaller bedroom, pre-cum glistened on the tip of his cock. He grabbed the gym bag and returned to her, tossing it on the bed. She reached for the bag but he stopped her and retrieved the bottle himself. Telly watched him silently as he straddled her feet. His cock slid up the crease between her shins, her warmth good but not what he wanted. He nudged her knees apart and flipped the cap on the bottle of oil. Rich fragrance wafted between them, almond and sweet fruit, drugging his senses and loosening his tongue.

"This makes me want to lick you." He stared at her stomach, full and round behind her upraised thighs. Her navel hid in the shadow between their bodies. Keith tipped the bottle and dribbled oil between her breasts, following its progress toward her bellybutton. "Licking you is how I discovered your milk. You pushed your nipple at me, but I'm the one who opened my mouth. I wanted to taste you. I wanted to keep tasting you, sucking hard until the taste turned into a mouthful."

Her nipples peaked, from half erect to hard in the space of a breath. "Why didn't you?"

He dribbled oil higher, slippery lines around her breasts. "Because you didn't know it was my mouth on you. You were asleep. I want you to know who's touching you."

"Did I say anything?" Her voice was small.

"Nothing important." Keith capped the bottle and tossed it aside. He brushed the hair from her face and bent down to kiss her, sucking at her lips and urging her back until she reclined limp on the bed. Once her eyes had gone glassy with want, he palmed his cock and guided the tip to her stomach. Her skin slid silkily beneath his head, warmed by the oil. He caught briefly on her navel before riding higher, the underside of his shaft rubbing the full curve.

Telly watched his cock's progress, darkly flushed against her lighter complexion. When he slid into the valley between her breasts, she lifted the twin globes and wrapped them around him. Her nipples peeked from between her fingers,

"You could've sucked harder," she whispered, rubbing her fingertips along his length with each slick pump between her breasts.

"Next time," he muttered, slipping back, his sac pulling tight as he spread the scented oil down to her pubic bone. Her belly glistened in his wake. She followed his retreat, spreading her fingers over the high curve, chasing him down until she caught his cock between her palms. "This time..."

"This time?" she prompted. Her thumbs came together at the base of his shaft and circled lower, behind his testicles.

"This time I need to mark you." Holding her gaze, he positioned the head against her stomach and took himself in hand. Telly rolled his balls gently but he needed something rougher. Hard, short jerks of his fist soon brought his climax. When the first jet of fluid splashed her skin, he broke their connection and lowered his eyes to watch. As if she understood, Telly released him and scooped his seed between her fingers, smearing it over her belly, painting her nipples with shiny wetness. Keith groaned and stroked himself harder despite his emptied sac. Again. He needed to mark her again. Once wasn't enough.

Chapter Four

Telly woke once to a text message notifying her that morning class was canceled due to weather. The second time she woke was to the ringing of the house phone beside her head. Disoriented, she stared at the unfamiliar nightstand and the bright red 8:23 on the face of the alarm clock. The phone kept ringing.

Keith's bed. Abruptly wide awake, she snatched the phone from the cradle. "Hello?"

A pause, followed by, "Matilda, we need to talk."

Trevor. Her skin chilled even as the furnace hummed in the background. "How did you get this number?"

"That's not important. Listen –"

"No, it is important. Did Jamie give it to you?"

Outside, the piercing rise and fade of sirens passed by. Telly closed her eyes and clutched thick blankets to her chest.

"Will you please see me? That's my kid too."

Sirens again, wailing in her ear as emergency vehicles sped down the street. Sirens from the phone.

Oh God. Was Keith's landline listed? Trying to think, she slid from the bed, grateful for the nightgown she'd pulled on after a pre-dawn trip to the bathroom.

"You blocked my calls to your cell phone," he said.

"Because I wanted you to stop calling me." Keith wasn't in the living room. Telly checked the lock on the front door. Lowering her voice, she said, "Trevor, you...we haven't been together for more than a year."

"That's not true. I want a paternity test."

“Do you also want me to tell the police you forced me?” Cold and frightened, she edged close to the window, trying to see outside.

Trevor swore, the curse muffled as if he’d taken the phone away from his ear. He came back on the line a second later. “I didn’t rape you. We were arguing and we got naked.”

“I said no,” she hissed. “Multiple times. You held me down. I’m saying no again right now. No, I won’t see you, and no, you can’t have any contact with my baby.”

“You’re not being fair. Just let me come in and we’ll talk—”

“Come in?” Rising hysteria sharpened her voice. “Where are you? You’re supposed to be in New Mexico.”

“I had vacation time. I needed to see you. Matilda—who the fuck is that?” A car door slammed outside.

Telly spun around from heading toward the kitchen, catching her thigh on the corner of an end table as she hurried across the living room to the front door.

“You’re fucking someone else?” Another car door slammed. She heard it on the phone and outside. Heart racing, she fumbled for the lock.

“Hey, asshole!” Trevor shouted outside and in her ear.

The aluminum screen door creaked as Keith opened it and the latch clicked as he closed it again. “Are you talking to me?”

Telly dropped the phone and wrenched the front door open. “Keith—”

“Yeah, I’m talking to you.” Trevor stalked across the front yard, his boots leaving tracks in the crust of snow. “She tell you that’s your kid?”

“You’re trespassing.” Keith stepped off the porch.

“That makes us fucking even, doesn’t it?” Trevor wasn’t a small man. He had a few inches on Keith, but he was wiry instead of broad. He stopped toe-to-toe with Keith and threw a punch. His fist didn’t make contact. Keith blocked with his forearm and

dropped Trevor to the ground, his knee planted on the other man's chest before Telly opened the screen door.

Without looking at her, Keith said, "If you step one foot outside, I'll put you over my knee."

"You'll let him hit you, but I'm a rapist?" Trevor sneered. "Fucking whore."

Keith's shoulders bunched beneath his coat, deadly stillness settling into his frame. *Oh no.* Covering her mouth to smother a sob, Telly backed into the house. She closed herself in the master bath, the only room in the house without windows, and sank onto the closed toilet lid.

Kittens. Eyes closed, she concentrated on deep, slow breathing and fuzzy kittens, not on whatever Keith was doing to Trevor. She'd kept the circumstances of their last encounter a secret for a reason. For two reasons named Keith and Jamie. She didn't want Trevor beaten half to death. She just wanted him to leave her alone.

Sometime later, Keith entered the bedroom. The sounds of him moving around, opening drawers and running water in the other bathroom, told her she wouldn't be able to hide much longer. Soon, he tapped on the bathroom door. "Can I come in?"

She blew out a breath. "It's unlocked."

He opened the door and stood there, shoulder against the jamb, giving her space. Silent, she studied his face. No budding bruises marked his features. Of course they didn't. Trevor would have been the one nursing injuries after crossing Keith.

Telly swallowed. "Trevor—"

Keith's jaw clenched. "Unless you're going to tell me you'll get a restraining order against him, or better yet, file charges, I don't want to talk about it right now."

She stood and met his eyes. "I said no, but he wasn't violent. He didn't brutalize me. He was just stronger. If he'd really hurt me, I would have gone to the police."

"Bruises aren't a condition of assault. You let him get away with it."

"But you didn't," she said softly.

“Of course I fucking did. What else could I do in daylight on my front lawn?” He turned away, leaving her in the bathroom.

She followed. “Keith, don’t do this. I’m not some kind of abuse victim and I’m not making excuses for him. He didn’t ruin my life or emotionally traumatize me. I don’t want to try to ruin his life. I just want him gone. No involvement. If Jamie would leave it alone instead of insisting he has to make Trevor man up and take responsibility, this wouldn’t even be an issue.”

“If you’d told Jamie the truth, he wouldn’t have gotten this close to you. Christ, he was parked across the street watching the house. How long would he have stayed in his car before he came in to get you? What if he’d shown up yesterday instead of today?” In the living room, Keith dug his cell phone out of the pocket of his coat. “That guy isn’t going to walk away, Telly. He thinks you belong to him.”

“Who are you calling?” She caught up to him as he lifted the phone to his ear. He angled the phone out of her reach, holding her back with a hand on her shoulder. “Keith, stop! You can’t tell Jamie. He’ll tell my parents. I am *not* going to listen to everyone I know whisper that my little girl is a product of rape.”

Keith stared at her. “You’re having a girl?”

She closed her eyes and sighed. “Please hang up the phone.”

“Tel. Jamie answered on the first ring.” He cursed. “I’ll call you back. Don’t say a word to anybody. Jamie— Christ. Tel, can he tell your parents it’s a girl?”

“He’s going to anyway.” Telly covered her face and sat hard on the sofa.

“He won’t say anything if you tell him not to. I’ll kick his ass if he does. Tell her.” Keith pressed the phone to her ear.

“I’m going to fucking kill Trevor,” Jamie said. “But I can keep my mouth shut. I can’t believe you didn’t trust me to deal with this, Telly. I—”

Keith took the phone away and crouched in front of her. To her brother, he said, “I told you to tell her you wouldn’t talk, not lecture her. So, no, you can’t tell anyone it’s a

girl. And if I find out you said anything about either issue, I'll— Yeah. I'll do exactly that. You bringing the beer tomorrow?"

Lowering her hands, she stared at Keith askance. Only he and her brother could go from threatening violence to planning refreshments in the same sentence. Keith met her eyes. He twirled a long lock of her hair around his fingers, winding up the strands until his palm cupped the side of her neck and his thumb rested over the pulse at the base of her throat.

"I'm going to take care of it." Keith ended the call and tossed the phone on the cushion beside her.

"You have to file for a restraining order. I don't give a shit about his life or job prospects or whatever the fuck you think you're going to mess up for him. Promise me you'll do it."

"The police will need a reason. I don't want to get into a rape investigation."

"At least look into your options. I need this to happen, Telly. I need a defensible reason to fuck him up if he comes near you again."

"He won't."

"He *might*."

She sighed, surrendering. "Fine. Will you come with me to talk to the cops?"

"I'll go anywhere you need me to go." His thumb stroked her collar bone and his gaze dropped to her stomach. "A girl. You don't play fair."

"I'm not playing." She swallowed, trying not to be distracted by his intent focus on her torso. "She's *mine*. I'd rather live in my parents' spare bedroom and never have another penny to my name than share her with Trevor in exchange for support. Jamie doesn't get that. He keeps pushing."

Releasing her hair, he fanned both hands over her belly. "What about me, Tel? Would you consider sharing her with me?"

“I don’t need your health care benefits, Keith.” This wasn’t the first time he’d hinted he could help. She’d taken him up on the offer of a rent-free roof over her head. That was a job, and he paid her in room instead of cash. Marriage, however, was out of the question. She wouldn’t take his name just to avoid delivery room bills.

“You’re being blind on purpose,” he growled. “I’m not trying to give you a safety net and I’m not trying to protect you from the world. I’m trying to give you love. From me to you, not because I want to be your hero but because I want the right to touch you, to lie beside you and feel the baby kick, to take you with me if an assignment sends me away.”

“I’m not going to be pregnant forever. What happens when I’m not anymore and you have to find –”

“Do not,” he interrupted, “question my loyalty to you. I’ve been working nearly half my damn life to have something to give you. The way I feel about you isn’t new. The only thing your being pregnant has done is push you into turning to me instead of continuing to stay away. I just can’t figure out why, now that I’m here, you’re backing off and shoving me away.”

Something in her chest twisted. Telly lowered her eyes and ducked his grasp, shoving up from the sofa. Her lungs felt compressed and the back of her neck ached. She paced the length of the room, looking for escape from Keith’s intensity. A collection of colorful rolls of wrapping paper and metallic ribbon spilled across the floor in front of the cold fireplace, waiting to be put to use on the gifts she’d gathered on Keith’s behalf for his family. She knelt in front of the forgotten bits of festivity and huddled close to the cold hearth.

Was she being stubborn, pushing Keith away? Was she wearing blinders, telling herself he was only interested because he’d been overseas for seven months and had developed a thing for her belly while he was gone? She and Keith weren’t new to one another. She’d always communicated with him during deployments, sending notes and cards, new socks and books. She did the same for her brother. The most recent

deployment was different though, letters and calls more frequent after she discovered her pregnancy. Keith, unlike her friends and parents, didn't turn every exchange into baby talk. He asked about her, sent small tokens from tourist shops, told her about the men he worked with and their families. He asked about the baby too, but chastised her for spending too much money on bibs and onesies and not enough money on manipedis and sexy nighties.

He'd described the lingerie he wanted her to buy. Pink and sheer, something that would part over her stomach and leave her bump bare. Something with matching ruffled panties and a feather boa. She grinned at the memory, at her responding accusation that he needed to find a Mongolian hooker before his battalion started questioning his sexuality.

"You look happy," he said, his voice anything but.

She blinked at ribbon tangled around her fingers. "I just remembered something, is all."

Turning, she studied his face. Keith didn't flinch from her examination. His eyes, clear and bright when he'd met her in the lot the night before, were now dark with the same emotion that hardened his jaw and drove his fingers in a rapid tapping rhythm on the arm of the sofa. He didn't smile. Strain tightened the tendons in his neck. Lower, his flat stomach appeared concave, his powerful frame folding in on itself.

Hungry. He looked hungry, starving, as his gaze roamed from her face to her belly. She touched the swell and exhaled a long breath. "You want to be more than a friend with benefits."

His eyebrows drew together and lifted his eyes back to hers. "Yeah, I do. Is that really all you want from me?"

"I didn't think you'd ever give me more than that," she said honestly. "I still half think the only reason we were so good last night is that you'd just returned home, that anybody would've sufficed."

His fingertips stopped drumming. "Not *anybody*. I wanted you."

“You don’t want just me, do you? You want to be a father.”

“It’s not that simple, Telly. I don’t just *want* you. I love you. I want your baby, to make her mine and love her, and then I want to fill you up again and know some part of me is growing in some part of you. Some of this is new to me. Wanting you though, that’s not new. You know it isn’t.”

“No,” she whispered. “I know it’s not.”

He leaned forward, elbows on his knees, and laced his fingers behind his neck. “Christ, Telly. I don’t want to take care of you. I want to be with you. If you want to hang on to your independence, do it. I’m not asking you to stop working. I’m not going to force you to take advantage of anything I bring from the Marines. Insurance, whatever. If you want to have this baby by yourself so you know you can, fine. Do it. But, Jesus, please don’t hold your independence between us like a wall. Let me love you.”

“It wouldn’t be fair to leave all the loving to you,” she said.

He flinched and closed his eyes. Aching, Telly drew the forgotten ribbon between her fingers one more time before wrapping it around her ribs, beneath her breasts and looping the ends into a bow. She rose to stand in front of him and gently stroked his clasped hands. “Keith...I want you to get something out of this besides a wife and a baby.”

He raised his head to respond, but his eyes didn’t reach hers, instead locking on the Christmas ribbon. He blew out a breath and fingered the tail of the bow, tugged until it loosened. “I’ll get to use my sword to cut the cake too.”

About the Author

Emily Ryan-Davis lives in Maryland with her loving husband and hateful guinea pig. On any given day, you can find her shopping (online or in stores), chatting/writing (the pair go hand in hand, can't have one without the other), knitting (or buying yarn) or mocking her husband's comic collection (while parenthetically wondering why comics haven't upgraded to the ebook age; imagine all the extra space she'd have). Occasionally she picks up her mandolin, but mostly she just ignores it. You won't find her paying attention to current events or the latest celebrity gossip because writing stories is her way of pretending it doesn't matter that she doesn't know how to use the television remote.

Emily's favorite authors are Megan Hart, Terry Pratchett, JR Ward and Orson Scott Card. She loves sexy, magical, funny and intense stories, but especially enjoys immersing herself in the breathless intensity of a "with feeling" love scene. She can't pick a genre (decision-making issues!) so writes in whatever setting calls to her at any given time: contemporary paranormal, historical western, medieval Europe, Gothic France – if she can imagine a strong emotional attraction existing in a particular place or time, chances are she'll write the story.

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

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