

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*

Wedding
Belles

*Something
Old*

Allie Standifer

ELLORA'S CAVE *Quickies*®

Something Old

Allie Standifer

Book 1 in the Wedding Belles series.

Brina hates weddings almost as much as she hates being a bridesmaid but her sorority sister demands she be one. At the wedding she runs into Adair, the man who left her – under the orders of his family.

Adair made a mistake leaving Brina, but he's back now. He has no intention of letting the woman he loves walk away without a fight...or a night of soul-melting sex to prove just how right they are together.

Will a night of blistering passion be enough to convince Brina that Adair's back for good? Or will she let the past ruin her future? Either way, only one thing is certain. Something old has never looked or felt so good.

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Something Old

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SOMETHING OLD

Allie Standifer

Dedication

For Tammie, sister of the heart and friend without equal. You've been there through the good, the bad and the really bad. Thank you for standing behind me when I needed courage, propping me up when I needed strength and being beside me when I needed unconditional support. True friends like you are rare and priceless. Thanks for adding your magic in my life.

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Chapter One

Nerves and sexual tension twisted his stomach into knots as Adair Al'Hassan crossed the expensive marble hotel lobby. He'd deliberately arrived a few days before the wedding after Zoe, the blushing bride, had included a note requesting that of him with the invitation. He knew in a matter of minutes he would finally, after all these years, be in the same room with a woman he'd never stopped loving or desiring. His eyes could finally drink their fill after thirsting for so long.

It was all his own damn fault, he grimly reminded himself. There was no one else to blame. If he hadn't been so immature and scared of the force of his attraction to Brina all those years ago, maybe he never would have broken under family pressure.

When the invitation had arrived in the mail, Adair's first impulse had been to toss it aside and forget it. To forget any connection to the past or to her. He saw no sense in ripping open old wounds that had never quite healed. Some instinct however, some premonition, had stopped his hand just before he'd sent the expensive, thick envelope through his shredder. The voice of reason urged the envelope's dismissal but another voice, much fainter than the first, encouraged hope and a world of possibilities.

Instead of listening to one voice over the other Adair merely tossed the envelope on his desk and tried his damndest to forget about it. It sat there for days, its presence weighing heavily in the corner of his mind until the most unexpected visitor twisted his world up once more.

He still couldn't believe his mother had been the one to set his foot along this new path but without her words he would never have found the courage or the hope to begin this new journey. But she had. Now he was here.

And there Brina was, as Zoe had informed him, just as lovely and desirable as she'd been when they'd parted. Just seeing Brina caused his heart to leap and his cock to harden. What a fool he'd been to think he could ever live without her.

Though the upscale bar in the Republic of Texas Hotel was filled with people, she was the only woman he could see. The rays of the dying sun streaming through the window outlined her lush figure. With her long, curly, sable hair, thick lashes that hid the bright intelligence of her sapphire blue eyes and her tall, curvy frame, Brina Collins outshone every other woman in the hotel.

His hands itched to stroke and caress her mouthwatering figure, but first he had to get her alone long enough to listen to him. Then pray to God she'd give him enough time to beg for her forgiveness.

Showing none of his internal hesitation or fear, Adair strode through the busy bar like he owned it, not stopping until he stood behind her inhaling her sweet, clean scent. He allowed himself one long, indrawn breath before making his presence known.

"Hello, Brina," he said in his most calm and level tone, and waited for the raging fallout he knew was sure to happen. Even when she was angry her passionate responses were enough to spike his libido.

Brina Collins stood at the elegant, gleaming oak bar in the cocktail lounge, staring out at the lush gardens. An unbearable sadness gripped her, one she couldn't seem to dispel. While she was genuinely happy for Zoe and Brad, tomorrow's bride and groom, Brina wished she were anyplace but the elegant and timeless Republic of Texas Hotel. The centuries-old hotel screamed romance and seduction, which was great if you had a partner to love and seduce. Being single in the hotel's double bed just made her miss her dog and vibrator.

Without warning, the small hairs on the back of her neck rose and she heard his voice.

"Hello, Brina."

Just like that, like the past few years hadn't happened. As if the rage, sorrow and hurled threats didn't hover in the air around them like the ghosts of their past.

The deep, low voice, the sudden sensitivity in the nape of her neck and the pulsing emptiness between her thighs should have warned her. No one could jump-start her body the way Adair Al'Hassan could. Too bad the sex-on-a-stick Egyptian was a rat bastard.

Pride kept her back straight and her movements smooth as she turned on her three-inch heels to face the man who'd ripped her heart out with a careless wave of his hand.

"Adair." She barely dipped her head in acknowledgment. She may have to play nice, thank you very much Zoe, but it didn't mean she'd play often. "I'm sure Zoe and Brad are thrilled you flew all this way to honor them with your presence. If you'll excuse me, I'll leave you to find them."

She tried to put actions to words, but the hard warmth of his hand seared her upper arm.

"I'll speak with our friends later." His warm breath teased the sensitive tissues of her ear. "For now I wish to speak with you...alone. Too many things for me to keep silent about until after the wedding. Please, Brina, let's go somewhere else and talk."

No way, not going to happen, nuh-uh, over my dead and rotting body. Those were the words popping around in Brina's brain like popcorn in the microwave. "There is not even the slightest chance—"

"Brina, darling, you look lovely as always." A large man with a ten-gallon hat, sweat stains under his arms and a straining gut leered at her from over Adair's shoulder.

Mentally she winced while outwardly she appeared nothing but smooth and gracious. Even if touching the obnoxious Rowdy McHaight made her want to bathe in bleach afterwards.

"Hello, Rowdy. Isn't this a lovely evening? Have you seen Zoe and Brad yet?" she asked in her most neutral tone. Yeah, throwing the Texas-size perv onto her sorority

little sister's lap wasn't very Ms. Manners of her, but at least Zoe had her big, handsome, soon-to-be husband to help fend off Rowdy's octopus-like moves.

"Well, now, I hate to bother the kids right now. I'm sure they've got so much going on they don't need me butting in. I'll wait until I drop off my wedding check to them." He waggled both his busy caterpillar-like brows at her. "Kids are going to be thinking of me their entire honeymoon once they get a gander at this here check." Rowdy patted his chest where Brina had to assume the check resided. She refrained from telling the foul-breathed old fart that her friends would likely be too busy screwing each other's brain out to waste time thinking of his old ass.

His fleshy face, florid with liquor, turned sly as he ignored Adair standing at her side. How the rancher could overlook Adair's six-foot-two frame Brina would never know. Not to mention the eyes that could warm her on the coldest night or freeze a person in place with only a single, icy glare.

"I'm sure they'll appreciate all their gifts," she said politely, "but if you'll excuse me there's an appointment I need to keep." Like rinsing her brain with mouthwash, but she refrained from saying the last part out loud.

"Don't be so hasty, sugar." Rowdy stepped closer still, ignoring Adair. "I bet if we tried we could find a couple of mutual interests to keep us busy this weekend."

"Brina already has something to keep her busy this weekend. Me."

When she turned to look at him Adair looked neither amused nor controlled. He looked coldly dangerous. Even knowing the look wasn't aimed at or intended for her Brina still found herself taking a safe step back or at least trying to, but Adair still had a gentle but firm hold on her arm.

"Sorry to disappoint you both, but I've really got to run." Struggling between a rock and flabby place, Brina quickly realized how limited her options were, provided she didn't want to make a scene.

"Mr. McHaight, it has been...interesting talking to you. Brina, come and we'll take care of your needs...together." Adair's voice remained even and polite, but she could feel the leashed animosity pouring from him.

Before the older man had a chance to sputter out a protest Adair's arm slipped around her waist and he steered her from the darkened bar into the brightly lit lobby.

He pulled-steered-dragged her across the elegant polished floor until they stood in front of the bank of elevators. Her common sense finally kicked in.

"Hey," she protested trying to move away from him, but the steely strength of his arm kept her firmly by his side. "Look I'm grateful you got me away from Rowdy, but not that grateful."

Midnight-dark eyes looked down at her and a shiver of suppressed desire ran across her arms. "Brina, I'm taking you someplace where we can talk. I know you don't owe me the courtesy, but I'm asking you for it nonetheless."

His low tone and words stopped her struggling like nothing else could have. The Adair she'd known would have demanded, cajoled or bullied his way into getting what he wanted. Hearing the actual words come from his sinfully delicious mouth filled her with enough curiosity to follow his lead.

"Thank you," he said then removed his arm from around her waist to press the elevator button. At once she felt the loss of his touch. It had always been this way between them, instant and electric chemistry with even the simplest of glances or touches. Her body aroused from the mere sight of him. Aching to be taken in the way only Adair could take her.

As they stepped into the empty elevator Brina moved away from him as far as the small space would let her while her mind ran wild. Hadn't she just complained about wanting a man, at least for the wedding? Raine, Zoe's gorgeous, filled-with-life, mother had told her to grab life with both hands before she found herself old and alone. Even Zoe, her sweet little sorority sister, had encouraged Brina to live a little this weekend.

Sneaking a sidelong look at Adair's tall, lean frame with his thick, jet-black hair curling over the top of his white dress shirt, his tanned skin standing out against the pale material, she knew she wanted him. The physical aspect of their relationship had always been great, better than great. What would it be like to have all that muscled power directed at her again after all these years?

But she couldn't—wouldn't—go there again. Having him walk out of her life the last time nearly destroyed her. She'd given this man her heart, soul and trust and he'd left without a backward glance.

But we want him, her aroused hormones whined. If it had been any man other than the one standing stiffly next to her she might have entertained the thought of having a weekend fling, but he was who he was and no amount of wishing would change the very nature of his personality.

Besides, the weak, horny part of her nature cajoled, *if you fuck him and leave him maybe you'll finally be able to get on with your life*.

That voice, she mentally decided, definitely had a point. Maybe it was time to turn the tables on Mr. Lord of All He Surveys Al'Hassan. She could screw his brains out, leaving him panting and weak in bed while she walked away this time.

Oh yeah, it was time to see if Adair could take what he so easily dished out.

Chapter Two

Adair had watched Brina sneaking glances at him. Sometimes they were filled with righteous anger, other times with the familiar sensuous heat he remembered so well. His cock got just as excited by that look as it used to and twitched eagerly in his pants.

The scent of her perfume and arousal filled the small, cramped space and Adair whispered a silent prayer of thanks when the doors finally opened. He quickly ushered her down the hall and had the door to his suite opened before she could think of a protest.

Once the door shut, closing them in the quiet elegance of his rooms he finally felt able to take his first deep breath since this whole thing started.

Now he just needed to get Brina relaxed enough to listen. He didn't even dare hope for the chance to make love to her, not yet. After the way he'd left the last time Adair knew he needed to grovel for a while and that was fine with him.

"Would you like something to drink?" he asked, shrugging out of his suit coat and tossing it across the nearest chair.

"White," she requested, "if you have it."

Of course he had it. Adair had made sure to have the bar stocked with at least three bottles of her favorite wine. Not that he planned on getting her drunk, but more like he hoped she'd be back in his bed often.

Crossing the room he forced his eyes away from her sensual beauty and reminded himself tonight wasn't about sex. Tonight in no way would be about sinking his aching cock into her sweet heat and pounding into her giving wetness as he took them both to paradise. Nope, he warned himself, not going to happen.

Too bad the tent in his slacks refused to believe him.

There was a plan. A good plan he'd worked on for weeks. A plan that would, hopefully, end with Brina back in his arms, bed and life...permanently.

"Would you mind if I freshened up a bit?" Her husky voice broke through his review of the grand plan.

"Of course not," he said after shaking himself back to attention. "It's the second door on the left."

"Thanks," she responded and gave him a sultry look that had his blood boiling and his cock weeping. Shit, it was going to be a long night.

He poured himself a whiskey and quickly downed the fiery liquid. He'd never realized how strong desire could be until it was denied.

To keep his mind off the vixen in his bathroom Adair got busy setting out cheese and crackers and placed Brina's bottle of wine in a bucket of ice to keep it chilled. Everything looked great without any obvious overtones of sex. He wanted this night to be about them, about what had happened in the past and what he wanted to have in the future. What he wanted them both to have in the future, a future together.

After more than ten minutes passed with no sign of Brina, Adair walked down the hall and gently knocked on the bathroom door.

"Brina? Everything okay?"

He waited a beat, but no noise came from the other side.

He knocked a little harder and longer, his heart speeding up. What if something had happened? The Brina he'd known had been in perfect health, but time had passed. Maybe she'd developed some weird terminal disease and passed out in the guest bathroom of his hotel room.

Just as he reached the point of panic Brina's sexy voice purred in his ear.

"I need you."

He felt her before he saw her. Her sweet heat pressed into his back, her nipples hard with desire.

Praying like never before for patience not to attack this woman he leaned his hot forehead against the cool wood of the door. "We have to talk. There are so many things I need to clarify and apologize for."

Soft kisses were trailed along the back of his neck. "The past is over and done with. The only thing I'm concerned with is the now. Like how I want you inside me, this minute."

His brain blanked out with all his blood supply being diverted to below his belt. In an easy move, Brina turned him until his back rested against the door and she rubbed over his hard arousal.

"Brina," he begged then sucked in an astounded breath at the feel of her soft, sweet naked flesh beneath his calloused hands. "Please, I want to explain things to you."

Talented fingers cupped his pulsing cock and he groaned with need. How had this situation gotten so out of control?

"You...are...forgiven." She slowly unbuttoned his shirt then pressed damp kisses to the exposed chest.

All his resolve and good intentions fled the moment his zipper went down and Brina's hand went in. He had to have her.

"I want you. I want to spread you wide and fuck you until we pass out then wake up and do it all over again."

He moved closer each time he spoke until he had backed her into the other wall. "Tonight, we'll make love until we can't move. Then in the morning before the wedding we will sit down and talk...about everything."

"We'll fuck tonight," she responded, not liking the intimate way he said make love. She didn't want to make anything with him, much less love. Fucking sounded so much better, earthier and more primal. It was all about scratching an itch and feeding a need.

Nope, this had nothing to do with love and everything to do with no sex in way too long.

She struggled to ignore the crackle and snap of the heat between them. But he was right there, reaching behind her to grip the doorknob and enclose her with his arms. Something burned hot, deep inside her.

“Brina.” Just her name, whispered in that low, sexy tone of his. The heat of his breath warmed her skin and sent shivers of desire all the way to her bare toes. “This isn’t a good idea.”

“Horrible idea,” she agreed and wrapped her leg around his calf to pull him closer.

“We should talk,” he whispered while taking erotic nibbling bites on her neck, running his tongue along the curve of her ear as she helplessly pushed back against his hardness.

Desire made her spine weak. Her head fell back as his lips made their way around the sensitive skin of her neck while he gently supported her in his arms. Still he held back from giving her what she wanted to beg for. The flavor of him on her tongue, the taste that was all Adair, something she’d tried for years to forget, but had never been able to.

Instead his lips gently pressed kisses across her face, lightly touching her cheeks, eyes, nose before—thank you, God—her mouth.

His mouth came down on hers, soft at first like a feather, his breath gentle against her skin like a spring breeze, and thoughts of protesting ceased.

Exactly what she wanted, Adair giving into his passion and exploding with her. His scent flooded her brain while his tongue played over her lips, tracing the seam, licking at the corner. How could she have forgotten the way the man immersed himself in kissing?

He moved his mouth back and forth, teasing, tasting. His teeth nipped gently at her lower lip, nibbling the edge of it. Her eyes drifted closed, giving in to the seductive touch. When she opened her mouth he moved in like a conquering hero returning

home. When he touched his tongue to hers, need jolted through her system, pulsing in her veins, firing her nerve endings, drumming insistently in her hardening nipples and her throbbing cunt. Her legs turned to jelly and she grabbed Adair's arms to steady herself.

Just like that he had her pinned to the wall, his arms so tight around her she could barely breathe, but breathing wasn't number one on her list of priorities at that exact moment. Feeling him moving against her, tasting his familiar flavor, that was the most important thing.

Her breathing came in fast draws when he finally lifted his head. She felt her feet touch the ground and found herself nose to pectoral muscle with him. Hmm, when had she ripped his shirt off? Yay, her!

Everything inside her burst into fiery need. Every inch of her skin felt starved for his touch, as if the nerves were too close to the surface. Her breasts turned weighty and achy, all her erogenous zones throbbed insistently and a hunger for him clawed its way inside her. Desire, raw and powerful, gripped her, wiping everything away except this man and his touch and its effect on her.

His mouth never left hers as he backed her inside the bedroom and closed the door behind them, his tongue still doing its wicked dance. One hard, muscular arm locked around her, pulling her close to him so she felt everything from his hard, flat abs to the swelling thickness of his cock.

Her chest ached suddenly, as if her heart had been squeezed. Her knees wobbled and she sank against him, melting into him, rising back to her tiptoes to meet his next kiss with equal force and desire. He groaned low and deep in his throat. She surrendered to him totally in that moment, but it didn't seem to be enough for him because he sank his hand in her hair and pulled her head back, exposing her sensitive throat to his mouth.

Eagerly he took advantage of the naked skin and ran his lips and tongue over her flesh making her cry out in need and passion.

"A gentleman would give you the chance to change your mind. Just so you know, I'm no gentleman." His hands roamed up and down her back as he talked. "And may I add a thank-you for being all naked and soft and...wet for me." His wandering fingers slipped between her legs and discovered the proof of her arousal.

He found her breasts, taking their weight in his palm. His mouth touched hers again. His hands were like individual flames burning away every thought that had nothing to do with him. When his thumbs grazed her nipples need shot through her and her thighs were soaked with her arousal.

"I took one look at you," he murmured, "and then there was no one else. You've been part of me since we first met. Nothing I do gets you off my mind or out of my heart."

Her traitorous heart pounded with joy at his words, but her much wiser brain dismissed the easily spoken sentiment as desire-fueled and of little consequence. "Fuck me," she demanded against his lips. His cock throbbed in her hand as she stroked him with the same furious, burning desire tearing her apart.

Swearing he grabbed her hand and pulled her away from his dick. "Look at me, Brina."

She refused, not wanting to see whatever emotion may be building in his dark gaze. She wanted this encounter to be about the sex and only the sex. Emotions would ruin this moment for both of them.

"Brina," he whispered and used two fingers to tilt her chin up. "Look at me, my love. You'll know exactly who's taking you tonight, all night. I won't have you picturing someone else while you're in my bed."

Shocked that he could even think that, Brina's eyes popped open and met eyes filled with passion, need and some other emotion she refused to name.

"That's my love," he whispered and pressed kisses to her face. "I want you under me, Brina, filled up with me until you can't remember a time I wasn't buried to the hilt inside your sweet pussy."

His eyes were those of a predator, devouring her everywhere they looked. Her head was spinning, disconnected from her body, leaving her wrapped in a cloud of intense sensations. Every place his gaze landed she felt zapped by electricity, a lightning bolt that shot straight to her core.

He lifted her high once again, and she coiled her legs around him. His knuckles brushed between her legs as he unfastened his slacks, let them drop then kicked them away. She felt the head of his penis probing at her, smooth and hard and hot.

"Condom," she screamed and unwound her legs to let him pull away.

"Shit," he muttered and went to grab protection.

He was back in an instant, latex protection covering his beautiful cock. Then an almost incredible sense of pressure filled her as he eased into her. Her body resisted at first, then began to stretch and admit him, inch by searing inch. She felt everything in her begin to tighten as sensation roared through her.

Then he was gone again and Brina couldn't help the small wail of need and disappointment that filled the room.

"Brina, you are so beautiful."

She didn't care what the hell she looked like. "Are you crazy? Come back here." She spread her legs in wanton demand.

"Do you know what I'd like to do to you first?" he asked, running a hard fingertip from her knee to her hip and back again. Leaving little mini-quakes of need in his path.

"If doesn't involve your cock I'm not interested."

He leaned forward and nipped the sensitive skin of her inner thigh. "I want to taste you."

She gasped. Oh yeah she'd give up the penis for now.

"I want to feel you come against my tongue while you scream my name." He ran his tongue dangerously close to her dark, damp curls.

Brina couldn't stop the shiver from raking her naked frame.

"Then," he whispered in his low voice, "I want to sink inside you until you can't take any more of me. I want to feel your hot pussy squeezing me tightly, pulling me in each time I try to pull out. Then we'll take each other until nothing but the two of us matters." He brushed a finger against her, parting her soaking, desire-swollen lips.

She moaned and lifted her hips to him eagerly.

Before she could think of a retort, Adair latched onto her clit with a groan. He kissed the soft hair of her mound before delving into her folds, his face pressed tight between her thighs, his mouth and tongue on her, licking, sucking, taking all of her. He trailed his tongue around her clit in circles and she clenched her hands tighter in his hair.

It felt so unbelievable and right to be here with this man. She moved beneath him, desperate for more. She couldn't have stopped the moans rising up in her throat if she wanted to.

His moved his head and look at her with those intense midnight-black eyes. "I have missed the taste of you, love. I could eat you all day and never grow tired."

"Adair, don't stop...please." She pleaded with him, desperate for the release only he could give her.

He dived back into her folds with his tongue and she shouted her pleasure. He kept those mesmerizing eyes on her as he licked and sucked.

Shit, having him watch her only made her rise even closer to climax. When he shoved two fingers into her pussy while watching her at the same time, he gave her clit one long slow lick. She was so freaking close, if he stopped for whatever reason—even death—she'd kill him.

Then thought was beyond her as Adair wound her tighter and tighter, bringer her higher and higher. Her legs quivered around his face as his five o'clock shadow scraped the insides of her thighs and pussy lips.

He thrust his fingers harder, sucked deeper and she went wild. Her entire body seemed to literally explode around her. Adair continued to push into her with his fingers, to lick and suck her and she rode out every throbbing pulse.

Just as she was coming down from her orgasm, he started again, driving her toward another climax. The second one hit her harder and faster and she couldn't take any more. She tried to move away from him and his talented mouth and fingers. He clamped his mouth over her pussy and drank from her as she crested the wave over and over again. She couldn't think, could barely breathe, unable to feel anything but the pounding, pulsing of her orgasm tearing through her.

He stopped finally, and all Brina could do was lie there, panting and trying desperately to regain the use of her lungs. Holy cowbells, Batman, had sex or near sex always been that amazing between them? How had she lived without it these past few years?

"I'll never be able to move again."

Adair gave a pleased masculine chuckle and moved from between her thighs so that he was lying beside her. She barely moved her head to look at him. "What the heck was that about?"

He shot her a sexy grin and shrugged one tanned shoulder. "I didn't want you to forget who made you come so many times. I may have...ahh...gotten a little carried away," he confessed, color high in his cheeks.

From somewhere she found the energy to lift her brow in amazement. "A little carried away? That's like saying the *Titanic* took on a little water or Alaska's a little cold in the winter."

"Hmm, maybe, but I never forgot how sweet you taste or the way your pussy clamps down hard when you come."

Though it was way past time to be embarrassed, Brina could still feel the blush crawling up her cheeks just the same.

Before, when they'd been together, Brina had been open to anything Adair wanted to try. He'd been the first man to go down on her, just as his cock had been the first she'd ever put her mouth on. They had explored positions, places, toys and more. Now seeing all those memories in his eyes made her want to slap him for the pain that had come after.

She managed to dredge up a bright fake smile. "Don't forget, stud, I'm only here for the sex."

Adair jerked back as if slapped. His lids immediately dropped down to hide his thoughts from her. She watched his chest rise on a deep intake of air before slowly letting it out again.

He gave her a long, slumberous look through his thick black lashes. "Then I'm being a bad host, aren't I?"

She didn't have a chance to understand what he meant before he snaked his arm around her waist to lift her up. He flipped her over and shoved a pillow under her hips.

"Hey," she protested even though this had always been a favorite position of theirs.

Adair wasn't gentle as he kneed her legs farther apart and put himself between them, his covered cock head finding her slit. Before she could even draw a quick breath, he pushed inside her, shoving himself balls-deep.

"Brina," he gasped then groaned as she pulsed around him. He ground against her ass as he fitted tight into her, drawing out and thrusting hard.

He was thicker than she remembered, pulsing with heat and she felt like a part of her had finally come home. She rose up and back against him, needing him deeper. He placed a hand on her back, pinning her down to the mattress.

"My turn."

His low demand and air of authority should have irritated her, but it only served to turn her on even more. His large, rough hand pressed low on her spine, holding her in place for his hard, steady thrusts.

The only sounds in the room were the slap of flesh on flesh as Adair's movements grew frantic and his body lost its controlled even pace. She heard every intake of his breath, the moist sounds her body made each time he withdrew. It grew hot in the room despite the air-conditioning and their bodies slid against each other as he lay fully on top of her, swept her hair to the side and bit her neck. He didn't break skin, but something about the primitive marking set Brina off.

She screamed in pleasure, came in a flood of explosions. Adair growled against her neck as heated spurts of cum filled the latex barrier separating them. He kept his teeth lightly against her skin, as a sign of possession, all the while riding her through the most intense orgasms of her life.

By the time they'd finished swearing, shaking and panting, she felt like a limp rag, unable to ever think about moving again, let alone speak or think.

Adair gently pulled out of her, rolled them both to their sides and drew her against him. Way down deep in a place she never thought of, Brina was secretly pleased with the gesture, but would never admit it even under pressure of torture.

Chapter Three

If death came for him now, he'd follow the reaper with a smile on his face. Shit, he absently rubbed a hand over his scruffy face and made a mental note to shave before going down on Brina's again. Her sensitive skin would be red for the next few days thanks to his carelessness.

This night had gone nothing like any of the scenarios he'd planned. In fact if someone had asked him, Adair would have said sex would be the last thing on his former lover's mind. A bet he'd happily lose.

Oh he knew Brina thought tonight was about sex and nothing more. He'd allow her to continue thinking that right until the time he kidnapped her on his plane. Sooner or later she'd forgive him...he hoped. But until then he could enjoy this time together and maybe if he was lucky get her so addicted to sex she wouldn't realize he was kidnapping her at all.

"Mmm, you've gotten better at that." Her soft teasing voice intruded into his thoughts.

He pressed a light kiss to her temple. Happy to be able to breathe her unique scent once more into his lungs. God, how he'd missed the simple smell of her. "*We've* gotten better at that."

Instead of answering him Brina gave a shrug that meant everything and nothing. He missed the girl she'd been. The one who never withheld her thoughts from him. Whose every emotion shone out of her big blue eyes.

"So how did an Irish girl end up in one of the hottest cities in this country?"

Again she shrugged. "With this economy you move where the job is. Mine happened to take me to San Antonio. I've grown to love the city and people. There's always something happening at the River Walk, Majestic or Verizon Center. Not to

mention all the small towns surrounding San Antonio. It feels like there's a festival going on every weekend for something or other."

As much as he didn't want to, Adair could hear the pure pleasure in her voice as she discussed her new hometown. Maybe, once all their issues were resolved, they could split their time between his home in Egypt and hers in America.

"Just seems odd you being so Irish and ending up in a mostly Hispanic town."

She gave a small laugh, which caused her breasts to bounce delightfully against his chest. "Yeah, so says the Egyptian with a Celtic name."

"My father's American, don't forget. I can't help it if he watched too many Highlander movies while my mom was pregnant with me."

"I'm just saying, people in glass houses and all that."

One arm kept her firmly by his side while the other stroked her silky, thick hair. How he'd missed this and her. What a fool he'd been to think he'd be able to live without her and find any sort of happiness in his life.

How he'd taken their quiet talks at night for granted back then. The act of simple conversation and connection while their bodies cooled was hard to find. Now that he'd found her again Adair wasn't going to take a chance on losing her again. No matter the lengths he had to go to.

Putting that worry off for the future, he slid his hand from her hair to the satin smoothness of her breast. He cupped it gently in his hand, absently toying with the now hardening nipple.

The sharp intake of breath let him know just how much his touch could still affect her. He gloried in the knowledge.

"You have the most beautiful skin," he whispered into the near silent room. Only the hum of the air-conditioning unit disturbed the perfect quiet of the night. Though a whole city filled with millions of people rushed around outside, Adair felt cocooned in the almost-silence of the hotel room.

"My skin is soft because I'm addicted to lotion." She tried to pull away from him, but he held her fast.

"I remember," he said softly and he did. He remembered the nights he'd spent watching her lather the cream on only to come to bed smelling like various fresh scents she liked. Always something fresh or sweet and sometimes with a hint of mint. How he'd loved exploring her body, taking her scent into his lungs.

Before he could think of a response Brina's hand slipped under the covers and grabbed his growing erection in a firm grip.

She heard the hiss of an indrawn breath.

"Better keep your hands to yourself or else we'll be right back to what we were doing," he said hoarsely backing away from her touch. "I wouldn't want you to get the wrong impression."

Brina allowed herself a tiny smile of satisfaction. It pleased her to know she had that effect on him. Made her feel a bit bolder in their sexual play. Adair had been her first real lover. She'd been spoiled by the chemistry they'd shared. Every man after him had led to disappointment and frustration.

There were too many temptations sharing the bed with her. First was Adair himself. God, how long had she waited for him to change his mind? Prayed every night that he'd come back to her and forget his family.

The second temptation throbbed in her hand. She'd missed this. The connection, chemistry and the buildup. How was she supposed to resist Adair? Especially when he looked too "boy next-door" with a lock of hair hanging over his eye and the bright light of desire heating his gaze.

Her breasts were bare and she had the idiotic urge to cross her arms and cover herself as his eyes burned over her. As if he sensed her thoughts, Adair wrapped his fingers lightly around her upper arms.

“Uh-uh,” he admonished. “No covering up.”

Cool air made her nipples pucker and harden. A finger drifted over first one, then the other, making them harden even more. When Adair pinched them simultaneously between thumb and index finger, Brina gasped for breath. Tiny shocks of heat zapped through her body, heading straight for the muscles inside her cunt and making them quiver.

“Your breasts are so gorgeous,” he said in his low, rough voice. “Plump, round and your nipples look like small kernels of caramel begging to be sucked.”

His words aroused her. No man had ever spoken to her in the way Adair did. Or even talked during sex. He’d always been so bluntly honest about who he was and what he wanted. She’d missed that and a tiny part of her admitted she’d missed Adair too.

That’s why she had daydreamed about Adair for so long even after he dumped her and returned to Egypt. She was definitely going to let go of her inhibitions. If he ultimately found her undesirable...well...at least she’d have had this night. And her own turn to walk away and leave him crushed and aching.

His warm palm came to rest on her slightly rounded tummy, caressing it with a gentle, circular motion. She lifted slightly into his touch but his teasing caress quickly disappeared.

A tanned hand urged her pale thighs apart and one finger brushed against her pubic curls, then traced the length of her wet slit. When he pressed against her clit she wriggled her hips, trying to increase the pressure. Even though she’d come more times than she could count, desire trickled between her legs.

“You like that,” he stated confidently. “You are so deliciously wet. I have to taste you again. I think I’m addicted to this sweet cream.”

The mattress shifted when he crawled between her legs, pressed her thighs farther apart with his calloused palms, and placed his open mouth directly on the center of her

pussy. Shards of icy heat tore through Brina's body. She tried to close her legs to hold his head in place but Adair kept his pressure on her inner thighs.

His tongue was like a butterfly, darting here and there on her slick inner flesh, pushing just inside her pussy, withdrawing. Brina reached her hands down to pull on the thick silk of his hair, but he turned it just at that moment and began the dance of his tongue on the inside of her right thigh. As he licked and nipped the tender skin, his thumb took possession of her clit, rubbing back and forth in the lightest of movements, just enough to stimulate her but not enough to give her any relief.

When he had finished one thigh, he gave the other one the same treatment. Brina couldn't stop squirming under the sensual onslaught. His mouth was everywhere, now on her cunt, now teasing at her navel, now sucking each nipple into his mouth. Hot shivers raced along her spine and her pulse throbbed with increasing intensity.

The sudden absence of his body caused her to moan and reach for him again. He laughed, a gravelly sound that warmed her with its familiarity.

"I could spend all night eating you. Fuck, I'd forgotten just how sweet you are. I was such a stupid jackass," he whispered. He gave a last kiss to her clit and moved back up her body. "I'm so sorry, Brina. I promise if you give me the chance I'll make it up to you. Everything," he promised, "I will never leave you again. I love you."

Then he was back, his body covering hers. Never giving her a chance to respond or object to his vow.

The rough hair on his chest brushed against her swollen nipples, making them ache even more. He must have caught himself on his forearms because he hadn't let his entire weight fall on her. His arms, pressed against her ribs, were warm, the heat seeping into her and adding to the raging inferno already building inside her.

He shifted one of his long, muscular legs and his cock pressed against her thigh. When Adair slid lower, opened her labia with his fingers and thrust his tongue inside her a climax raced through her, unexpected in its force. He massaged her clit and fucked her with his tongue while her inner muscles clasped and clenched and her body

shook with earthquake-worthy tremors. Her hips jerked and thrust, she ached to squeeze her thighs together but Adair held them mercilessly apart.

When the last small aftershock had spent itself, Adair moved again, this time apparently reaching for something. Brina heard the unmistakable snap! of latex as he sheathed himself. She barely had time to catch her breath before he lifted her legs and arranged them over his shoulders, parted her cunt and thrust himself inside.

Despite the fact that her vagina was tight, her cream made the penetration easier. He was large, larger than any man she'd ever been intimate with. Until tonight she'd forgotten how big he was and her pussy muscles strained to accommodate him. She breathed in, then out, trying to relax herself so she could take every bit of him, not wanting to miss a second of him forging inside her.

His musky tang teased at her nose, exciting her, and the fine hair on his arms where they touched her skin brushed her all-too-sensitive skin. His hips rolled and thrust as he pushed in more, withdrew, pushed again. He slid his hands beneath her buttocks, lifting her to him even more.

"You are everything I remembered and more," he whispered. "Lush, sweet, with curves that make me drool. I can't count the times I jacked off in the shower thinking of you, of us together again."

Brina wanted to believe him. Badly. But at the moment she couldn't concentrate on anything except what he was doing to her body, the icy heat racing through her veins and the need building within her again. The friction of his cock in her pussy was driving her crazy. He seemed to know just the tempo to set to pull her up the spiral without giving her release.

Everything else would have to wait until she either died or recovered from Adair's passionate lovemaking.

His mouth closed over a nipple again, tugging it tightly into his hot mouth. When his teeth grazed the swollen bud, she moaned. She locked her ankles behind his neck, pulling him into her even deeper and thrust her hips at him.

He drove into her, hard, one last time before his body stiffened, and they exploded together, tumbling through the orgasm as if a whirlpool had swept them up. Her body shook with tremors, muscles tensing and releasing as she convulsed again and again. Rockets exploded in the darkness, electric shocks zapping her like lightning bolts. She thought the spasms would never stop. When the final aftershock trembled through her, she felt completely limp and boneless, and more satisfied than she'd been in years.

The only sound in the room was the rasping of their breathing. Brina could feel the pounding of Adair's heart against her still tingling breast, mingled with the thudding of hers. After what seemed like forever, Adair lifted his head and kissed her, a gentle yet passionate kiss, with as much emotion as lust in it. Finally he lowered her legs and massaged the muscles.

When he withdrew from her, Brina tried to hold him in place longer. Not wanting reality to break their magic spell just yet.

"Let me dump the condom," he whispered. "Then we can talk."

He returned with a warm soft washcloth, carefully wiping the sweat from every part of her body and cleaning every inch of her cunt. Then he climbed into bed beside her and wrapped his arms around her.

"Are you going to let me explain now?"

"Mm-hmm," she murmured, nestling against him.

"Brina, honey, I need you awake for this."

"No," she sleepily protested. "I don't want to think or hear or have anything do with being a mature adult. Tonight is all I get and I'm not going to waste it fighting with you."

"Then sleep, my love, sleep. I'll still be here when you wake." She felt a soft kiss pressed to her temple. Then Adair's arms pulled her closer and she allowed her body to finally completely relax.

The last thing she remembered was a whispered, "I love you, Brina," before she fell into a dreamless, sated sleep.

Chapter Four

She woke hot and eager, her body pulsing with unfulfilled needs.

Adair slid his condom-covered cock through the slick needy folds of her pussy. His penetrating hardness wound the coil of desperate need inside her tighter and tighter until she couldn't stand it any longer.

"Adair, please," she begged as his hard chest rubbed against her back.

"Shhh," he whispered. "Let me fill myself with you, honey." He took her leg and drew it back over his thigh before slipping his warm hand down the smooth roundness of her tummy to cover her weeping core.

Lying on her side with Adair spooned behind her, Brina couldn't twist or move against him like she needed. One strong, hair-roughened arm wrapped around her chest, holding her arms in place while his talented fingers teased and pinched her nipples. His other hand circled and stroked her clit in time to his slow, steady thrusts.

"Fuck me, Adair," she pleaded and tried to angle her body to take more of him. Instead he firmed his hold on her and changed his strokes to soft, shallow ones that left her on the verge of insanity.

"I'm not going to rush this. You don't know how badly I've wanted you and for so long." He breathed huskily into the sensitive shell of her ear. "We belong together, Brina. You're the only woman I've ever loved. And I'm so damn sorry for ever walking away from you."

"No," she screamed, not wanting to hear his words. She couldn't trust him to not destroy her world again. He'd done it so easily before.

His mother hadn't approved of her or her Irish Catholic heritage. He'd tried, she'd give him that. Adair had lasted almost three months before finally breaking under his

family's disapproval and returning home. A note left behind on the coffee table with the words, "I'm sorry. Don't wait for me".

Like a fool she had waited...and waited until finally even her romantic heart couldn't hold onto hope any longer. She broke down then built herself up one pain-filled day at a time.

Now Adair was back in her bed and body, saying all the things she'd prayed and wished for so many years ago, but her heart was no longer interested.

Instead she reached around and shoved her fingers through his thick hair. "I don't want your love. I want your cock. We're fucking, not making love. Now, either fuck me hard or get the hell out of me and I'll find someone else who will."

"No," he refused, need and something darker lacing his rough tone as he pinched one of her aching nipples. "There won't ever be another man fucking this pussy. You and it belong to me."

It went on for hours, days or years, Brina wasn't sure. She did know Adair to be a man like no other. His ability to orchestrate her orgasms one right after the other left her mind blind, her body unable to do anything other than follow his lead.

Hours later she woke, sore, but still desperate for him. Seeing him lying there on his back, naked, started a hunger she knew only one way to tame.

In slow motion Brina drew the sheet from his tanned form and licked her lips.

"Honey, what are you up to?" His sleepy murmur drew her gaze away from his growing erection.

"I'm hungry," she answered simply and licked her suddenly dry lips again.

"I can order room service..." His voice trailed off when she shook her head in denial.

"I have something else in mind. Something with a little bit more protein." Not knowing what had gotten into her and not caring in the least, Brina wrapped both hands around Adair's heavily veined cock.

"Oh honey, that feels so good." His voice was low and hoarse.

"This will feel even better." Brina lowered her mouth and let the thick, wet tip of his cock spread her lips. Eagerly she sucked him in, lashing the sensitive top with the flat of her tongue. She freed one hand to cup and stroke the sensitive weight beneath his heavy erection.

"Oh yeah, damn. Oh yeah let me fuck your mouth." Just as before his strong hands slid into her hair, tilted her head back for deeper penetration. "Shit! Fuck yes!"

Brina opened her mouth wider, sucking Adair harder and deeper until she swallowed the very head of him. She loved his musky, salty flavor, the harsh desperation in his cries of pleasure. The way he grabbed onto her so tightly like she was necessary to his pleasure beyond her mouth.

Adair's thrusts lost their rhythm, the motions no longer smooth or in control. She continued to tease him with her tongue. To gently rake her teeth down his now wet length. Brina gloried in the shudders that racked his long, muscled form because of her actions.

"Suck me hard, Brina, come on, baby." His breath sawed in and out of his lungs. "Oh fuck...yeah."

Again she wrapped both hands around his enormous width only this time she twisted her hands in opposite directions causing Adair to shout in pleasure. When he reached down and tried to pull her off his body, she resisted.

"Brina," he pleaded desperation and need layering his husky voice, "I'm going to come, angel. Want inside you when I come...please."

As much as she'd love to feel this thickness pounding heavily in her achingly empty pussy, Brina needed to feel his seed in her throat, to take in his essence and flavor with her mouth. To cement the bond they'd once had. Instead of letting him pull her away she deepened his strokes, encouraged him to increase the speed of his thrust.

He gave in with a low, ragged moan of defeat and desire.

"So sweet, so good," he muttered.

"Close, so close."

Adair's nature took over from there. Calloused hands held her head still while his hips jerked and drove deeper into her mouth. She took it all and teased him for more with her tongue, teeth and lips.

"Brina!" he yelled and that voice raised the hair on the back of her neck, but before she could understand why, Adair's cum spurted into her mouth in heavy and hot salty surges.

Brina swallowed everything she could, licking his softening erection until Adair pulled her up his shaking and sweat-coated body. He rested, exhausted against her.

"I love you, Brina Collins. And no, it's not just that amazing blowjob talking. You are, were and always will be the best part of me. I made a huge mistake in leaving you and I knew it before I even walked out. Only a fool would allow his family to pressure him into giving up the only woman he'd ever love. I do love you so much. I'm willing to do whatever it takes to make you believe in me, in us again."

"I—"

"No," he protested with a finger over her lips. "Don't say anything yet. Just give me this time until the weekend is over to convince you I'm the same man you fell in love with. Only a better, more loyal version. One with the complete blessing of my family."

Long moments passed before she finally gave a subtle nod of her head.

He swooped down to capture her lips in a kiss of gratitude, happiness and dare she think it...love?

* * * * *

Brina's warm breath tickled against his chest as held her long after she'd fallen asleep. His mind raced. The closer they became physically, the more he became emotionally entangled with her. How would this all end? Would she be angry when she learned of his plans? Pleased? He'd taken a big chance and he prayed it paid off.

First thing in the morning he needed to make his staff aware of the change of plans.

* * * * *

Brina woke again. The light from the rising sun barely made a dent in the darkness of the room, but she knew it was time to go. Even without looking she knew Adair's side of the bed would be empty. Just like all the promises he'd made last night.

Once again she'd allowed herself to be fooled by his handsome face and false sincerity. Later she'd beat herself up over her stupidity, but for now she wanted out of his bed and away from his room. She desperately needed her own things around her, to cement her in reality. The reality that Adair would never want her as a permanent part of his life. She'd never be his one and only, never be his wife or mother of his children. The most a woman like her could count on would be these nights away from time. Where for a few hours he'd allow himself to love her, then when the sun rose in the morning she'd be right back here. With her heart broken and her pride lying in shattered pieces at her feet.

So caught up in her own mental thrashing, Brina never heard the sound of the suite door opening then closing. Or the muffled sound of footsteps crossing the floor.

He came down next to her, naked as he pulled her to him, his hands moving gently over her body.

"I used to dream about seeing, touching and tasting your breasts again," he murmured. He licked each one as he held the weight of one heavy breast in his hand. "I've fantasized about sucking them into my mouth more times than I can count."

He put action to words as he mouthed one nipple with a gentle bite then soothed the hurt with his tongue, finally drawing it between his hot lips and taunting her with the edge of his tongue.

Heat seared through her body straight to her needy pussy. As he pulled and sucked on her hardened tip his hot breath heated the slope of the breast above it. Erotic

sensation on top of erotic sensation until she didn't know how much more she could take without begging for his cock.

"Fuck me, now, Adair," she demanded in a voice gone hoarse with need. This would be it, the last time they were together. She'd memorize every sound he made, the feel of his taut skin beneath her fingers, the sweet smell of their combined scents lingering heavily in the air.

"Yes, love, oh hell yes." His breathing rasped against her ear, shooting erotic darts of sensation all over her body. "Love you so much."

His mouth claimed hers with such hunger and need Brina knew it was all in her head. Adair had never needed her or loved her and he never would, but she shoved the uncomfortable truth out of her mind. She didn't need reality now. Not with Adair hot and aroused in her arms.

She pictured his mouth drinking from hers, his tongue savoring every inch of it, his lips marking hers, telling her better than words how much he needed her, how much he wanted her and only her.

Adair kissed her for so long she was dizzy with longing, every erotic point in her body aching with need. Without taking his mouth from her, Adair moved on top of her. Hard, muscular legs wedged themselves between her wet thighs as he braced himself on his forearms.

"Need this," Adair panted against her neck. "Need you, now and always."

Brina curled her arms around his neck and drew his mouth down to hers. "I'm yours." *For now*, she mentally added.

He slid into her with one hard stroke, shoving himself balls-deep inside her. As his cock stretched her Brina couldn't stop the moan escaping her lips.

He moved then. A long, slow teasing rhythm that made her want to scream. He set the pace of her fantasies and Brina could only follow his lead. He pushed and withdrew in unhurried glides, until in frantic need she locked her legs around him and planted her heels in the curve of his ass.

"Damn you, Adair Al'Hassan, fuck me," she demanded trying to increase his pace. "We're not making love. This is all about fucking."

"Anytime I touch you I'm making love to you. Now shut up and let me have you. My way or no way," he responded in a steady voice.

In and out, his steady thrusting seared her brain and singed her flesh. With each thrust his sac slapped against her ass. Every time he pulled back his forward shove became more forceful until it was sheer torture to be so close and not be able to come.

He fucked her steadily with his shaft, the tight muscles of her slick body gripping him, milking him. When he shifted to glide one hand between them and take her clit between two rough fingers, she nearly screamed with gratification.

Brina panted, her body writhing for what it craved, the movements mindless and desperate. She didn't know which way was up or where Adair ended and she began. He felt too big, too hot, she freaked in a second's panic.

Adair picked up the pace. He moved one knee with his hand and pushed her leg away from its stranglehold on him. This opened her wide to his every thrust.

He abruptly thrust deep into her slick passage. She gasped at the sudden powerful intrusion. The sheer mass of him once again had her rethinking her plans. Until he drew back and slammed into her and Brina's back came off the bed. She scrambled to clutch the cotton beneath her hands, to keep herself from sliding off the slippery sheets as his thrusts went deeper and harder as they increased in speed.

"Adair!" she cried out, unsure of what to do. Her breasts shook as he continued to stroke deep inside her, the rhythm impossible for her to keep up with. He was giving her exactly what she'd asked for.

"You feel so damn good. All slick and tight, you taste just like candy. You're fucking amazing, Brina. I've waited so long to be inside you I can't control myself. You're better than any fantasy."

His eyes were filled with a unique blend of lust, passion and something deeper that sparked an answering fire inside her. Did she have the same look of wonder and awe on her face?

"Come now," he demanded flicking his fingernail over her clit, back and forth until she wanted to scream.

Her head spun as the world twisted around her. She whimpered and lifted her hips to join in the mating dance. Her muscles clenched as her tight walls jerked in release. She came with a strangled cry, her whole body locking as her channel squeezed down on Adair's still stroking cock. Her nipples tightened into pointed beads that rasped against his light covering of chest hair. She matched his movement, pushing against him, every nerve in her body exploding, setting her skin on fire. The pleasure devoured her, ate away at everything she used to be until nothing was left. The mind-numbing, pulsing pleasure careening around her.

Her heart thundered against her ribs. Her breath wheezed shallowly out of her lungs and still there was nothing in her existence, but that thick cock impossibly filling her, pounding into her. Vaguely she was aware of Adair's strangled shout, the hot flash of his cum inside the latex barrier, but any more than that and her brain would shut down for good.

He collapsed at her side, his half-hard cock still buried deep inside her. Brina's internal muscles continued to clamp down around him as ripples of aftershocks swept through her.

"You are so amazing." He kissed her lips softly, his muscular body covered with sweat. He was panting hard through kiss-swollen lips and Brina thought she'd never seen him look sexier as he looked at her from sated, dark eyes. "Stay put," he said and slowly slid from the tight hold of her body. "I'll be right back."

Brina didn't protest his leaving. She knew the condom had to be disposed of. Plus, it gave her the opportunity to make a break for it. She couldn't stay with Adair any longer. Already her heart broke at the thought of leaving him. But she could never

compete with his family and win. Their last go-around had proven that much to her. Stolen moments were all they'd ever have.

And damn her for wanting more, for wanting it all.

If her chest ached for a nameless intangible thing, Brina ignored it and focused on gathering her clothes and getting dressed. She wanted out of the room before Adair could come out and stop her.

Her independence and freedom meant everything to her now. It was the only thing he'd left her. No way would she throw away everything for the sake of a man. A man who'd left her once before and could easily do so again. In any event, she needed to gather her wits together. There were wedding festivities to get through. She owed it to Zoe to keep her shit together. No matter how much she wanted to run screaming from the hotel all the way back to the safety of her home.

With a last glance at the bathroom, Brina slipped out of hotel room and quietly closed the door behind her.

Chapter Five

The soft click of the door closing made Adair's heart twist. He'd known chances were slim that Brina would stay with him, but that hadn't stopped his heart from hoping. He could have kept her there, tied to him through passion and sex, but someday they'd have to come up for air and face the reality that waited for them. Maybe it was better she left now before he ending up doing something that would make her hate him forever.

Like his plot to kidnap her and whisk her away in his private plane. *Yeah*, he snorted at himself, *nothing to make a woman love you like involuntary bondage*.

Letting out a sigh of defeat he grabbed a change of fresh clothes and headed back to the bathroom for a much needed shower and pity party. And to put on his game face for the wedding fuss.

* * * * *

Brina stood in front of the elevator, waiting, although she wasn't sure for what. The door stayed closed. Somehow the fact that he didn't try to follow her made her want to go screaming back in there, demanding to know why he hadn't tried to stop her. Did the love words he'd whispered mean nothing? What about his seemingly sincere and abject apology? A man didn't say he was sorry for dumping you then whisper soul-deep love words unless he meant to create a future, did he?

Feeling her brain start to hurt from all the mental roller coaster she'd put it on, Brina took a deep breath and lifted her hand to press the down button. Before she could touch the shiny arrow down, the light above the double doors blinked and a soft ping sounded.

She automatically stepped back to make room for the people getting off. Not really wanting anyone to see her walk of shame in case it was a fellow wedding attendee, Brina kept her back half turned and pretended an intense interest in her shoes.

The only way to make it through the wedding and the rest of the wedding festivities was to pretend her time with Adair never happened. If she could manage that then she would drive herself home and have a nice, long cry – in her too large tub while drowning her sorrows in a bottle or two of good German wine.

Out of the corner of her eye she glimpsed a tall woman with dark hair and perfect carriage step out of the elevator. Brina's heart gave a hard thump in recognition and she instinctively stepped back.

Too late, she was caught, her slight movement drawing the elegant older woman's attention.

"Breena," her name came drawn out in a thick Egyptian accent. Akila Al'Hassan stood tall and domineering in front of her and Brina felt her knees start shaking.

This woman had made her life a living hell, convincing her son to dump the Irish girl she'd deemed not good enough for her precious offspring. Adair had never said the words, but his mother's last visit had been the beginning of the end for them.

"Oh shit," she whispered under her breath then gathered up the tattered remnants of her courage and faced her personal boogie monster.

"Mrs. Al'Hassan, I'm surprised to see you here." She almost mumbled a false "So nice to see you again" but couldn't push the lie past her lips.

"Brina, I'm very happy to have run into you. It saves me the bother of having to look for you."

Shock held Brina's tongue silent for several seconds. Then her brain kicked into gear. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yes, my dear, I did. I will buy you coffee and we will talk. I'm afraid there are several things I must discuss with you." In her typical imperious manner Akila swept

ahead of her and into the waiting elevator without once looking back or asking if the younger woman might have other plans.

Feeling her backbone grow in direct proportion to her anger Brina stalked into the elevator and jabbed the L for lobby. "Don't worry, Mrs. Al'Hassan, I have a few things to say to you as well."

Both women remained silent on the short ride down to hotel's stylish bistro. The smell of coffee nearly had Brina swooning with need. The booth they found gave them privacy from other early morning diners and nosy staff.

They ordered coffee and dispensed with the menus. Once the lovely young teenage waitress with flyaway red hair disappeared they got down to business.

"You don't like me." Adair's mother fired the first shot.

Brina, locked and loaded, didn't hesitate to fire back. "Why should I? You pressured the man I loved into leaving me in order to please his family. You made him choose between us and that's a burden no mother should ever place on her child. My God, I can't get over how selfish you are."

Akila jerked back from the verbal smackdown, but didn't jump to defend herself. "I suppose from your point of view that was the situation."

"My point of view came from the front seat. Adair loved me and you couldn't stand it. So you came into our lives, our home and forced him away with familial bonds." She drew in a gulp of air. "I just have to wonder how the hell you get the umbilical cord to stretch the distance."

The hit was a heart shot as far as emotional daggers went. Though she expected to be proud, shame crowded in on her instead. How she really fallen this far? Throwing taunts and insults at Adair's mother? She had to get out of here.

Not waiting for Akila to respond, Brina dug into her purse for cash, threw some bills on the table and stood up. "Look, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said any of that. Adair's a grown man who made his own choices. Guess I never really got over him leaving me."

She turned to make her way out of the coffee shop when strong, slim fingers captured her wrist. "My son never got over losing you either. That is why I have come. To beg you to open your heart to him once more. I made many mistakes. I wish I could say it's all done with a mother's love, but some were made through pride. You know our customs, our traditions. But I clung to them too hard and made my son a miserable, lonely man."

With the grip firmly on her arm Akila guided Brina back to the booth before releasing her. "I came here to find you, to explain that I will interfere no more in your lives. My son means the world to me and his happiness must come before my own petty desires."

Swallowing a few times past the dryness of her throat Brina finally engaged her brain. "You aren't here to threaten me to stay away from Adair? Why?"

A small, sad smile curved the other woman's lips. "You have every right to be wary, I know that, but it makes me hurt. I wonder what kind of relationship we would have had if I'd been smart enough to welcome you with open arms. I've always wanted a daughter and my son had given me one. I was too stupid or stubborn or both to understand the gift I'd been given." She placed one bejeweled hand over Brina's.

"This wedding has offered the perfect opportunity for us all to be together and resolve this. Please don't let my son go, to spite his meddling mother. If you give me the chance I will show you that there's more to me than my pride and temper. I know my son still loves you. He never stopped, Brina. Please don't give up on the incredible future you could have just because of me."

"Mrs. Al'Hassan—"

"Akila, please."

Brina cleared a lump of emotion from her throat. "Akila, I still don't get this." She waved a hand to encompass the table and both of them. "Why now? It's been years since Adair and I broke up. Why the sudden change of heart?"

"It's never been sudden, my dear." Akila took a small sip of her coffee then looked at Brina with Adair's beautiful, dark eyes. "My son came home as I demanded. He dated Egyptian women. He did and said everything correctly and I've never seen him so miserable. It took a while and my husband's fierce temper to finally make me realize that my son had already found his life's companion and I had made him leave her. Please, don't get me wrong, it wasn't easy or quick to convince Adair to leave you. It took me months of work and bribing, threatening all the relatives to agree with me. The only reason he left was because I played upon his family honor and tradition. For no other reason did he leave you and never once has he stopped loving you."

"It's true, you know." Adair's voice came from behind her, making her jump in the deep leather booth.

"Shit, Adair, you scared the crap out of me." Nervously Brina put a shaky hand to her chest and looked over at the man she'd always loved. Dressed in a casual white dress shirt, rolled up at the sleeves and tucked into a pair of well-worn jeans.

"I never did stop aching for you," he told her, "and wondering why the hell I let my skillfully manipulative mother talk me into leaving the best thing that's ever happened to me."

Akila stared at her son. "How long have you been listening to our private conversation?"

A slight flush darkened Adair's already tanned cheeks as he answered his mother. "I needed to get out of my room, coffee seemed like a good idea, so here I am." His deep, midnight gaze never left Brina.

"Well, that is good. You need to convince this beautiful young lady that you are worthy of her. If you don't then maybe I'm mistaken. Now it's all up to you." With that Adair's mother rose to her feet, kissed both of them on the forehead and walked proudly away.

Adair slid into the seat across from Brina. They sat in silence for a few moments before he cleared his throat and spoke to her. "I didn't put her up to that, you know. I didn't even know she'd be here."

Brina's head was nodding before he finished the sentence. "I know. She said she came to see me."

"Oh?"

"Yeah..." Taking a deep breath for courage, Brina blurted out the question burning in her mind. "Is it true? Anything she said? All of it? None of it?"

He reached across the table to cover her hands with his. "Every word of it. You were always in my thoughts and forever in my heart. No matter the women I met, none could ever compare to you. I gave my heart away once and had nothing left to give anyone else."

Moisture flooded her eyes as tears streamed down her face. "Oh God, Adair, how did I get so lucky?"

A small grin curved his beautiful lips. "You call this lucky? Being apart for years, missing you until I thought I'd go insane? Waking up jacking off to dreams of you? That's lucky?"

Quickly she slid out of the booth and over to his lap. "I'm lucky because you came back to me. You never gave up on us." She pressed a quick kiss to his lips then confessed, "I love you, Adair Al'Hassan."

"I love you too, Brina Collins—please, God willing, one day Brina Al'Hassan." He slanted his head and took over the kiss. When they finally both raised their heads they were panting for air and smiling like fools in love.

"Ask me nicely and I just might say yes. If you don't I'll sic your mother onto you," she teased and felt like a million bucks. As if she could dance on air or float to the clouds. Nothing could bring her down, not with Adair's love and his mother's approval to support her.

Adair gave a mock shudder. "Anything, but that. Now, let's go back to the room so we can celebrate properly. We still have time before the big event and I don't want to waste it."

"Oh I couldn't agree more." Brina slipped off his lap and twined her fingers with as they headed to the elevators and into their future.

About the Author

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.

Allie 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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