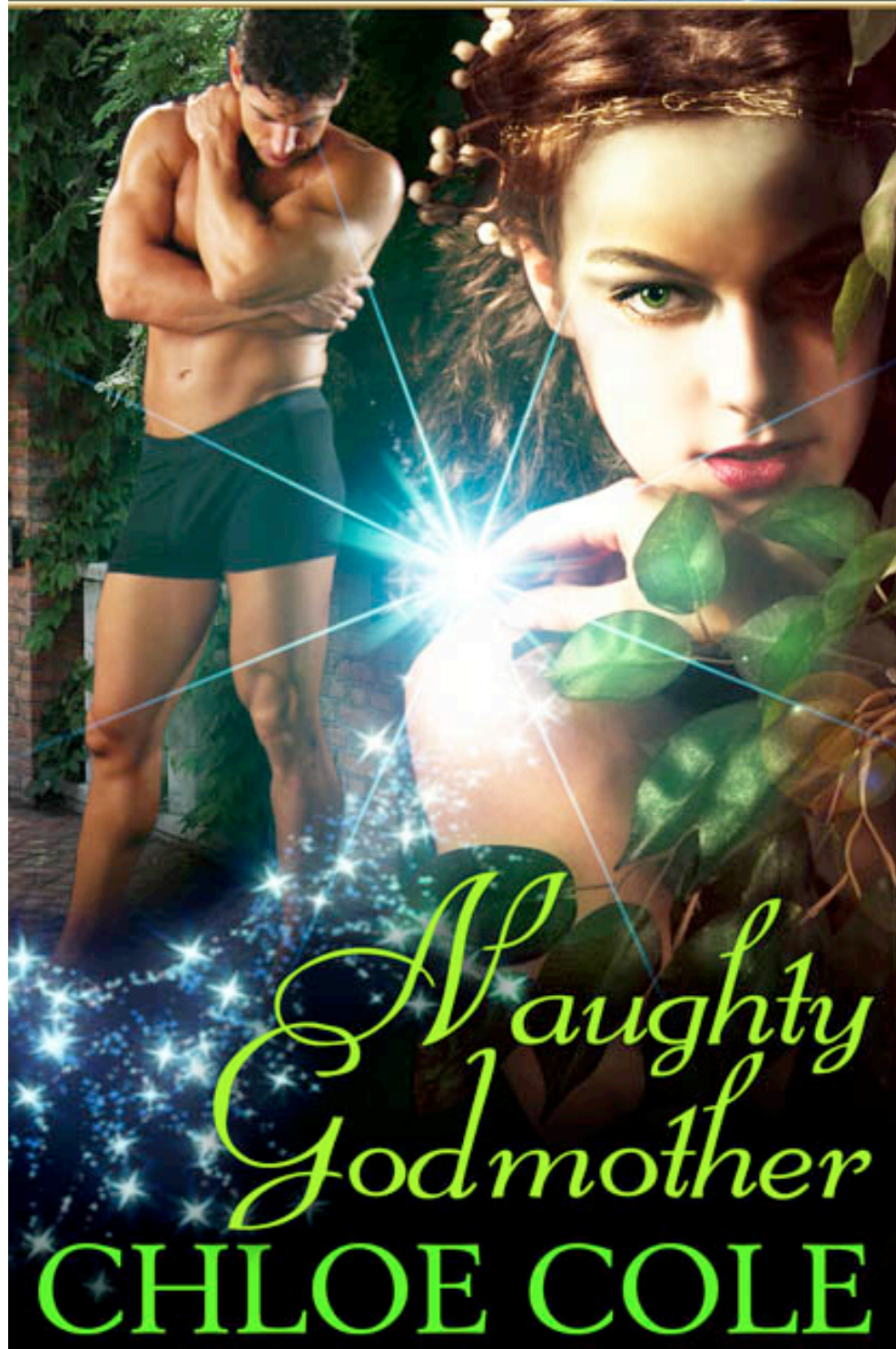


ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



Naughty Godmother

Chloe Cole

It's only her first day on the new job, and already fairy Holly Tucket is in over her head as she attempts to use her powers to turn super nerd Alex Nelson into a lady-killer. Little does she know Alex isn't who he pretends to be, and when it comes to making women melt, he doesn't need any help.

Security expert Alex Nichlaus has been undercover for four months and is putting the finishing touches on a smuggling case that has kept him secluded and celibate. When a sexy redhead shows up on his balcony claiming to be a fairy sent to teach him how to please a woman, he just can't bring himself to send her away.

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Naughty Godmother

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NAUGHTY GODMOTHER

Chloe Cole

Dedication

To Melinda, the real Holly Tucket. And for my sister Nicole who, despite my determination not to, makes me believe in magic.

Acknowledgement

To my editor, Grace Bradley, for making me look good and making it look easy.

Trademarks Acknowledgement

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Glock: Glock, Inc.

Chapter One

"Him. He's the one."

Mila arched a perfectly shaped raven brow. "Are you certain you wouldn't like a little more time to choose? This shouldn't be taken lightly."

"Nope, that's the guy. I'm sure of it," Holly said with an emphatic nod.

"It's a one-shot deal you know. If he's a dud, that's that. Fail."

"I know."

"All right," Mila said, her tone indicating that, while it may have been "all right" it certainly wasn't smart. "Sign here."

Mila held out the elaborate gold pen and Holly resisted the urge to wipe her sweat-soaked palms on her jeans before taking it gingerly. With a trembling hand, she scrawled out her signature then held the pen back out to Mila, who shook her head.

"Keep it. You might need it."

Oh ye of little faith.

She was right though, better safe than sorry. "So now what?"

"Now you get to work. You have," Mila raised an elegant wrist to check her watch, "twenty-three hours and fifty-nine minutes to get it done." She cast a dubious glance at the image of a man in a lab coat sitting on a park bench, tapping away on his laptop. "And judging by the looks of him, you've not a moment to spare. If you need me to intervene, you know what to do."

She picked up the contract and stood to go. "Wait!"

Mila paused and cocked her head expectantly.

"What if I can't go through with it?" Holly whispered.

"Call me and I'll intervene." Uncharacteristic concern clouded Mila's eyes. "You know, not everyone is cut out for this kind of work. You don't have to do this."

"Yes I do. I have to at least try. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't."

"All right then, give it your best shot. Always remember to look at it like a public service. You're helping people become more comfortable with themselves. Like a therapist. Now, hop to it."

And with a flick of her manicured fingertips she was gone.

"Showoff," Holly grumbled.

She looked down at the bowl of water on the table and into the face of her new charge. Oblivious to her voyeurism, he slid his glasses back up the bridge of his nose, unaware that his life was about to change forever. *If* she had the skills to pull it off. The thought kicked up the swarm of butterflies that had taken residence in her stomach since the day Mila had summoned her about the possible promotion.

I could have said no.

She let out a snort of disgust. As *if*. It would have been an unforgivable slight if Holly didn't at least try the new job Fairy Queen Lucienne had selected for her. If she crashed and burned and was a major disappointment to everyone involved—again—she could just go back to her happy little job and forget it ever happened.

Maybe then they'd all finally just let her be. And who knew? Maybe she'd be great at it.

With a sigh, she dipped her finger into the water and the scene reflected there shuddered and disappeared.

The clock was ticking.

She picked up the suitcase and laid it on the coffee table. Aside from the lingering scent of lilacs that accompanied Mila everywhere, it was the only evidence of her having been there. And despite the fact the potential contents of the bag terrified her,

she was grateful for both it and the scent that still permeated the air. Both were ironclad evidence she wasn't a raving lunatic.

On her twelfth birthday, as it was for all the fairies, she'd blossomed and was introduced to the world of magic. Even after fifteen years, every so often she still needed reassurance that she hadn't lost her mind that day; that her whole life wasn't just some prolonged delusion.

With no time for further contemplation, she opened the suitcase then covered her eyes, peering down through the cracks of her splayed fingers. The tried and true method did little to soften the blow.

It was bad. Really bad.

Three pairs of stiletto heels, two black and one red, stared back at her. Always practical, even in spite of the nerves clawing at her, she decided instantly on the red ones. That way when she toppled down the stairs and broke her ever-loving neck, at least the shoes would match the pool of blood that would likely be her final resting place. Mila would've been proud to know that at least one of her lessons had stuck.

A woman should always put her best foot forward. The way to lure a man is to C.A.S.T., darling. Color coordinate, emphasize your Assets, and never leave home without your Stilettos and a Thong.

Ah Jeez, and speak of the devil, there it was. Holly wrenched her stupid fingers away from her stupid eyes and gnawed her lip as she stared down at the teeniest, tiniest scrap of underwear she'd ever seen. It made dental floss look positively substantial.

Well, fiddlesticks.

* * * * *

Alex Nichlaus yanked the glasses off his face and rubbed the bridge of his nose where they pinched just enough to be annoying. Another couple days and he'd be rid of them for good.

He couldn't wait for the whole thing to be over. To get out of the cramped apartment, change out of the ridiculous clothes and, if there really was a God, to get laid.

And definitely not in that order.

After four months without sex, he was starting to lose his mind and if the old wives' tale held true, his vision wouldn't be far behind. His hand just wasn't going to cut it for much longer.

He needed a woman and he needed one bad.

Gooseflesh raised on his arms as the room turned unseasonably cool. A moment later, the curtains fluttered. He stood to investigate but before he could work out the cause, a loud crash and a muffled yelp sounded from the balcony.

His heart bucked as a rush of adrenaline coursed through him. Sliding the glasses up his nose, he reached a hand behind his back, resting his palm lightly on the Glock nestled there. He considered drawing the weapon but dismissed the idea. Foolhardy maybe, but he'd worked too hard for too long establishing his cover and he wasn't about to risk blowing it at the eleventh hour.

Alex got to the French doors just in time to see a slight woman with a riot of red curls tangled around her face hauling herself up, using his planter as an anchor.

He threw the door open and glared at the intruder, who'd finally righted herself. "What the hell are you doing?" he snarled.

The redhead started in surprise, teetering. Panic flashed across her face as she pitched forward. He steeled himself but her momentum was too great and she slammed into him, knocking him off his feet. Instinctively, he wrapped his arms around her as they crashed to the floor. His lungs emptied with a whoosh as her full weight barreled into his solar plexus.

Shit.

“Crap,” the woman atop him muttered. She struggled to free herself from his grasp, but he wasn’t quite ready to let her go. If she did have bad intentions, he would be all but helpless until he got his breath back.

The darker part of him acknowledged that, bad intentions or no, it had been way too long since he’d had a woman wriggling on top of him. Her warm, soft curves molded against him in all the right places and he closed his eyes to gather some fortitude as he tried to hold her still.

A few seconds passed before he got his wind back. He sucked in a deep breath and was assailed by the scent of warm woman and buttery brown sugar. Instantly his cock stiffened.

Down, boy.

He rolled to his side, spilling her off him and onto the floor then jumped to his feet.

“Who are you and what were you doing on my balcony?” he demanded. He stared down at her, more puzzled by the second. “And why in God’s name do you have on a trench coat? It’s eighty degrees out.”

She struggled onto all fours then to her knees, peering up at him. A thatch of rust-colored curls had flopped forward, covering one side of her face and she blew them away with an exasperated huff. Her cheeks were flushed a pretty pink and she gnawed at her bottom lip. Not exactly the hallmarks of a serial killer or potential burglar, at least not from his experience. Some of the tension knotting his muscles released as his body got the signal that the “code red” had been downgraded to a code “What the fuck is going on here?”

The answer to that question hit him even as it formed in his mind—Saunders and Leeland. Those two were always looking for their next practical joke and apparently he was the mark this time.

He’d just been complaining to Saunders the other day about the job killing his sex life and now out of the blue, a cute redhead in a trench coat falls into his lap. Literally. Talk about ammunition, he’d practically laid himself out on a silver platter.

What didn't sit right, though, was that they had engaged him at all. He was under deep cover and it was serious business. Even though things were coming to a close, he wouldn't feel comfortable breaking character until the perps were picked up and all the evidence he'd collected was turned in to the authorities.

Dammit, he'd handpicked those two jackasses when he'd started the company and it burned him up that they didn't know better. They'd always been a little immature, but they weren't usually careless. First thing on tomorrow's "to do" list was to make sure nothing like this ever happened again.

Alex turned his attention back to the woman at his feet. He contemplated letting her off the hook but something about the way she looked—all flustered and on her knees in front of him, no less—made him want to see how things played out. This was the most entertainment he'd had in months.

The woman on the ground pushed herself to her feet. "The coat came in the bag, if you *must* know. And I'm here because this is my block and you've been yearning for help."

He scowled at her, incredulous. What the hell was she babbling about? "Are you drunk or something?"

"No, it just takes me a while to get used to these dag-burned heels. You'd think three-inch ones would do, right? But *nooo*." She wrinkled her pert nose in disgust and shifted her gaze to the couch. Hunching her shoulders, she inched toward it. When she reached it, she heaved a sigh of relief, holding onto the back for support.

"There we go. I've got my legs under me now. Why don't we have a seat and I'll explain everything?" she asked, shooting him a brave smile.

There was a fine edge of hysteria to her voice and he felt oddly sympathetic. Either she was a great actress and this was part of the joke or she was brand new at this. On top of her wholesome looks, she was just so...awkward. He hadn't spent time with many strippers in his thirty-four years, just at the occasional bachelor party, but he was pretty sure he'd never seen one like her before.

Sharp, bottle-green eyes regarded him as she waited for him to answer.

He moved to sit on the ottoman as she shimmied around the armrest and plopped down onto the sofa.

She slipped a hand into the deep pocket of her coat and he tensed again, hand on Glock, until she extracted a handful of note cards and a sheaf of papers.

Clearing her throat, she began reading from the cards.

“Good evening, Mr. Nelson. My name is Holly Tucket and I am your Naughty Godmother.” She paused, looked up from her notes and made a grand, sweeping gesture with one arm before consulting the cards again.

Her face was so solemn he had to swallow the guffaw that threatened to escape.

“When you broadcasted your need of my services, I heard the call and I’m here to help. Trouble with women? Not a problem. When I’m done with you, you’ll be fighting them off.”

She gave him an encouraging, albeit rather patronizing, smile. “I bet you’re wondering how this all works. Well, let me tell you. I have twenty-four hours to turn you, Nerdy Mr. Nice Guy, into a bad boy babe magnet. All you have to do is follow my instructions to the letter and promise not to tell a single soul about me. The contract outlines all the details.”

She leaned forward and patted his shoulder gently. “I know this is a bit of a shock, so take a few minutes to read it over and get your head together. Then we can have a little Q and A session.”

Alex bristled at her assessment of him until he reached up and fiddled with his glasses, then looked down at his clothes. For a few minutes there, he’d forgotten what he must look like to her. And he’d also fallen out of character, which wouldn’t do at all. Whatever kind of joke this was, he couldn’t let it distract him when he was so close to the end of things. He had a job to complete and he was going to do it by the book.

What would Alex Nelson do? he asked himself.

Taking the packet she handed him, he scanned it then shook his head in admiration. The guys had gone all out. It looked and read like a real contract, with all the legal mumbo-jumbo and even sported a gold-leaf seal depicting the silhouette of a curvy woman with a wand. Nice touch.

As he skimmed, he was pleased to note that the name under the signature line read "Alex Nelson". At least the idiots hadn't given out his real last name.

Grabbing a pen off the coffee table, he signed with a flourish.

"There you go. And thanks, you showed up just in time. I need all the help I can get. Where do we start?" He rubbed his hands together and pasted an eager, needy smile on his face.

She hesitated, her throat working as she swallowed audibly. A twinge of guilt niggled at him. Maybe he should just let her know he was onto her and end the charade.

Then again, there was no sense making the girl feel bad on her first day. And damn him, but he really wanted to see what was under the coat.

"So you believe me? Just like that? Don't need any proof or anything?"

"Nope. It all makes perfect sense."

"Oh. Okay then."

She looked so crestfallen, he found himself wanting to make her feel better. "But now that you mention it, maybe some proof would be good."

Holly brightened and nodded. "No problem." She picked up the pile of cards and riffled through them, plucking one out of the bunch.

Her face scrunched in concentration as she twirled a finger toward the floor lamp in the corner of the room and shouted, "*Luz versilus!*"

A strange hiss and a loud pop echoed in the small space then the room went dark.

"Huh," she mumbled. "That wasn't supposed to happen. That was a new one for me, lemme try one of my usual—"

"No, no, that's okay," he assured her, and went to the adjoining dining room and turned on the light. Clearly whatever they'd done to rig the lamp hadn't worked exactly as intended. If he let her continue this charade she was liable to burn the place down. No wonder she'd been so bummed out when he didn't ask to see some magic. A lot of work must have gone into that setup.

"Okay, if you're sure."

"I'm sure."

Holly thumbed through the cards again and pulled another from the pile. "Next, I'm supposed to..." She trailed off, the color draining from her cheeks.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all." Her tone was brisk and she rallied before his eyes, shooting him a winning smile. She stood, again steadying herself on the armrest, and dropped the cards onto the table.

With a trembling hand, she tugged one end of the belt that held her coat closed. The sides fell open an inch, then two. She paused and Alex flicked a glance to her face, wondering if maybe she had spoken but he hadn't heard over the rush of blood pounding in his ears.

Her green eyes held him transfixed as she curled her fingers around the fabric and peeled the trench away, letting it fall to the floor. The air in his lungs seemed thin and insubstantial as he tried not to look down, tried to hold her gaze. But the lure was too strong.

The blood that had pulsed in his head only seconds before drained south and filled his cock to bursting as he took in her lithe form.

She was small but perfectly proportioned. Round, firm breasts strained against the cups of a white lace bra, one deep breath away from spilling over. The creamy expanse of taut stomach led to a triangle of fabric so small, so sheer, it left no doubt she was a natural redhead. One white garter hugged a bare thigh, her shapely calves and trim ankles set off by one pop of color. Red stilettos.

Jesus.

As Alex stared dry-mouthed at the woman wobbling in her high heels before him, his cock throbbed, urging him to taste. To take. He struggled mightily to tear his gaze away to no avail.

Holly Tucket was a study in contrasts. Her face adorable, her body pure sin, she smelled like a fucking pecan pie and he just had to sit there acting like he wouldn't know what to do with her if she sat on his face.

Saunders and Leeland were so going to pay for this.

Chapter Two

As she stood exposed, conflicting emotions vied for Holly's attention. In the end, embarrassment was handily defeated by the jolt of desire arcing through her.

Alex's tense jaw worked as his hungry gaze raked her from head to toe, sending a tingle down her spine and a rush of heat between her thighs.

What was that about? When they'd observed him from the scrying bowl he'd looked totally innocuous. Perfectly harmless and spectacularly boring...*timid* even, which was exactly why she'd chosen him.

Now standing before him in the flesh, she wasn't so sure. Yes, he still had on the dated, ill-fitting glasses and the hideous geometric-pattern sweater-vest. But something wasn't right. Something in the eyes seemed out of place with the rest of the package, something raw and overtly sexual. And he'd been so confident, so commanding when he'd found her on the balcony.

She stared at him hard, trying to put the pieces together when his gaze shifted to meet hers. He froze for a moment but then Dr. Jekyll seemed to take the reins back from Mr. Hyde as the intense gleam in his dark eyes faded and the little lamb returned, eager for direction.

"Um, wow. You're really pretty." He fidgeted in his seat.

"Thanks. I'm glad you think so. That will make the rest of this go much easier."

His nostrils flared as the tension returned to his face for an instant then retreated.

"The rest of what go easier?" he asked in a husky voice.

She narrowed her eyes at him. "You *are* Alex Nelson, right? You don't have a twin or anything, do you?"

“That’s me. And I’m an only child. So you were saying something about the rest of this...”

Holly bent to retrieve her note cards and shuffled them until she found the two she needed.

In order for him to land a sexy, savvy lady, your charge needs to be comfortable around women of that caliber. Embody that woman so he is prepared when the time comes to strike out on his own.

Check. Well, half a check anyway. She may have been a little awkward at first. And her entrance had been atrocious, but she would be extra-super-duper savvy from here on out.

She flipped to the next card.

In order for him to allow you into his world and accept your advice, you need to be physically attractive to him. In order for him to get the type of woman he wants, he needs to be equally attractive. Plan a look for him that will make him as appetizing as possible.

She cocked her head and checked him out again. Like all NGM charges, he had potential. The ones that didn’t went to another department, an elite group of fairies called Miracle Workers. They had a lot more time and a lot more magic than the average godmother and they weren’t afraid to use it to do a major overhaul on a charge.

This one had good bones, a full head of hair and nice teeth. Despite his ill-fitting clothes, after being sprawled on top of him earlier, she knew he had at least a decent body under there somewhere.

Looks-wise, after a little spit and polish, he’d do. She’d start off by getting him to try the clothes she’d brought, maybe lose the glasses and put some product in his hair. With a couple of minor changes and those flashes of charisma he could be a real winner.

“Be right back.”

She braved the stilettos and slowly made her way to the balcony. After locating the bag that had been flung there when she’d stumbled, she pawed through it until she found what she was looking for.

When she got back to the living room, she was armed with hair goo, a pair of modern faded jeans, an athletic-cut, white button-down shirt and a fitted t-shirt to go underneath. A plain brown belt would complete the look.

Simple, casual, great for an after work drink date.

"Okay, go try this stuff on."

She shoved the pile of clothes at Alex and ushered him away. As she waited, she tried to tamp down the nervous excitement that coursed through her.

He was going to be so happy when he saw how different a change of clothes made him look and feel. She bet his confidence would increase tenfold just from that one small change.

A couple minutes passed before Alex reappeared with a sheepish smile on his face and Holly bit back a gasp.

"How does it look?"

Frigging awesomely hot. "Not bad."

The t-shirt clung to his toned chest and a six-pack that wouldn't quit. The jeans sat low on lean hips and hugged his manly bits like barnacles on a boat. A really big, thick boat.

More like a yacht, maybe.

A hot flash hit her and she bit her lip, dragging her gaze away. She made the rest of the journey down and saw he was barefoot, which felt oddly intimate.

He cleared his throat and her gaze shot up to meet his, her already overheated face going molten.

"Looking good. Really good."

"Thanks. I like it too."

"Okay, so how about we put some product in your hair, huh?"

She didn't wait for an answer and went about scooping some of the paste in her hands and rubbing them together.

"Sit down."

He did so without question and she ran her fingers through his hair. It was really nice, thick and silky, with just a hint of curl. She mussed it this way and that, then stepped back.

Well hot darn, she'd picked herself a doozy. He was a stone-cold fox. This Naughty Godmother thing was going to be a one-day deal and as far as charges were concerned, she was batting a thousand. They couldn't all be this easy, could they?

"You look great."

"So do you." His voice was deep and dark and mesmerizing.

She broke eye contact to glance down at herself and winced. So caught up, she'd totally forgotten she was half naked. She quickly scooped up her note cards, hoping to cut the tension.

Break down some barriers. This will likely be the hardest part, so start now. Draw him out of his shell. Nothing is sexier to a woman than a man with confidence, so give him some. A good starting point is to make sure your charge knows how to ki –

Holly squeezed her eyes shut and forced the words out in a rush. "Okay, Champ. Time for lesson number two."

She put the cards down and stepped up to the ottoman where Alex sat, motionless. Her heart knocked almost painfully against her ribs and she wondered, yet again, if she could pull this off.

Holly gave herself a mental shake. The contract was signed and she'd made a commitment. She'd just have to suck it up and do the best she could for her charge. Tomorrow, when it was all over, she'd ask for her old job and everything would go back to normal. Hopefully.

"Stand up, would you? And take off the glasses. You don't need to see for this."

Alex shot to his feet and took off his glasses, setting them on the table.

"Now you're supposed to kiss me. Or I'm supposed to kiss you. The bottom line is that I have to teach you how to kiss, okay?" Her cheeks were on fire and her hands shook as she stopped to stand just a few inches from him.

What was the big deal, anyway? It was just a stupid kiss.

She laid a hand on his chest to steady herself and lifted her chin. Up close, he seemed very tall. And broad. His eyes were a golden-flecked hazel and they regarded her intently.

The thick, black-framed glasses hadn't done him justice.

She zeroed in on his lips. Full, firm, kissable. His mouth parted as he wet his lips with the tip of his tongue. A warm, minty scent washed over her as his breathing quickened.

Holly realized with a start that she had his shirt clutched tightly in her fist and was leaning in to him.

She thought of Mila, who oozed sexuality, and tried to channel her at that moment, remembering the lessons of the Russian seductress. *Fairies are passionate, sensual. Focus.*

Her nerves drained away as she committed to the role like she did to everything—wholeheartedly.

"A kiss," she murmured in a fair imitation of Mila's silky tone, "should be thought of as an audition. For sex, for a relationship, for whatever it is you desire. Bad kiss? 'Thanks but no thanks, Mr. Nelson. Don't let the door hit you on the way out.'" She inched closer to him, noting the hitch in his breath. "Good kiss? 'We really like your work so far, Alex. We'd like to see more of you.'" She brushed her lips against his jaw then blazed a trail upward.

"You do want the call-back, don't you, Alex?" she whispered against his mouth.

The tension rolled off him in waves, his muscles coiled, but he remained still. Holly pressed her lips to his but they were locked tight. Undeterred, she slid her tongue along

the seam until he opened them. Digging a hand into his hair, she pulled him flush against her. Her nipples pebbled as her chest came into contact with his.

He felt good. Way too good.

Alex's cock jerked in response as her warm, soft lips closed on his. She'd warned him. He'd had time to steel himself for this, but it was just supposed to be one harmless kiss. He would thank her for her time, give her a message for Saunders and Leeland and send her packing.

But *damn*.

In a hot minute, everything had changed. Gone was the clumsy, cute girl from his balcony. Any sign of awkwardness drained away as she leaned into him, her full, round breasts burning into his chest.

Coherent thought fled as her bewitching scent enveloped him. He clenched his hands into fists to keep from grabbing her and taking over. The need to dominate, to take control, rode him hard but he stood strong.

Until she whispered, "You can kiss me back, Alex."

And then her tongue touched his. Powerless, he responded, reveling in the warmth of her mouth. Wrapping a hand in her hair, he anchored her to him and nipped her full bottom lip, groaning at the feel of her. His other hand slipped to her hip and squeezed the silky skin, kneading the pliant flesh. *Perfect*. He arched his hips toward her, almost delirious with the need to feel the softness of her pussy against his aching cock.

She whimpered against his mouth and melted into him, her body instinctively responding to the pressure. Her pelvic bone ground hard against his dick, igniting a desperate need to get closer to her, to be inside her.

Releasing her hair, he traced a path down her back, brushing along her spine until he reached her ass. He spread his fingers wide and palmed the firm globes then angled her toward him until his cock pressed directly against her sweet spot. She made a low

sound deep in her throat and he bit back an answering growl of satisfaction. He began to rock against her in slow, deliberate circles, rubbing, grinding.

As the heat of her pussy seeped through his jeans, he realized he was one straining zipper away from fucking her. He was like a hormone-saturated teenager, and if a stiff breeze hit him right, he'd come. To his relief, Holly appeared to be in the same condition. Her breathing had grown erratic, her whole body tense against his as she rode his jeans-clad cock.

He guided her away from his erection and nudged her legs apart with his knee, settling his leg into the vee between hers. Cupping her ass in his hands, he worked her over his thigh again and again as he fucked her mouth with his tongue. Soon, she needed no encouragement and was writhing against him of her own volition.

Alex released her luscious ass, letting his hand roam over her hip, skim across her lean stomach and stop just beneath her breast. Her heart skittered wildly beneath his palm. He stroked the bare skin, trailing along the underside of one breast, then the valley between.

She curled her upper body toward his hand, trembling. Unable to deny her, he slid the narrow bra strap off one shoulder and brushed a thumb over her stiffened nipple. She froze and let out a long groan. He pinched it lightly between his fingers, rolling it, tugging until the movement on his thigh becoming frenzied. She tore her mouth from his, panting.

He made the mistake of looking down and got an eyeful of his swarthy hand on her pale, delicate skin. Her breasts were spectacular and full. All he could think about was his cock between the cleft, sliding faster and faster until he exploded onto her, topping those tight strawberry nipples with his cum.

"God, you're so sexy," he breathed, unable to contain himself.

She murmured an incoherent response and moved her hand around to the front of his jeans, popping the button then forcing his zipper down. Her soft fingers closed

unerringly around his cock and he froze. She moaned her approval and gripped him just right before dragging her hand up then down in the most sublime of strokes.

There was a moment of sheer panic as his balls tightened and he realized that his body was going to betray him. He tried to speak, to stop her, but his mouth hung open in a silent scream. *Stop!*

But again she pulled at him, this time squeezing the swollen head of his shaft on the upstroke.

And it was all over.

The sweet pussy bouncing on his thigh, the scent of this woman drowning him, the hot grip on his dick; it was too much. The orgasm nearly floored him and he bellowed, the waves crashing over and over, her magic hand working his cock as he came.

“Ahhh, damn, Holly,” he groaned.

She stayed with him through the storm and until the tremors ceased. Shaken, he pulled her hand away.

Holly extricated herself from his grasp and took a step backward. They stared at one another, chests heaving.

“What the heck was that about? Where did you learn all that stuff?” she demanded.

He was blank, her words and their accusing tone taking a long moment to register through the fog in his brain. Reality came crashing back and he was rendered speechless.

Not only had he just humiliated himself with the early launch, he’d fucked up royally.

Yes, Alex Nichols, nerdy lab assistant, do tell us “what the heck” that was about?

He tried to form an answer, to focus on anything but those almost-bare tits just a couple feet away. Her nipples stood out in tight little buds, one still peeking out over the top of the white lace and his mouth actually watered.

It had been world class, but the hand action had barely taken the edge off. He had four months to make up for and this woman was boggling his brain.

Maybe it was that, or maybe it was the novelty of her method of seduction, but he couldn't remember ever wanting another woman so much. It was clouding his judgment.

Where did she put that damn coat?

"Well?"

Alex Nichols, inexperienced geek. He cleared the gravel from his throat and pasted an apologetic smile on his face hoping it didn't look quite as pained as it felt.

"I-I don't know what came over me. You're so pretty, I just...gut instinct, I guess. And I'm really sorry about the mess. The bathroom is through there." He pointed down the narrow hall, his face burning with genuine embarrassment as she walked away.

What a loser.

Alex closed his eyes, cruelly denying himself the pleasure of seeing her backside in motion as she left the room.

He hadn't made her come, so he certainly didn't deserve to watch her go.

Shit. As a man of unparalleled focus and concentration, he took pride in the fact a woman hadn't left his bed unsatisfied since he was a teenager. Not because he was vain, but because he loved it. Loved to watch their eyes go wild, feel the delicate play of muscle under soft skin, taste the musky flavor of a plump, wet clit on his tongue.

His traitorous cock twitched at the thought. He would have given up his Glock forever for a taste of Holly Tucket right then.

Glock!

Panic subsided as he remembered putting it in the drawer when he went in to change. So much for unparalleled focus. In the scorching heat of the moment, he hadn't given it a second thought.

With a sigh of regret he headed into his bedroom, washed up in the tiny bathroom there and changed into a pair of track pants, stripping off the button-down shirt and just leaving on the t-shirt.

When he got back to the living room, she still hadn't returned. He slipped his glasses on and waited, at a loss as to what to do next.

Holly's voice was strained as she reentered the room, her progress slow and stilted in the stilettos.

"I'm sorry I freaked out, Alex. It's fine. You did good. You actually seem to be a natural as far as the kissing thing. I got a little carried away and I'm sorry for that. It won't happen again."

She gave him a tight smile then continued. "I should reiterate some of the finer points of the contract, though, in case I gave you the wrong idea. I'm here to teach you. Part of your lesson is how to attract and please a woman. I'll do what I deem necessary to make sure you understand your lessons, but there will be no actual intercourse. Do you understand? I'll talk you through those parts."

His brain stalled halfway through. He'd gotten hung up somewhere around "teach you" and "please a woman".

He tried to get his scrambled thoughts in order and realized she had basically just said she was still willing to fool around with him. Even with straight fucking off the table, his mind reeled with the possibilities.

Right in the midst of his fantasies, his conscience sent up a warning flare. In a moment of clarity more sobering than a junk-punch, he realized he couldn't take her up on her offer. In fact, he'd let things go way too far already.

"Alex?" Holly stared at him like he was slow-witted.

"Listen, you don't have to teach me anything, I'm okay. In fact, I'm great. I'll be fine on my own. No worries. You should probably go." The words came out in halting spurts, as if he were reading them off his own stash of note cards.

Of course they did, they were being dragged out of him by his useless killjoy of a conscience.

"Yeah...um, I beg to differ. That," she said, with a cluck of her tongue as she gestured in the vague direction of his genitals, "isn't supposed to happen. Don't feel bad though. It's okay to be nervous at first. And it happens to a lot of guys before they know what they're doing. I know you must be embarrassed, but you shouldn't be. We've just got to get you comfortable with your own body, and then we'll work on getting you comfortable with a woman's. Once you get past the novelty of it all, I'm sure your little issue will be a thing of the past." She gave him an encouraging smile. "How's that sound?"

Little issue? Oh no fucking way.

There was just no way he was going to let her walk away thinking that.

Pride reared its sinful head and he made a silent promise to himself. He was going to rock Holly Tucket's world if it was the last thing he ever did. His cock pulsed in agreement as the last of his conscience shriveled up and died a final death.

No point in fighting a losing battle when he knew without a doubt he would do absolutely anything this captivating woman would let him get away with.

He glanced at her then and realized she was waiting for an answer. And despite her confident speech, she was obviously out of sorts and nervous, so he took the reins, keeping his voice light. "Sounds like a plan. How long have you been at this job? You seem so at ease."

She gave him an appreciative smile. "Not at all. But I'm glad I had you fooled. You're actually my first assignment. In fact, you'll likely be my only assignment. I was just trying this out. I really like my old job."

Warmth infused him at the affirmation of his suspicions. This wasn't her usual profession. "Really? What did you do before this?"

"I used to be in teeth."

He was silent for a long moment. Shaking his head he finally spoke. "I don't— what does that even mean?"

"What do you think it means? I used to be a Tooth Fairy."

He gaped at her. "Seriously? That's what you're going to try and tell me now? There's a Tooth Fairy?"

"Not *a* Tooth Fairy. Tooth Fairies, plural. How could one fairy be responsible for the whole world's teeth? Really, Alex, use your head."

"Okay, so how *does* it work then?" he found himself asking. Maybe he'd breathed in some sort of toxic fumes at the lab and now he was looney tunes.

Or worse. Maybe she was so earnest because she was the crazy one—not a stripper at all, but an asylum escapee or something. His stomach sank at the thought, but rebounded quickly as he realized that crazy wouldn't explain how she'd gotten into his apartment or known his name.

She was as sane as he was. Just one fantastic actress. An actress who'd just let him know that her job description didn't include sex. That was actually good because a stripper was one thing, but a prostitute was something else. And just because sex wasn't part of the *job* didn't mean they couldn't decide, after some heavy petting, as two consenting adults, to just go for it, did it? He didn't know but he was sure going to try.

By the time he tuned back in, she was still chattering, but winding down. "And everybody gets a section. I used to work Glendale."

What was she talking about again? Right, Tooth Fairies.

"Sounds fascinating."

She grinned at him. "It's a great job. This is too, though," she added hastily.

"It's okay, I'm not offended."

"Good. Okay, we don't have a lot of time and you have a lot to learn."

Indeed.

"So I think it's time to continue our lessons. Maybe we should have a quick drink first, you know, to loosen you up a little." She looked rather desperate and he wondered who, of the two of them, really needed the loosening.

"Let's go see what there is in the kitchen. This is actually my cousin's place, I'm just subletting for the year, so I'm not sure what he has stashed."

She turned, heading toward the kitchen, then paused.

"Do you mind?" she asked, motioning to her shoes. "I'm not supposed to, but —"

"No, go right ahead. I don't want you breaking your leg."

She bent at the waist and began unbuckling the slim strap around her ankle. He froze and tried not to whimper.

Thong.

He'd felt her ass, but seeing it was a whole other thing. Firm and round, it called to him, begging to be squeezed and spanked. He visualized walking up behind her, pinning her hips as he slid his cock in deep. He wouldn't even take the scrap of lace off, just flip it to the side with one finger and line his dick up with the sweet, wet slit. Shifting, he tried to position himself in a way that his expanding tent didn't appear quite so pitched then peeped a look at the results.

Fail. It looked like he'd decided to hide his Glock in his pants.

Holly chose that moment to toss a questioning glance over at him, her gaze flicking down and back up. Pink-cheeked she stood, kicking the shoes to the side before stepping into the kitchen.

Following her in, they both steadfastly ignored his situation and he went to the liquor cabinet. He didn't drink often, but when an occasion arose, he went for the good stuff.

He gestured at the top shelf selection. "What's your pleasure?"

Chapter Three

Holly started at the question and realized he was talking about liquor. Her mind had been wallowing in the gutter since the moment she'd laid her lips to his, and she couldn't seem to get it back onto dry land again. Granted, it had been a long time since she'd been with a guy. There just hadn't been anyone she felt sufficiently attracted to.

She quickly did the math and flinched. It would be two years come July. Where had the time gone? No wonder she was so worked up after only two minutes of over-the-clothes petting. She was hard up for some good loving.

Granted, she had indulged in a little solo action when the urge hit, which was pretty often, but this... This was different. She was crazed with need, like she wasn't even herself. A dull ache still pulsed low in her stomach and her nerve endings were lit up like lights on a Christmas tree. Did she have the strength to walk away from this man without knowing what it felt like to be with him for real?

She found herself eyeing him hard again. He returned her gaze intently, his eyes narrowing as if he could read her thoughts. Heat sizzled through her as she realized that, despite his release, he was still very much affected by her. That was good. Exposure therapy, Mila called it. Getting him comfortable in sexually charged situations. She only wished *she* was a little more comfortable.

That shouldn't be her concern. Right now her job was to teach Alex about a woman's body. He seemed pretty comfy in that area, but instinct would only take him so far, and he had a delicate issue that needed to be worked out. It was her duty to ensure the next lady he was with walked away satisfied and eager for more. The twinge that came along with that thought unnerved her but she shoved it aside.

"I'll try that." She pointed randomly to one of the bottles.

"A tequila girl, huh?"

"Not really, but what the heck."

He opened another cabinet and pulled out two shot glasses, set them on the counter and poured.

"Sorry, no training wheels. I don't keep lemon handy."

"This will be fine."

She picked up the glass and mentally cursed her trembling hand as the golden liquid sloshed over the sides. It wasn't like she was scared. Nervous maybe, but also almost unbearably excited.

Her eyes locked onto his and he gave her a wolfish grin that shouldn't have even been in his arsenal. Suspicion reared its head again but faded fast. She'd seen him with her own two eyes, he was a nerd, clear as day. And their interaction in the living room was proof he didn't get a lot of female attention. He had an aptitude for foreplay and flashes of charisma. So what? He still needed her help. And as the evening progressed she was more and more inclined to meet those needs to the best of her abilities.

"Cheers." He clinked his glass to hers.

"Cheers," she replied and sucked down her shot. Heat suffused her stomach almost immediately and she embraced it.

Alex drank his too then stood looking at her as if in a trance. He reached out a tentative finger and brushed an errant drop of tequila from her chin before bringing it to his mouth and catching it with the tip of his tongue.

A wave of desire hit her hard as she imagined that tongue on her. Her nipples tightened and Alex noticed, his pupils dilating, keen eyes taking in every detail.

"One more." Her voice sounded shrill and overloud in the tiny room, making her wince.

He took her glass and silently poured them both another.

"To new friends."

"To new friends," she parroted and knocked back the second drink.

She set the glass on the table with a *click* and turned to face him, hoping the liquid courage kicked in fast.

“Alrighty, time to get down to business. The clock is ticking and there’s a lot of work to be done. Which way is the bedroom?”

Holly trailed behind Alex, noting how nicely the track pants hugged his tight bottom. She bit back an irrational giggle.

As they entered the bedroom, she was struck by how impersonal it was. No family pictures, no paintings, no warmth. Come to think of it, the living room was the same way. But he did say this was his cousin’s place, and he probably didn’t want to clutter it up if he wasn’t going to stay for the long haul.

Alex clicked on a small bedside lamp and stood, as if unsure what to do next.

Time for her to do her job. She could just get out the manuals and be done with it. Could talk him through it all in a perfunctory manner. But she had one day to do this. One day to be wild, sensual and free, the way fairies were supposed to be. And she had a perfect candidate to help her.

She was loose and languid from the drinks and this man was making her feel all kinds of sexy. The unfiltered heat of his gaze along with that shy, wary smile was a total turn-on.

And she had to hand it to Mila, the C.A.S.T. method was working out pretty niftily, even without the shoes.

They faced off on opposite sides of the bed. “You’re awfully far away.”

He wouldn’t make eye contact with her as he crossed the room but his confident, almost predatory gait made her shiver. Strange how he exuded sensuality, but only in short bursts. When it was there, it was truly something to behold. It was a wonder no other girl had seen it before now and tried to train him properly.

“Lesson two—”

“Lesson two? What was that in the living room?”

"Right. I kissed you. That counts, sort of. But now you should kiss *me*. Most dates will expect you to be the one making the first move. You gotta have a move ready for them. So, whaddaya got, Alex?"

Oh, how I wish I could show you.

He contemplated how to play this one. Out and out try to blow her mind the way she was blowing his and hope their chemistry was enough to get her to stick around once she realized she'd been misled? Or continue the Alex Nelson routine and fumble around a bit. Let her teach him a thing or two and hope it somehow resulted in a chance to finish what they'd started.

His instinct was to go with the former, but he was hardwired a certain way, and couldn't undo the years of training that compelled him never to break his cover.

"Here goes nothing." He bent down and zeroed in on her lips, but didn't tilt his head. Their noses banged together and she pulled back, chuckling.

The humiliation of the charade was almost worth it to hear that laugh. It zinged through him like a glass of fine champagne and he found himself thinking of ways to make her do it again.

"Only do that if you're trying to break her nose. Here," she said, reaching a hand to his chin, angling it for him. "Now try."

He leaned down, steeling himself against her scent and pressed his lips to hers. Despite the overwhelming urge to crush her to him, he kept his hands firmly at his sides.

His body on high alert, he waited to see what she would do next. She pulled back a few inches.

"You're going to want to put your hands on her."

Indeed. "Where?"

"Hips are a good start. Or you could touch her face, put a hand in her hair. Be creative. Just remember to be gentle early on. We'll talk about...other options later. For now, think of things that might make her shiver."

Thinking of "other options" was making *him* shiver.

He lifted a hand and tucked a lock of hair behind her ear, trailing a finger down her cheek. All the while, he never took his eyes from hers. He continued down and with the lightest of touches traced the fullness of her lips with his thumb. Her mouth parted and she let out a breathy sigh.

Alex's already-hard cock expanded as he racked his brain for ways to make her sigh like that again. Dipping his thumb in, he caressed the tender inside of her bottom lip and couldn't help but think how the wet, smooth skin would feel against the head of his cock.

Almost as if she'd read his mind, she nipped him, sending a bolt of need straight to his groin. He slid his damp thumb from her lips, skimming lightly over her jawline, down the side of her neck. He paused there, his sensitive fingertips drawn to her skittering pulse before continuing down past her delicate collarbone to the enticing vee of her cleavage.

Holly's breathing grew short as he made patterns on her skin, caressing the tops of her creamy breasts, sucking in a curse as her nipples tightened into points under the lace of her bra.

Slow, take it slow.

He purposely bypassed her nipples, continuing down to rest his wandering hand on her nearly-bare hip and giving it a squeeze.

"Like that?" he asked softly.

She swallowed before answering.

"Yesss."

Yesss.

"Can I try the kiss part again?" He made sure his lips were close enough to hers so that they brushed together as he spoke.

Holly nodded almost imperceptibly.

He touched his mouth to hers, sliding the tip of his tongue between her lips, a shallow lick, before retreating.

Her fingers were locked on his forearms in a vise grip.

"Again?" he breathed.

"Again."

His heart pounded against his ribs as he kissed her. Again, he flicked out his tongue to lave her bottom lip then tugged with his teeth before slipping into the warm cavern of her mouth.

She inched closer to him until their chests were touching, the hard points of her nipples branding his rib cage. The contact made him ache to get closer, to bury himself in her.

He tightened his hand on her hip and felt the softness of her thighs against his. He was powerless to resist. Unable to stop himself, he closed the gap between them with a decisive thrust then stilled to savor the sensation.

Wedged against her bare stomach with only his track pants and a scrap of lace separating them, he imagined how easy it would be to yank his waistband down, clutch that heart-shaped ass in his hands and lift her onto his swollen cock. No need to lie down, she was so small, he could work her up and down with ease.

Was she trembling, or was that him?

Remember who you are, Mr. Nelson.

He dropped his hand from her hip and pulled away.

"Sorry."

"It's okay. That was good. Next time you want to make a move, that's a pretty good one. Now lesson three." Her voice was low and intense, her breathing erratic.

Good.

He tried not to stare, but with her eyes bright, bottom lip swollen and nipples still hard, it wasn't easy.

Without a doubt, he was going to love lesson three no matter what it was. In fact, three was his new favorite number.

"We can do this by the book, with the drawings and a lecture, or I can show you."

"Show me," he croaked.

She gave him a thousand-watt smile.

"Let's take some of your clothes off. Just the shirt for now."

He stalled for a moment, playing bashful, then reached for the hem of the t-shirt and yanked it over his head, tossing it on the floor. The track pants did little to hide his arousal.

Holly made a low humming sound in the back of her throat and he pursed his lips to keep from grinning. Humming was good. If he could keep her humming and sighing, he'd be a happy man.

"You're in ridiculous shape," she murmured. "Why would you ever wear those silly clothes?"

He didn't answer. Partly because the question was rhetorical, partly because he didn't want to lie any more than he already had.

Her gaze raked his body, pausing on his cock. The thick head pulsed, as if aware of her scrutiny, shouting *pick me, pick me!*

She wet her lips and he followed the path of that little pink tongue. Was she imagining her mouth on him?

Stepping forward, she placed her hands on his pecs, palms grazing his nipples. "I'm going to touch you now. You need to get used to the feel of a woman's hands on you."

Her small, soft hands roamed over his chest. She ran the pad of a thumb over his nipple and he groaned as his balls tightened in response.

"Does that feel good?" she whispered, her warm breath fanning his neck.

He didn't trust himself to speak, so he nodded.

"Know your body, embrace the feeling. It's a beautiful thing, but so many people rush through. Savor every touch." She pinched his nipple and his pulse thrummed.

He was hypnotized by the look of concentration on her face. Their gazes met for a moment before he broke the contact.

She ran a hand down his stomach, stopping to toy with the drawstring of his pants.

He held his breath.

"I'm not going to touch you there yet, Alex. I know you think you want me to, but I promise, it's better this way. It'll make it easier for you to hold out."

He nodded stupidly.

She splayed a hand over his abdomen, just an inch away from his dick. Slowly, she circled him, kissing his collarbone, then his shoulder, moving until she stood behind him. Using his shoulders to balance herself, she stretched to her tiptoes and pressed her lips to the base of his neck as her nipples brushed against his bare back. Lowering herself an inch at a time, she continued to kiss a path down his spine.

Squeezing his eyes shut, Alex tried to focus only on the sensation as she drifted lower, her breasts caressing his back, her hands slipping off his shoulders to grip his hips. She didn't stop the sensual assault until her mouth reached the waistband of his pants. Then she straightened, flattening herself against his back, wrapping her arms around his abdomen and sinking her teeth into the back of his shoulder.

He groaned, the raw, almost violent sexuality of the bite a perfect foil for the sweetness of the gentle kisses leading up to it. His cock stiffened and pulsed as she sucked the flesh pinched between her teeth.

Everything in him clamored for more and he fought to remain still beneath her busy hands and mouth. Her hand swept over his hip to lay flat on his stomach. Her index finger followed the narrow strip of hair from his bellybutton downward and he

held his breath, hoping, praying she would continue. She did, cupping him through the stretched cotton, then squeezing the partially exposed head of his cock. A bead of cum dripped from the tip and he bit his lip.

"Mmm," she moaned against his shoulder as she rubbed her thumb over the silky liquid that had escaped him. She dropped her hand then backed away.

"Turn around, Alex."

He did and noted the frantic beat of the pulse in her neck, the lusty gleam in her eyes.

"Nice. You're doing very well. Now it's your turn to touch me. I'll tell you what feels good, all right? Where do you want to start?"

Oh yeah.

Without hesitation, he reached out and with a flick of his fingers unclasped the front of her bra. It sprang open and she drew in a quick breath.

He didn't touch her, he just looked, his eyes growing darker, the muscle in his jaw tensing.

"Lovely," he murmured.

She expected him to reach out then, but he remained still.

"Run your hands over them now. I want to see you touch yourself."

His voice was low and hot and moisture rushed between her legs. She lifted a hand to one breast, cupping it gently. Alex's face grew more strained. He liked what he saw. She gave a squeeze then released her breast to run her fingertip over the peak. He actually groaned then and she smiled.

"Like this?" she asked.

"Just. Like. That."

She let her head fall back as she pinched and teased, letting the sensations and the knowledge that Alex was watching envelop her.

She didn't hear him move closer, and jerked in surprise when his hands covered hers.

"Let me try."

He replaced her hands with his own, cupping her breasts. His strong, warm hands covered her entirely and she whimpered as he tested the weight of her.

"You feel amazing." He ran his thumb over each pointed tip and she shivered in response, the touch sending waves of pleasure to her center.

"So sensitive. I love that." Taking her hand, he stepped back and sat on the edge of the bed, pulling her to stand before him, so that his face was level with her chest.

"I'm going to lick you here," he said, then flicked out his tongue, swiping her nipple in a long lick.

"Mmm."

Again he licked her before drawing the tight nub into his hot mouth and sucking, so soft, so gentle she wanted to beg him for more.

She clutched the back of his head urging him closer, wordlessly begging him to increase the pace.

He pulled back. "There's no hurry. It's better this way, I promise," he mimicked, a mischievous glint in his eye.

He leaned forward then pinched the nipple between his teeth and she jerked. It hurt but in the best possible way. He laid his hand low on her belly and resumed his task, drawing on her nipple, faster and harder as the seconds ticked by.

A sweet tension pooled in her center, tightening her stomach, setting her thighs to shaking as she waited for him to cover her with his hand. Desperate, she took it in hers and placed it directly over the lacy underwear. The warmth of his hand seeped through and she groaned.

He released her nipple with a pop and she struggled to remain unmoving as he squeezed and massaged her overheated sex.

"You're so wet."

He ground the heel of his hand against her and she arched closer.

"Please."

"If I put my fingers inside you, that's not against your rules, is it?"

Pushing the thin scrap of lace to the side, he slipped two thick digits into her folds, teasing her with a shallow thrust before retreating.

"No. I mean, yes. No, it's not against the rules. Alex..." Her whole body quivered, straining for release. He was torturing her, and doing a fine job of it. What a quick study he was.

"Do you want me to rub your clit first? Like this?" He slid slippery fingers over the tiny knot of nerve endings then back down to thrust deep, and she cried out.

"Again?"

"Again, again, again," she chanted as he set a slow, sensual pace. She arched toward him, seating his fingers deeper.

He bent his head and closed his mouth over her tight nipple, sucking hard as he slid in and out. The maelstrom built and built, raging out of control.

"Harder. God, Alex, please, harder."

Alex released Holly's hips and covered her pubic bone with one hand as he fucked her with the other. She was so close but it was all so good he wasn't ready for it to be over.

He tried to block out her voice. The sexy whimper, the broken begging, the plump, swollen clit under his fingers—if something didn't give he was going to explode.

Her thighs started to quiver as she tossed her head back and forth.

"Please," she sobbed.

Shit.

He plunged deep then covered her clit with slick fingers, working her with both hands. Holly froze and her smooth walls fluttered. He bit back a shout. Rubbing the tight knot he thrust his finger into her again and again until she screamed his name, her pussy twitching and squeezing him.

Her face was flushed with ecstasy and he barely restrained himself from replacing his hand with his dick as she rocked and moved. Moisture trickled from the tip of his cock and he was painfully hard, but he held fast, riding the wave with her. She sucked in breath after shuddering breath until the tremors began to slow.

When she quieted, he took his hand from her and locked his arms around her middle, pulling her onto him as he lay back on the bed. She let out a squeal then allowed herself to be situated and they finally settled with her draped on top of him.

Soft breast to hard chest, hip to hip, sweet pussy flush against stiff cock. *Win.*

"That was quite good, sir."

He barked out a laugh. "Why thank you, ma'am. I'm glad you enjoyed it."

"Time for lesson four."

His already-swollen shaft expanded to painful proportions. Had he said three was his favorite number? No way. Four. Four was his favorite.

She wiggled her hips in a figure eight and he closed his eyes to try to concentrate on her words through the onslaught.

"What's lesson four?" he growled.

"You learned how to hold back and wait for a lady. And you did it very well. Now it's time to learn to let go."

He was going to let go all over her if she kept wiggling like that. He was denied though, as she lifted herself away and crabbed her way to the bottom of the bed until she was eye to eye with his hard-on. Her breasts brushed the top of his thighs as she settled over him.

She looked him dead in the eyes. "I'm going to do things to you you've never done before. And you're going to love it. It might seem scary or strange but you have to trust me, okay?"

He nodded, his mouth going dry. What the hell did that mean? She thought he was such a geek he'd never even gotten his dick sucked? Not once? He tried to be annoyed, but as he gazed down at the gorgeous naked woman between his legs, annoyance fled and was replaced with anticipation.

She took him in hand and squeezed. Pulling air in through his nose, he waited for those glorious, full, sweet lips to close over the head of his throbbing cock.

"I'm going to take you in my mouth. Is that okay?"

"Yeah."

She leveled him with a dazzling grin then wrapped her lips around the sensitive tip of his erection and sucked hard.

He grunted and fisted his hands in the sheet.

In and out she suckled at the distended head until he began to pump his hips beneath her. All the while, her magic hands stroked the shaft, the friction stealing his sanity. His balls tightened, drawing close to his body. She snaked a hand to cup them, pulling gently.

"Unless you want me to come, you need to stop," he ground out through tight lips.

"Close your eyes, let yourself feel," she said, her lips brushing him as she spoke.

Her hand shifted from his balls, drifting lower. A pause, then one slippery finger slid between his ass cheeks. His eyes snapped open and he froze.

"Whoa," he started.

"Shh, give it a chance, don't clench up. Trust me," she whispered. Then she deep throated him so far he saw stars. As he arched up to meet that hungry hot mouth, she took advantage of his distraction and suddenly her finger was inside him, thrusting

deep. He tried to pull away, to dislodge the intruder, but then she was pressing and sucking and damn it felt good.

She drew him in hard, running her tongue over the head of his cock then pulled back until he was almost entirely out, only the pressure of her soft lips imprisoning him. She continued like that, sucking him off then thrusting into his ass as she expelled his cock. It was a never-ending onslaught of sensation and his head spun as the blood in his body rushed downward to fill his dick to bursting.

On the precipice of something totally foreign, he quaked, fighting for control. But she was relentless. The fullness, her mouth, his body drawing on every ounce of energy as the climax bore down on him.

And then he was flying. It went on and on, crashing over him, wrecking him, as the cum snaked up the length of his turgid cock and pulsed out the tip, exploding into the waiting inferno of Holly's mouth.

"That's...*damn*." His whole body twitched and quaked in the aftermath as he gasped for air.

Speechless, he peered down at her as she slid her finger from his still-twitching ass.

She smiled and he found himself smiling back.

"I'm really proud of you."

A warm buzz that had nothing to do with the monster orgasm he'd just had ran through him.

"Thanks."

She crawled back up to lay beside him, nestling into the crook of his shoulder. Then she burrowed her face into his neck and sighed.

"I'm wrung out. I'm just going to rest my head here for a minute, okay?"

"Absolutely."

He held her tight, like a lover, and tried to pretend that's what she really was. Wrapped in the cocoon of her sweet, warm scent and her soft woman stuff pressed against his hard man stuff, his eyes drifted shut.

Chapter Four

Light streamed in through the window as Holly stood in Alex's kitchen, sliding a piece of golden brown French toast onto a sunny yellow plate. She slathered it with a pat of butter and watched as it melted.

She closed her eyes and inhaled the scent of vanilla and soaked in the moment, the sense of completion and happiness she knew was fleeting.

Five hours left with Alex. Then her time was done. She'd go back to being a Tooth Fairy, he'd move on with his newfound confidence and land himself a great catch.

Jealousy roiled in her gut as she connected the mental dots and imagined him trying all the things they had done together with someone else.

She couldn't believe how close she felt to him already. Total violation of the cardinal rule—never get attached. Not that the rules really mattered anymore. Even if she passed her test, she wouldn't accept the position. There was no way she could do this job, not before and certainly not now. Not after Alex.

Alex.

She shook her head, bemused. He was a total puzzle. How could he have gotten this far in his life without unleashing that delectable man meat on a woman? She would have scooped him up years ago. They must grow 'em dim or blind wherever he came from.

The floorboard creaked behind her and she turned to see him walking into the kitchen, hair mussed from sleep. Bare-chested with just his track pants on, he looked better than the French toast.

Don't get attached.

She worked up a weak smile and turned back to the stove.

"Hungry?"

"As a matter of fact."

He had moved to stand directly behind her, and his breath tickled her ear. Slipping his arms around her waist, he drew her back against his hard body.

"Food, Alex, I mean food."

She struggled to keep from arching back against the thick ridge pressing against her bottom.

"You look sexy in that shirt."

She'd helped herself to his new white button down and a pair of his boxers while he slept.

"Thank you."

He nipped her earlobe and a thrill coursed through her.

Five hours.

She twisted her neck to give him better access. He pinched the lobe between his teeth then released, pressing moist, sucking kisses down her neck.

His hand inched up over her rib cage to close over one breast, teasing her nipple. He groaned, impatient, then yanked at the shirt. A button popped off, then two, skittering across the countertop.

Muttering his satisfaction, he closed both hands over her bare breasts. The touch set off a rush of moisture between her legs and she squeezed her thighs together to ease the sudden ache.

"Alex?"

"Holly."

"Member how I said — Mmm..."

One hand had slipped down to cup her behind, seating her more firmly against his erection.

She cleared her throat then tried again. “Uh, do you remember what I said about the rules? And taking it slow and savoring every touch? And then I said there are other options. Now’s the time for another option.”

“What do you want me to do?” he whispered hotly.

She thought about it for a nanosecond before answering. She’d regret it for the rest of her life if she didn’t take the opportunity to be with this man in every sense. Besides, rules were made to be broken.

“I want you inside me. Now. Can you do that for me, Alex?”

“Hell yes.”

The boxers were around her ankles an instant later. She shut the burner off and turned to face him.

He gripped her hips in his big hands and lifted her, turning them to face the table then lowered her onto it. The cool, smooth wood was heaven on her overheated skin and she gasped. Spreading her legs wide, he stepped between them and knelt before her.

“But humor me for just a minute or two. I’ve wanted to taste you since the second you cracked open that trench coat.”

She’d opened her mouth to reply when all thought fled. His strong teeth closed over the tender inside of her thigh, sending a shot of pain and pleasure to her core. The sting had barely subsided when his mouth closed over her, voracious, hungry, sucking and licking, drawing the swollen bud of her clitoris into his mouth rhythmically.

She stiffened, her body electrified by the sudden onslaught. Vision blurring, she lifted her legs over his strong shoulders to offer him more—to offer him everything.

Then his hand was there and a finger tested her slick heat with a shallow thrust. Panic lapped at her and she tried to close her legs as the pressure built fast and hard, almost too intense. He made encouraging sounds and held her firm, sliding two digits

deep. Without pause, he settled into a measured, dragging rhythm, pressing in and out as he sucked. She whimpered as the sensation engulfed her.

And suddenly too much became just right as she lost herself to the madness. Unerringly his thrusts got deeper, harder and she arched her hips to meet his clever fingers. It was right there, shimmering before her, the release drawing her down, urging her on.

She tried to hold back, to hold onto the terrible, wonderful insanity for just another moment but lost the battle as his fingers went deep, curling up to press on her G-spot. The pressure built unbearably and she had to bite her lip to keep from screaming.

One more deep, luscious pull of his wet mouth and she sucked in a ragged breath and let the orgasm take her. She burst into pieces, coming hard, her body clenching over and over as the tremors racked her.

“Oh my – Alex!”

He was relentless and worked her body hard, milking her climax to the very end until she lay in a quaking heap.

As her spasms slowed, Alex squeezed his eyes closed. The image of her spread on the table like this would be a part of him forever. He tried to get a grip on his emotions, tried to slow his racing heart as he slid his fingers from her wet heat and stood.

“Where did you learn that?” she asked, her quivery voice laced with wonder.

He gazed down at her rosy cheeks, those trusting eyes, that beautiful body so open to him, so giving. The guilt lanced him hard. *Just tell her the truth.*

“I have to tell you something.”

“I have to tell you something too.” Her face grew serious. “This isn’t me. I’ve never done this with anyone but you. I’m breaking the rules here for you because I feel something for you that I’ve never felt before.”

Her words thrilled him but made his even more difficult to say and they stuck in his craw as he opened his mouth to speak.

Holly continued. "I'm going to tell Queen Lucienne I don't want the job. I'm going to just go back to being a Tooth Fairy."

At that, his stomach bottomed out. Goddammit, he'd thought they were past that shit. If it wasn't a game to her anymore, why would she still be lying to him?

No more romanticizing, you punk. One day of great sex with a gorgeous woman. That's all this is and don't forget it.

Still, her seemingly heartfelt speech grated on him, an unnecessary almost unkind twist of the knife in his back.

"What did you want to tell me?" she asked.

His heart felt like a hard lump in his chest, but as he stared down at her spread legs, the Great Betrayer throbbed and stiffened, still very interested in completing their transaction.

Hot sex on the menu. When had that ever been a bad thing?

"Not important," he said, his voice more grim than he intended. "Now where were we?"

He bent low, trapping a nipple between his teeth and sucking. Slipping a hand into the pocket of his track pants, he pulled out the condom he'd tucked away on the off chance his attempt at a full seduction succeeded. Never taking his mouth from her, he shoved down the waistband of his pants, tore open the package then worked the sheath over his aching cock.

Testing her readiness, he bit back a groan as his swollen tip made contact with the soaking molten lips of her pussy.

She may not care about him, but she wanted him. Bad.

The power of it juiced him and he figured if he was going out, he was going out with a bang.

Holly Tucket would remember fucking Alex Nichlaus, even if she didn't know his name.

He released her nipple, then bent his knees, working his cock into her wet, waiting pussy. Her body resisted at first, the channel tight and unyielding from her orgasm, but he persisted, not stopping until he filled her. She lay motionless as he pulled back his torso and locked his gaze with hers. He paused, allowing her body to stretch and hold him comfortably then withdrew almost completely.

He took in the image of their bodies joined, her soft white thighs against his darker ones, the tight, ginger curls of her neat little pussy, the pouty lips of her sex glistening with cream. Spreading her open to his gaze, he pressed a finger to the exposed plump clit and pumped his hips again. Blood pounded in his head as the column of her sex clamped over him.

"Damn, so fucking tight. Wrap your legs around me."

Gripping her hips, he lifted her slight form off the table as her sleek thighs clenched around him, the change in position sinking him deeper inside her.

"Alex," she moaned.

"You like that hard cock? Tell me. Tell me what you want me to do, Holly. I'll make it all better." He pulled out then flexed back in deep, but slow, and stopped before he was seated to the hilt. Her hips bounced as she tried to urge him faster. He pinned her with a hand.

"Not going to work. Tell me what you want. Tell me how you want it."

Gripping her ass, he punished her with an inconsistent rhythm, sometimes working her down on him in long unhurried strokes, sometimes only inching her pussy over him in shallow thrusts.

"Oh my God. Oh Alex I—"

"Say it. Fucking say it."

"Please."

He increased his rhythm, but only a bit, teasing her.

“That’s not the right answer. What do you want me to do to you? Beg me to fuck you hard and it’s all yours.”

A sob shuddered through her and she broke before his eyes. “Yes, fuck me. God, please, fuck me hard.”

Elation soared through him and he let go, pounding into her, clutching her hips in his hands, working her over his dick faster and faster. He gritted his teeth, trying to hold back, the pulling heat of her sex sucking the breath from him.

She let out an incoherent cry then a keening wail as she came, the climax bowing her back, thrusting her full breasts into his face. Alex closed his eyes as her body gripped him like a fist and clamped down on him in waves. A shiver stole through him then he followed her over the edge, jerking and spurting as she clenched tight over his cock.

Holly slumped bonelessly over him, legs still wrapped around his hips, as Alex patted her bottom. She let her legs fall away from him until her feet touched the ground. The tiny kitchen was filled with the sounds of their labored breathing and unspoken questions.

His voice was gruff as he spoke, releasing her. “I’ll be right back. I’m going to clean up. You can use the hall bathroom.”

She waited for him to leave the room before grabbing the edge of the table for support as she caught her breath. Her legs were still shaking.

As she tried to get her head around what just happened the shrill ring of a telephone interrupted her reverie. It continued to ring, then stopped. She scooped up the boxers and headed into the bathroom.

She washed up and the sensual fog that had clouded her mind began to clear, leaving behind a sinking feeling.

What the hell had just happened? She hadn't taught him that. Come to think of it, she hadn't taught him anything. And the confident, take control, almost animal-like quality of their lovemaking this last time seemed like such a comfortable, natural fit for him. Could that really have been the first time he'd behaved that way with a woman? Surely not.

She closed her eyes as a wave of nausea swamped her. Time to get to the bottom of this. Somehow, going out there exposed felt different than it had just a few minutes before so she donned the boxers again. She buttoned the shirt as best she could then tied it at the waist to compensate for the missing buttons. At least she wasn't naked.

When she entered the bedroom, it was empty but a low voice came from behind the closed door of the master bathroom.

She knew she shouldn't do it. It was a total invasion of his privacy, but the compulsion was too strong. She scurried into the kitchen and poured tap water into a shallow bowl. Taking a deep breath, she dipped her finger into the bowl and stirred.

Alex's bathroom.

He was standing in the corner, talking in low tones on a cell phone.

"Yes, Alex Nichlaus returning his call."

Nichlaus?

He stood quiet for a few seconds, apparently waiting for the other party to come on the line.

"Hey, Mike, sorry I missed your call. Tell me something good, man." He paused then smiled, running a hand through his hair. "Ah, fuck, you're not kidding. It's been a long haul. But that's great news. I can't wait to get my life back. Hey, I really appreciate the department's support on this one. I hope we got you enough to put him away for a good long time."

An icy ball of dread formed in her stomach and she splashed at the water with her fingertips, dispersing the image. Heart stuttering, she ran back into the bedroom.

Methodically, she opened drawers and rifled through his closets but nothing helpful surfaced.

Her eyes lighted on his pants from the night before and she made a beeline for them. She'd just shoved a hand in one pocket and pulled out his wallet when the bathroom door opened.

"What are you doing?"

His voice was frosty, but even that seemed warm compared to the icy gleam in his eye.

Whatever. She was the one who'd been lied to.

"What have *you* been doing, is the question."

"Don't deflect. This is about you. What, the guys didn't pay you enough to cover all that overtime so you thought you'd just help yourself?"

What the hell was he talking about? "You sound like a crazy person right now. I was looking through your stuff because I wanted to find out who you really are. So if we're trading secrets or something, why don't we start with you, Mr. *Nichlaus*."

He had the good grace to look ashamed, but only for a second. "What tipped you off? No, don't answer, it doesn't matter. None of it does anymore, the job is over. I was coming out to tell you anyway."

She tried to swallow past the stone lodged in her throat, but couldn't. "What job?"

"I'm not Alex Nelson, lab assistant. I'm Alex Nichlaus, securities specialist. I've been undercover for the last four months working for a pharmaceutical company gathering evidence on some key players in a large-scale narcotics smuggling operation."

"So you lied? This has all been a lie? The geeky persona, the inexperienced lover, all fake?" She cursed herself as emotion clogged her throat. She turned and stalked to the door.

"Wait a second. Where are you going? Don't you have something to tell me too? We have a lot to talk about here, Holly. This was all really complicated and neither one of us is innocent here."

"Every second I stand here, the more horrible it feels. I can't believe you lied to me this whole time. How could you let me—" She blanched, her body seeming to curl into itself.

The guilt that had begun to surface gave way to outrage. "That's rich, coming from you," he retorted.

"Wha—what is that supposed to mean?"

"The jig is up. It's *always* been up. You may talk like an innocent, but I know you're a stripper or an escort and I know about Saunders and Leeland."

She looked at him as if he were insane as her mouth opened and closed wordlessly.

"The guys who hired you for the practical joke," he pressed. She paled, but there was still no recognition in those stricken green eyes. Only hurt.

And tears. Fucking tears. *Dammit.*

The white-hot anger that had flared only moments before dimmed to a burning coal and he ran a hand over his face. What was he hoping to accomplish here? Finding somewhere to lay blame? They'd both been wrong.

He started again. "I don't even care what you do for a living. I really liked being with you. And unless you're an Oscar-winning actress and had me completely hoodwinked, you liked being with me too. I'm sorry I didn't tell you. But my job—"

She cut in, eyes flashing, her tone sharp enough to draw blood. "Your job has nothing to do with this. I understand confidentiality, *believe* me. But you pretended..." She paused and swallowed hard. "You pretended that you didn't know...things. You let me humiliate myself by showing you."

She covered her mouth with a trembling hand and squeezed her eyes shut. A few seconds ticked by before she opened them again, pinning him with her gaze. "You could have stopped me and sent me home. You could have said *no* if you didn't believe in me; if you didn't *need* me."

Alex's stomach lurched. He opened his mouth to interject, but she held up a hand.

"No! No, don't you talk. Every word out of your mouth has been a lie. I opened myself to you in a way I never thought possible. I broke all the rules for you because I thought you were worth it. I thought *this* was worth it. But you're not. And it's not."

"How is this on me?" he shouted. "You were *paid* to trick me. And God only knows what else. I was willing to look past it because I thought we had a real connection. But even now, you won't come clean, and you're going to judge *me*? I'm the good guy here."

The words sounded hollow, even to himself.

She gave him one last look, shook her head and walked out the door.

Chapter Five

By the time Alex finished all the damn paperwork and got to leave the station it was well after midnight. He opened the door to the apartment and started in but the scent of pecan pie stopped him short.

“Holly?” For a split second hope sparked in his chest. It faded quickly as he looked around.

He rewound the mental reel of their goodbye and flinched as he recalled the look on her face. Disgust, despair, disappointment. She wouldn’t have come back. Her scent lingered behind, a poignant affirmation of what a tool he was.

He shut the door behind him and went into the kitchen. Taking out a bottle of scotch, he poured himself a neat double and took a long pull. The amber liquid slid a warm path down his throat but did nothing to melt the block of ice lodged in his chest.

Looking around the apartment, he waited for the feeling of accomplishment and elation to wash over him the way it always did after a job well done; for the excitement of being able to resume his real life to creep in and give him the energy, despite his exhaustion, to pack up and get the hell out. Instead, he found himself wondering what he’d been so anxious to get back to in the first place. His house was no great shakes, he had no wife or kids to welcome him home. Shit, he didn’t even have a dog.

Before yesterday, this place had been nothing but a prison. But in twenty hours, Holly Tucket had permeated every corner. Not only did it smell like her, he couldn’t even *look* at the table without seeing her glorious hair—and even more glorious thighs—spread across it.

The bedroom would be even worse. Alex considered sleeping on the couch, but then realized he wanted to think about her, wanted to picture her. Because once he left here that would be it. Even on the off chance she did want to see him again, he didn’t

live in the city and she wouldn't be able to find him. And he'd never see, smell or taste her again.

His stomach clenched at that. God, he was an asshole. She'd been nothing but giving and amazing. Sure, she'd told some fibs, but she'd had a job to do just like him. And what had he done? Thrown it in her face. And there wasn't a thing he could do but regret it.

Maybe he'd stay one more night, then clear out in the morning and be back to his own place, in his own life by lunchtime. *Yippee.*

Alex rubbed his eyes and took another swallow of scotch as he headed into the living room. Maybe he'd watch a movie until he fell asleep so he wouldn't have to think.

A beige piece of cloth sticking out from under the couch caught his eye. He put down his drink and bent to see what it was.

Trench coat.

He took a steadying breath then slid a hand into one deep pocket. He felt something. Holly's notecards. Pulling them out, he rifled through them quickly, looking for a phone number or some piece of information that might give him a clue. One of the cards stood out from the rest, in bold red print.

NO MATTER WHAT, DO NOT ALLOW YOURSELF TO GET EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED TO YOUR CHARGE.

He put the cards back in the one pocket then dug his hand into the other. His heart sank as he fished around, but just as he was about to give up, his hand brushed something warm. What he pulled out was puzzling. An intricate, gold writing utensil that looked like it was worth a fortune. But there was something strange about it. While it appeared to be antique, it had a glow, the pristine sheen of something that had never been touched before. And the heat of it—not hot exactly, but far too warm to the touch for a metal object that had been sitting in a pocket under his couch—made it feel almost alive.

A buzzing filled his head as he stared at the pen, his stomach bottoming out as he lifted his thumb to depress the button on the back.

He held his breath. Time seemed suspended as he waited for...something magical to happen.

Nothing did.

He let out his breath in a rush.

What an idiot. After one night you're so whipped, the girl has you believing she's a flipping fairy, for fuck's sake.

"Sorry I took so long, I was in the middle of – What the hell are you doing?"

The pen fell from Alex's hand as he stared, blinked, then stared some more. A beautiful woman with sleek black hair stood before him, her cold dark eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"Where is she? If you've harmed her, it will not go well for you, Charge." She kept her voice low and even, but the frank sincerity with which she delivered the threat was positively chilling.

"No, of course not. How did you get in here? And who the fuck are you?" This was surreal. *Déjà vu*. Hadn't he said almost the very same thing to Holly?

Alex moved a hand to his arm and gave it a surreptitious pinch. Not dreaming.

"I'm Mila. And I'm here because you called me, you imbecile. Now answer the question. Where is she?" She uttered the last through clenched teeth and Alex had the distinct feeling he was walking on thin ice.

"I don't know. I was looking for a way to find her so I went through her coat and found the pen. Do you work for the agency? You need to help me."

She raised an imperious brow at him. "What agency?"

"The agency that books the strippers."

Her hand flashed quick as a striking snake and a white bolt of light shot forward, nailing him square in the chest, knocking him on his ass.

Holy. Shit.

He sat, stunned, as he tried to get his breath back from his second apparent fairy attack in twenty-four hours.

Part of him was in shock. But then the other part had always known, somewhere deep down, that Holly was exactly what she said she was. She didn't have it in her to lie like that. How he could know that about someone after only one day didn't concern him. It was a fact. One he realized just a few hours too late.

"Watch what you say and mind your tone. I don't know what happened here, but I'm certainly not going to be listening to insults or taking orders from a charge. And if Holly wanted to be found, you'd be able to find her." She held out a hand. "Now give me the pen."

"No can do."

Her dark eyes turned almost black as her pupils dilated. "You can and you will."

Alex almost blanched at her palpable fury. She clearly didn't appreciate being toyed with. But if he let her take the pen and go, he knew without a doubt there was no chance of ever finding Holly again.

He steeled himself, for what, he didn't know. "Just hear me out. I lied about who and what I was. But I want to make it up to her. I have feelings for her, strong feelings. I know that seems crazy after only one night, but it's the truth. I need to tell her how sorry I am. Please."

He wasn't the begging type, but at that moment, he would have done anything for a chance to talk to Holly one more time.

Bowing his head, he waited for this woman, this *fairy*, to turn him into a frog or something. *Couldn't hurt worse than getting shot*, he reasoned.

Instead, she let out a sigh. "She can't make you into a magical being, you know. And if you're thinking of turning her into some kind of money-making sideshow, you

can forget it. The second you tell another human about her powers your memory will be wiped clean of her existence."

A kernel of hope started to take shape within him. No point in giving him all these warnings if she was going to refuse to help him outright. "The thought never even occurred to me."

"And she isn't immortal. In fact, she's doesn't even have much magic. Parlor tricks mostly. Coming, going, maybe whipping up a soufflé, but that's the extent of it."

"All right."

She tipped her regal head, studying him with the intensity one would give a detailed map. "And still, you wish to find her?"

He met her gaze and answered without hesitation. "Yes."

"I'm not going to do it for you. It's not my place. But I'll tell you how it could be done, theoretically. It's up to you to pull it off."

Even the warning note in her voice didn't diminish the relief that coursed through him. He was going to get one more chance with Holly Tucket. Who was, indeed, a fairy.

And this time, he wasn't going to blow it.

* * * * *

Holly had been back on the job for five days and wondered when it was going to get awesome again. She loved it so much, and the kids were wonderful. But since her disastrous run as a Naughty Godmother, it seemed like everything had gone to heck in a handbasket.

After she'd left Alex's apartment, she went home to cry it out until Mila had summoned her. Holly had tearfully explained the whole story and Mila had been reserved but sympathetic. However, because the rules hadn't been adhered to, Holly would not be able to graduate to a NGM. She would, however, be permitted to return to her old job.

As miserable as Holly been after what had happened with Alex, she'd jumped up and hugged Mila at the news.

"I told Lucienne you weren't cut out for Naughty Godmother in the first place, but she insisted you try," Mila said, carefully extracting herself from Holly's exuberant grasp.

"Do you think she's going to be disappointed?"

Mila's dark eyes flashed. "She'll be...as you would expect. I'm sorry, Holly, I know your mother isn't an easy person to deal with."

Holly tried to ignore the crushing disappointment. Why had she ever thought it might be different this time? That her mother might be proud of her for trying? "I wouldn't know," she said quietly.

Mila sighed. "She has a lot on her plate. And she does love you, in her way. She just wants to see you be as successful as she has been."

"Well her way sucks, and she may be a success as a fairy, but she's a failure as a mother."

"Enough. You were born into a legacy, that's the way it goes. Many of us would have killed for an opportunity like you had." Mila's voice was hard. "I get it, it's not for you. But you love your job and your father's absolute adoration for you more than makes up for your mother's reserved nature. Some of us don't even have that."

It stung, but she was right. She'd spent so much time trying to please her mother and prove herself, she hadn't even realized she was already a success. She was a standout Tooth Fairy, she was a good, caring person and she had her dad. Her sweet, lovable, human dad who lavished her with hugs and support.

Lucienne needed to be powerful and surrounded in her castle with adoration and fealty. But Holly? Maybe it was time for Holly just to let herself be happy.

"You know, I'm glad I did it. I needed to try. Not just for her, but because if I didn't, it would have always bothered me. I didn't want to miss out, but now I know I'm exactly where I'm meant to be."

She paused, allowing herself to think about *him*.

"And even with Alex, maybe that was meant to happen too. To help me grow up and lose the over-the-top optimism and get a reality check."

Her face grew hot. God, she'd been such an idiot. "It's pretty embarrassing to think of how naïve I was."

"Don't be so quick to turn your back on that part of you. Hope is magic in itself. And trust is a priceless gift. Both to the person receiving it *and* the person bestowing it," Mila said, her wistful tone so out of character, it seemed to come from someone else.

Holly opened her mouth to question her about it, but the cool mask of indifference had already slid back into place.

"So, it's back to work tomorrow for you. Get a good night's rest and I'll see you in a few weeks for the quarterly meeting."

"Wait! I-I left something behind. I'm sorry, but I can't go back there to get it." Her voice broke and she bit her lip hard.

Holly waited for the condemnation but Mila's expression remained inscrutable. "It's been taken care of." With a wave of a hand she was gone, leaving Holly behind in her quiet little house by herself.

Maybe she'd go stay with her dad for a few days. She'd been alone for most of her life and it never bothered her before. But since Alex, alone felt very...lonely.

Even days later, as she stood at the foot of the bed of little Stevie Thompson, she had to bite her shaking lip. *Don't think about it. It's over.*

Holly reached down to her belt and unhooked the silken silver bag. Trying to conjure up happy thoughts, she extracted a pinch of fairy dust from the sack. It would soften the edges of the child's memory. Give him a sprinkle in case he woke up when

she was trying to get the tooth that had lured her there from under his pillow. If he woke up, she'd dazzle him with a little fairy sleight of hand and their interaction would seem like it had been a lovely dream when he awoke the next morning.

She eyed the lump on the bed appraisingly and went back for a larger pinch. Stevie was a big fella.

Pulling back the cover gently, she sprinkled the dust onto the head of the child, who promptly sneezed in her face.

"Achoo!"

"Bless you," she said reflexively, then paused, confused. That wasn't a child's sneeze.

"Thank you," Alex said as he sat up in the bed.

Holly's heart skidded to a stop as she squinted in the dim light to make out his features.

"What are you doing here? And where is Stevie?" she demanded.

"Stevie is my nephew, and he and his parents are having a luxurious mini-vacation in Martha's Vineyard on me."

Holly turned to go, but he took her arm, stilling her.

"Please. Don't go."

His sounded so raw, she halted.

"I thought I'd never smell that again," he said softly.

She tamped down the urge to put a hand to her pounding heart. "Why are you doing this to me?"

"I don't want to hurt you. I just want a chance to explain."

"What more is there to say? If it makes you feel better, I don't hold any ill will toward you. But you humiliated me and it makes it worse facing you. There's part of you probably still laughing inside about what a sucker I was. If you're truly sorry, you'll do as I ask and leave me alone."

Her voice cracked on the end and she tensed her jaw, pursing her mouth shut tight to keep her lip from trembling.

"I want you."

Ah, so he wanted a repeat performance. She both cringed and ached at the thought. Anger replaced sadness in a flash. "I think you've had as much as you're going to get of me, and far more than you deserved."

"I don't mean it that way. I want...*you*. All of it, the whole package. The clumsy, cute, neurotic mess who won't utter a curse word. The wild, sexy, femme fatale who, no matter what you say now, I know only comes out for me. I want it all."

He gazed at her intently.

"I'm sorry I deceived you but I'm not the kind of guy who believes in fairy tales. I thought it was all a prank. And even then, deep down, I knew better, I knew I was seeing the real you. This may sound crazy but I don't care. I'm head over heels in love with you and the thought of never seeing you again makes me feel sick and hollow inside. Please, Holly. Please just give me a chance."

Love. He loved her. Dizzy with elation, she gave up on controlling the lip and let out an involuntary snuffle.

He stood and pulled her into the warm circle of his arms. She pressed her forehead against his shoulder and tried to keep from sobbing. She could forgive him and he would be hers if she wanted. That was good. Really good.

"It wasn't pretend, you know," he muttered into her hair. "At first, maybe. But the things we did together... I never allowed myself to go there with anyone else. It was never about making them shiver, it was just about making them come. You made me realize what I was missing. And what I was missing was you. If you never did another spell again, you'd still be pure magic."

Joy coursed through her at his words. Maybe she was just being stupid, naïve Holly, but she had faith in her heart he was telling the truth.

She chuckled against his chest. "I still can't believe you stole your nephew's tooth for this. That's a little coldhearted. Did you at least give him a dollar for it?"

The nightstand lamp clicked and the room was bathed in warm light.

Alex looked down at her, a gap-toothed smile wreathing his face. "Who said anything about stealing a tooth?"

Her stomach did a little flip. "Oh my gosh, what did you do?"

"Mila said the only way to summon a Tooth Fairy is to be in her territory, hide a tooth under your pillow and yearn for her. The first part worked out great since my sister lives here, and the last part was a piece of cake. The middle bit, not so much," he said with a rueful smile. It faded quickly as his hazel eyes gazed into hers. "It was worth it though. I was a little worried that you wouldn't think I was sexy anymore, but Mila said you can fix it."

"I can. The question is, will I? You look kind of cute like that."

"Whatever you want, Holly Tucket. As long as you'll be my very own Naughty Godmother."

"Yes."

She pressed her lips to his, the thrill of it sending a tingle down her spine.

Now that's magic.

About the Author

Chloe Cole is happily married and lives in Pennsylvania with her wonderful husband and a pack of teenage boys. She loves to play poker and fantasy football. If she weren't a writer, she would definitely be a cat burglar. Or a ninja. She also writes steamy paranormal and steampunk romance novels under the pen name Christine Bell. Someday she hopes to publish something her dad can read without wanting to poke his eyes out with sharp sticks. She *loves* to hear from her readers!

Chloe 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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