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Best Laid Plans

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Book Blurb

Wedding planner extraordinaire Taylor Forrester is stunned when her potential clients turn out to be her ex-fiancé Caleb Bryant and his future wife. It's obvious he's moved on with his life nearly three years after Taylor abruptly broke off their engagement. But Taylor harbors a secret that led to their break up. She had to let him go, but still loves him.

Caleb Bryant's heart breaks all over again when fate brings him and Taylor together as he plans his wedding to another woman! One look at Taylor and Caleb cannot deny the love that still burns bright for his one true love. Will this chance meeting finally bring him the answers he demands? Or is it too late to mend broken fences?

Best Laid Plans

By Heather Peters

Taylor Forrester clutched her wedding planner like a bible, grabbed an overstuffed folder, and crammed both items into an already-crowded tote bag.

She looked around her tiny apartment to make certain she'd remembered everything. She chided herself for neglecting to do the laundry this morning, but duty called. Her boss, Jane Donnelly, had asked Taylor to fill in for a co-worker who was down with the flu. She dutifully gathered a lavender cloth bag engraved with the title, "Bridesmaid," which held everything she needed to create the perfect dream wedding.

The dream that hadn't come to fruition for herself. She sighed, once again reminded of the old adage, "always the bridesmaid, never the bride."

She grabbed her car keys, slipped into her good Kenneth Cole heels, and took one last look around the room to make sure she had everything she needed for her meeting with the prospective couple.

Truth was, Taylor seldom forgot anything pertaining to her work. She was the ideal wedding planner, the perfect bridesmaid, the loyal maid of honor.

Big deal. She'd give it all up to be on the other side of the date book.

* * * * *

Twenty minutes later, Taylor arrived at her office, a tiny but serviceable area in a corner cubicle, and placed her valise on the floor next to her chair. Her thick binder sat unopened in the center of her pristine desk. She looked at her watch, puffing out a tiny sigh to see she had two entire minutes before meeting the couple she'd been asked to see. From habit, she touched the empty spot on her ring finger where a diamond used to sit. She gave herself a mental shake. *This is no time for a pity party. Get to work.*

Because today was Sunday, she was alone. She shrugged off her salmon-colored blazer, tucked her shoulder-length hair behind her ears, and opened her folder to make

a mental note of the bride's name. Suzanne Dobbs was some rich society matron's daughter. The groom owned a construction company across town. Taylor was just about to read his name when she heard the ding of the elevator.

Taylor remained standing in order to greet the young couple who entered her open office doorway. She looked up and saw a stunning, tall, brunette walk toward her, with a much taller, sandy-haired man behind her.

Taylor's heart stopped.

Caleb.

Caleb's heart fell to his shoes when his gaze rested on Taylor. She was his wedding planner? This was fucking too bizarre for words. Shit. Almost three years had passed since she'd broken their engagement, and damn if she wasn't just as beautiful as ever and twice as sexy.

Two years, ten months and four days to be exact, but who was counting?

The moment their eyes met, she tucked an errant strand of hair behind her ear, a nervous gesture Caleb was well acquainted with. But why should *she* be nervous? She'd been the one who'd informed him she didn't love him anymore. She'd returned his ring, torn his heart from his chest, then stomped on it for good measure.

Unbelievable. The woman who had at one time been the love of his life was his wedding planner.

Be cool, he told himself. *This is just business.* Their engagement was long over, their own wedding cancelled five weeks before the "I dos." Caleb had moved on, and obviously, so had Taylor. He was engaged to Suzanne now, their wedding only three months away. Yet, if he'd known his former fiancée was now his wedding planner, he'd never in a million years be here. The fates were cruel indeed.

"Ms. Forrester, good morning. I'm Suzanne Dobbs and this is my fiancé, Cal Bryant."

Taylor shook both their hands with professional indifference. "It's a pleasure to meet you both."

His heart pounded, and his fingers encircled her small, soft hand. Her small, soft, *ice cold* hand. He pulled back as quickly as possible without being obvious. What the fuck?

A memory ensued of those hands and the way they used to caress his face when they kissed. Fingers that entwined with his own as they shared romantic whispers across a dinner table. Hands used to arouse and stir him when they made love. *Damn her.*

Wasn't she going to say something to reaffirm their acquaintance? Something like, *'It's good to see you again, Caleb. How are you? Remember me? I dropped you like a bad habit nearly three years ago.'*

But one look at her face told him she was going to play it cool. So that was the way it was going to be? Fine.

"You'll have to excuse Cal's appearance." Suzanne frowned. "But he's come straight from the construction site where he's building the new mall on Central Avenue." She turned and shot him a glare. "Really, darling, you could at least have showered and shaved before our appointment. What will Miss Forrester think?"

"It doesn't matter what I think." Taylor threw him a glance cold enough to freeze a polar bear. "I'm here to make sure your wedding day is one you'll never forget."

He managed a tight nod. *It seems you forgot ours quick enough.*

They'd both moved on, but just for good measure, his gaze quickly slid to her left hand, particularly her empty ring finger. A flood of relief washed over him, and he couldn't explain the sensation. They hadn't been a couple in years. Why the rush of relief to discover she wasn't married or engaged? He should feel nothing.

But his body told a different story. The air of familiarity apparent when you haven't seen someone you shared so much with was still present. Taylor motioned for them to sit across from her, which gave Caleb the opportunity to study her closely and reacquaint himself with every memorable nuance about her. Those beautiful, big, moss-green eyes, tiny freckles sprinkled on pink cheeks that even makeup could not erase. Her mouth housed a smile potent enough to charm the most controversial opponent.

Memories of their love affair washed over him. He'd fallen for her so fast and hard the first day they met. It had been a spring day nearly five years before, when Caleb started working for her father as an apprentice electrician. The other guys on the crew had warned him not to fool around with the boss' daughter, but he'd been unable to stay away from Taylor. He couldn't breathe unless he was close to her.

They pursued a relationship soon after they met, and that meant stealing away to make love, anytime, anywhere they could be alone to share endless moments of insatiable lovemaking and passion for each other. Taylor had been hot; this woman standing before him appeared icy cold, a statue.

Her voice now reminded Caleb of a cool morning after a long night of hot sex and interrupted his erotic musings of their time together. In contrast, Suzanne's animated voice bubbled like a volcano waiting to erupt.

"I understand Jane has informed you that we want Donnelly Planners to take care of every aspect of our wedding." Suzanne clasped her hands together as Caleb attempted to concentrate. He couldn't help but gaze at Taylor, allowing his gaze to drop from the crown of her shiny, straight, chestnut hair to her long, elegant neck, and lower to her breasts, encased in a silk blouse. She wore a tiny gold watch and round diamond studs that accentuated her shell-like ears. A distant memory of nibbling playfully on those ears stirred him, and he recalled the soft sound of her giggles when his tongue tickled and aroused her.

Her business monotone interrupted his sex-filled musings, as she addressed Suzanne. "Yes, Miss Dobbs, I have all the information here, and I'll be happy to discuss everything with you. Are you planning your own bridal shower?"

Taylor avoided meeting his eyes. *Why won't you look at me? Did I mean so little to you?*

Caleb attempted to concentrate at a point on Taylor's desk, where not one picture frame resided, in a feeble attempt to stop staring at her.

Remember what we were to each other? Remember what we had?

Obviously not. Taylor's stoic expression seemed forced. She directed her business-like attitude toward Suzanne only, virtually leaving Caleb out of the mix.

As he watched Suzanne and Taylor discuss menus, favors, color schemes and other incidentals, Caleb clenched his hands on his lap and began to sweat.

Why did a sudden sense of panic strangle him? He loved Suzanne, didn't he? They'd been dating since the winter, nearly six months before. He found her a classy, intelligent woman, and he'd been attracted to her instantly. Caleb had settled for their healthy – if rather less than inspired – sex life. After Taylor, not even Suzanne had measured up in the making love department. Taylor had been the most affectionate, loving woman he'd ever met. But he never expected Suzanne to be like Taylor in any way. So he settled for Suzanne's seductive skills, and she'd somewhat met all his needs. Suzanne was not adventurous in any way when it came to sex. She was a huge fan of the missionary position, and while Caleb found satisfaction in Suzanne's supple body, something had always been missing.

That "something" was sitting not three feet away. Shit.

He needed to focus on Suzanne and nothing else. Last month, she'd coolly hinted that it was time for them to discuss marriage and of course, an engagement ring.

So Caleb did the right thing, the gentlemanly thing, and purchased the ring she'd picked out from Tiffany Jewelers. It was nothing like the one he'd given to Taylor.

Taylor's diamond had been a round, simple affair. He recalled the way she threw her arms around him, kissed him, and cried as though she'd just been given the Hope Diamond. She'd told him she'd love him forever.

All a lie.

Suzanne's ring rivaled most wealthy, entitled women's rings. A gaudy, square stone, surrounded by an endless trail of little sapphires. It appeared to make her happy, her parents somewhat satisfied, and seemed to thrill her friends and people he didn't even know.

Caleb barely listened as Suzanne and Taylor mentioned something about mimosas, brunch, and doves. Well, hell, we're just one big happy family, aren't we?

Taylor went deep within herself to find the strength to concentrate on the task at hand. Always the professional, she focused on the bride and tried not to make eye contact with the groom.

Caleb, her Caleb, engaged to be married.

Caleb, the man she'd never stopped loving, marrying someone else.

Caleb, the man she gave up so she could save his company and his reputation.

Yes, aren't you the self-sacrificing idiot who fell under your father's control when he'd threatened to ruin Caleb's new business and his reputation if you married him?

As Suzanne inspected several color charts for tablecloth shades, Taylor reflected on life since she essentially kicked Caleb out of it.

Taylor's expertise ruled when it came to planning an elite affair such as a society wedding. She aided potential brides in selecting flowers and food and music. She could import doves and tropical flowers from anywhere in the world with one phone call. When it came to her job, she was in complete control. She possessed an uncanny knack for locating the most reputable caterers, and was a natural expert in picking the perfect colors for the bridal party.

However, when it came to her father's hold over her, she was as wishy-washy as a wrung out wet rag.

She didn't dare exhibit a single emotion as she sat there watching Caleb, knowing he was going to marry this lovely, classy, obviously rich woman across from her in three short months. He'd sleep with her in the same bed every night, make love and babies with her, if they wished it, something that Taylor would never share with him.

Seeing him today, she realized she still loved him with every fiber of her body, but didn't love him enough three years ago to stand up to her father when it counted.

Caleb was out of reach. Taylor did not, in any way, deserve his love and devotion. She'd lost him forever. It was glaringly obvious he couldn't bear to look at Taylor while she discussed wedding strategy with Suzanne.

Life moved on, at least for Caleb. For her own peace of mind, Taylor would allow he and his bride-to-be only to see what she wanted them to see. And that meant her professional manner and a cool, calm control over their meeting. Caleb would never know her heart was bleeding inside her chest. Never know her legs were shaking under her desk, or see the tiny beads of sweat along her hairline.

When they left her office, Taylor would allow herself a few moments of self-pity, and fall apart.

Caleb wanted to see her, just once, without Suzanne. He needed to look into those sultry green eyes one more time. He had to know if Taylor still loved him, before he headed to the altar and took the most important step of his life.

You're a sap. She left you right before the wedding. Proof enough she doesn't care about you? She's ignoring you now. Do the smart thing, walk out and never come back.

"Thanks, Taylor. May we call you Taylor?" Suzanne shook Taylor's hand and smiled affably.

Taylor nodded and returned the smile. "Of course, and call anytime with questions. I'm here to help."

"Mr. Bryant." Taylor turned to him. Did he just see her lower lip quiver? No, it was just his imagination. He frowned, noting the contradiction between her cool hand and the tiny bead of sweat on her upper lip as she bid him goodbye.

"I wish you both much happiness." Her voice was devoid of emotion and her smile never reached those green eyes. Caleb's chest ached when she pulled her fingers from his and broke their connection. He found his hand empty and hollow, yearning for something he couldn't possess.

Taylor slid her gaze to him once more. Were those tears welling in her eyes? No, just wishful thinking on his part.

After all, she hadn't shed a single tear when she'd returned his ring. And she showed absolutely no emotion this morning. For the past hour and a half, she spoke in a monotone, even voice, business like and nothing more.

Nothing like the passionate, warm-blooded woman who'd made love as if her life depended on it.

Nothing like the fun-loving, sweet, sexy lady he'd asked to be his wife.

I have to know. Today. Now. Before I walk down the aisle, I need to know the truth.

He purposely left his car keys on the corner of Taylor's desk, then led Suzanne out the door to the elevator and down to the car.

Helping her in on the passenger side, he felt his pockets. "Damn I must have left my keys in the office. Be right back." He knew he was acting like a bastard, but he had to see Taylor one more time. Make sure they were really over.

When are you going to learn, asshole? It's been a long time. Over is an understatement. Go back to Suzanne, marry her and forget Taylor ever existed.

He'd sooner forget to breathe.

Suzanne unknowingly intruded on his silent tirade. "Cal, you should be more careful about your personal things. You need to work on that, you know."

Caleb just nodded, slammed the car door, and ran back to the office, before Taylor had a chance to leave.

Instead of using the elevator, Caleb ran up the three flights of stairs. It felt good to run again. Since he'd been involved with Suzanne, he really hadn't had a chance to do any of the things he'd enjoyed. He used to do a five mile run each morning, but Suzanne didn't like to run. Running made her sweat, she pointed out.

He played softball with a bunch of college friends every Sunday in the local park. Taylor used to attend all of his ball games. Caleb's friends adored her, but these days, he seldom saw his friends.

That, too, had stopped with Suzanne.

Sunday mornings were for brunch with Suzanne's parents. Then golf at the country club and dinner with Suzanne's friends.

He and Taylor shared much, it seemed. They had rarely fought, arguments were few and far between, and always settled by a session of wild, passionate lovemaking.

In fact, Caleb thought as he opened the door to re-enter her office, they'd been perfect together.

He had loved Taylor with every breath in his body, gave her everything, though she never asked for anything other than his love. He was a one woman man when it came to Taylor. So why was he marrying Suzanne?

If he had to ask himself the question, he knew he was in big trouble.

After Caleb and Suzanne left her office, Taylor had heaved an exhausted sigh. Her legs wobbled and her hands trembled. Weary and heartbroken, she'd dropped down in her chair, covered her eyes, and wept.

Tears slid down her cheeks, as she mourned the loss of her one true love. "Caleb." She cried into her hands, needing to say his name. Not "Cal," as Suzanne called him. Her attempts to keep her eyes from him had failed, and even now, she missed his presence in the chair across from her. He'd grown more handsome with time, more muscular, no doubt due to the work he did for a living. But his beautiful eyes, so filled with sadness, spoke volumes about the heartbreak he'd endured, and she was to blame. How could she ever make amends for the pain she'd brought down on him?

She could still feel her fingers tunneling through his thick, short-cropped, sandy hair. His masculine nose was straight and a little wide at the bottom. His beautiful mouth and strong dimpled chin, perfect for kissing.

Not a word from him in nearly three years, until today. Imagine planning Caleb's wedding to another woman, instead of her.

Always a bridesmaid, never a bride.

"Why are you crying?"

She jumped from the chair, startled at his re-appearance. She wiped her eyes with a slash of her palm, and then cleared her throat.

"Caleb, what are you doing here?"

She had always loved the sound of his name. Loved crying out when they made love. She'd scream it over and over as she came in Caleb's arms. Then he'd bury himself deep inside her wet channel and she'd fall apart in his arms.

"Don't answer my question with a question. Why are you crying?"

Lie, she told herself. *Do whatever you have to do, just lie and get him out of here, before you do something you'll regret.* Her heart pounded out a rhythm of something she hadn't felt in two years. She couldn't help stare at him, yet no answer came forth. She tried, but couldn't lie again.

Yet she couldn't tell him the truth. He wasn't hers any longer. He belonged to Suzanne now. Taylor had no hold over him.

"I have allergies."

He moved closer, his hands in his pockets. "You don't have allergies. I think you can do better than that."

She shook her head, willing him closer, yet knew she shouldn't. "It's true."

He shook his head and his brows furrowed in a frown. "Liar."

Don't come any closer, Caleb, or I'll fall apart. His scent of sweat and man wrapped around her, pulling her in, yet she stepped back and almost fell over her chair.

"Why did you come back? Did you forget something?"

She spotted his car keys on the desk, and her heart sank. *He only returned for his keys, not for you.*

But he didn't retrieve the key chain. He looked at nothing but her.

"Yeah, I forgot something. And I came back for this."

Without warning, he grabbed her arms then pushed her against the desk. His warm and familiar touch drew a gasp from her. The fact he hadn't shaved drove her crazy. She'd always loved him scruffy, sweaty, and raw.

Was she crazy?

"Caleb, let me go."

His hands lifted to her face and held her in place so she couldn't look away. His mouth was so close to hers, she could smell coffee on his breath. He drank his coffee black with two sugars, something she'd never forgotten.

"Please." She pleaded for what? Even she didn't know the answer.

"Please what? Go away? Or kiss me?"

Her legs gave way, and her tears fell unheeded down her cheeks. Where was her rigid self-control? Her secret vow to never give in to any weakness again?

It was gone. She knew what she was about to do was so wrong, but she couldn't help herself. Caleb tore down her wall of resistance with a warm palm against her face. "Please kiss me."

Without preamble, Caleb slid papers and folders from her desk to the floor, then lifted Taylor and placed her on the desk, followed her down and kissed her like there was no tomorrow. Taylor's mouth opened to his insistent tongue, and he delved into her warmth, loving the taste of peppermint. This is what love should feel like, he thought. Knowing you'll die without the woman you love, holding her as if she's your other half. Having her kisses hold you prisoner from a place you never want to be free of. This is what loving a woman is like.

And he loved Taylor. He'd never stopped loving her.

No words were spoken. Haste was of the utmost importance. He knew what he was doing was wrong, so why didn't he stop? Why didn't his fingers stop unbuttoning her white silk blouse with the lace camisole underneath? Why didn't she stop him and slap him and tell him to get out? He could see her pink nipples through the lace, pebble hard, waiting for his mouth to devour them like a tasty meal. He lifted the silky fabric over her head, exposing her full breasts. He proceeded to ravish her as if starved for weeks. No, starved for nearly three years . . . for the taste and touch of Taylor.

He was hard as steel as his body took control over his mind. Her hands were all over him, pulling the shirt from his pants, unbuckling his belt, and before he knew it, she'd released his throbbing, erect cock from its restraints.

"Hurry, Caleb, I can't wait," she whispered, as her kisses rendered him helpless. He recklessly lifted her skirt, found her thong, and ripped it from her, dropping it to the floor. He picked her up, and his mouth slid down her body to the musky scent he hadn't realized he missed until now. Everything was happening so fast, Caleb knew she couldn't possibly be able to take him into her body without discomfort. So he spread her thighs wide and placed his mouth on her. He licked her pussy to moisten and ready her for his onslaught. He was hotter than dry tinder put to flame, and this was going to be hard, hot and fast. He wrapped her legs around him and buried himself into her pussy with one hard push, stretching her to the limit.

She was so incredibly tight, and so, so familiar. This was how it always was with Taylor. So responsive, so warm and willing, a passionate woman who'd never failed to make him wild with heat and drive him to the edge of madness and back.

He gripped her ass tightly, pulled her into him, and gave several good pumps. Taylor's sweet, hot, little body milked him with her tight-fisted pussy until Caleb sensed her approaching orgasm. He hung by the thinnest thread, yet he waited for her. When she stilled and cried out his name, his kisses silenced her scream, and he allowed himself to follow her into oblivion.

It was over in seconds, and just as familiar and earth rocking as if they'd fucked for hours. She could hardly move, yet Taylor forced herself to regain some of her lost control and proceeded to distance herself from him. With shaking hands and teary eyes, she straightened her blouse, grabbed her panties and shoved them into her bag.

"You'd better go." She was unable to look into his eyes. "Suzanne is waiting."

"Is that all you have to say?" He was breathless, flushed, his eyes dark and still hungry. She knew from experience Caleb was an insatiable lover. When they were together, what they just shared would have been only a prelude to hours of deep, explosive sex. He was the most voracious man she'd ever known.

His palm turned her cheek toward him. "Taylor, look at me."

She shook her head, and again, tears trailed down her face. "No, Caleb. I'm sorry this happened. Look at what we just did. I've betrayed everything I believe in. We didn't even use protection," she cried. "Oh my God." She shielded her face with her hands in shame.

"Please leave before Suzanne follows you here. If she catches us, I'll die."

He nodded. "Fuck! All right, I'm going. But this isn't over. We have to talk, and I want answers, Taylor, do you understand? I need to know why."

"There's nothing to know. Just leave me alone. I feel bad enough as it is. I'll hand your file over to an associate. Just tell Suzanne I was too busy to continue with your wedding plans."

He tucked his shirt in his jeans, threaded shaking fingers through his hair. She wondered what he was thinking. A quick fuck for old times' sake? *What an idiot I am. Fucking your ex while his fiancée is downstairs waiting in the car.*

"Tonight, Taylor. Make sure you're home, because this is not over. We are going to talk. And don't tell me this meant nothing, because I know better. I know *you* better."

She threw her hands up. "I don't care what you think you know, Caleb Bryant. We just humped like a couple of dogs in heat in my office, on my desk! I was caught up in the heat of the moment. Seeing you again, it-it was just too much."

"Please forget this." She grabbed the front of his shirt. "Forget this ever happened and go back to Suzanne."

He swallowed so hard, his Adam's apple bobbed. He firmly held her chin in his hand, so she couldn't look away.

"Tell me to forget how to breathe, maybe I can manage that. But not this. Remember when we used to make love in every room of my house? We fit together perfectly, Taylor, you and me. Now you're comparing making love to dogs in heat? I know your body better than anyone. You're not an actress, and you're not a faker. What just happened here was real. Because you still feel something for me. Don't bother to deny it. We loved each other." He pulled her chin closer until they were nose to nose. "Don't waste your breath to deny it."

He didn't wait for her to answer. "I loved you so much I was stupid from it. The ring I gave you was a symbol of my commitment to you. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you, damn it, and you threw the ring in my face with no word, no explanation. I deserved more than that. Why, Taylor, why'd you do it? Why?"

"I have no answers for you."

A car horn honked, and they both turned toward the window at the reminder of Suzanne's presence.

"Oh, but you will. And don't try to run away, because I will find you. Understand?"

She nodded weakly. Another blast from the horn below, and he released her. He took one last look at her then ran out her office door. Back to Suzanne.

* * * * *

Taylor had no intention of telling Caleb the truth. When he discovered her father was behind the break up, he'd hate her anyway. Besides, he was engaged to Suzanne. Taylor would take the blame for what happened in the office earlier and put it behind her. At least, that's what she told herself . . . but her body would not allow her to forget so easily.

Her breasts still tingled from his mouth suckling and licking her nipples. Her pussy throbbed and beat like a drum from Caleb's long, hard strokes inside her tight walls. Their lovemaking had been quick and hard and desperate. When she arrived home, Caleb's scent still blanketed her body, causing the tears to fall once more.

She tossed her bag and binder on her bed, followed after them. She lay across her cool, soft comforter, willing her tears to stop, to no avail. They continued to fall until she fell asleep in her suit and shoes.

When she woke up, it was dark. She sat up in bed and looked at her alarm clock. Seven thirty. Caleb said he'd be here at eight.

Where would Suzanne think he'd be? He won't come, she convinced herself, though a tiny doubt remained. One thing about Caleb, he always kept his word.

She left a trail of discarded clothes in her wake as she headed to the bathroom. She turned on the shower jets and stepped under the refreshing steamy spray. Taylor rubbed the honeysuckle-scented body wash over her face and neck, down her breasts, still tender from Caleb's eager mouth.

She trailed her palms farther down to her stomach, and passed her bare mound where he'd buried himself deep into her pussy only hours before.

No one could undo her like Caleb. She stood under the soothing waterfall and cursed herself as a fool. There had been no man before or after Caleb Bryant.

She'd loved him since the beginning of time.

She loved him still.

And she'd never have him.

* * * * *

At eight o'clock on the dot, Caleb arrived at Taylor's door, braced for a confrontation and looking for answers.

"You shouldn't have come."

Caleb took in her wet hair and slinky robe, and his cock sprung to life. He'd bet the farm she was naked beneath that thin fabric. All he wanted, and needed, was to hold her in his arms again, inhale the faint talc fragrance that was hers alone. To bury himself deep inside her wet, tight, heat and make love to her until they couldn't walk.

"I said I'd be here, didn't I?"

She blocked her doorway.

"Aren't you going to ask me in? I told you I had things I needed to say."

She exhaled a breath and held the door open. He walked through to her colorful, cozy living room, and stood in the center, hands on hips, ready to do battle.

She wrapped her robe tighter around her. "I guess you'd like to sit down."

"No thanks, I'll stand." Her jittery manner told Caleb she still cared.

She looked so pretty and so young without her professional suit and makeup. Damn, she was his girl, and he had to find a way to sort out this mess.

The familiar scent of talc wrapped around him and held fast. Those crimson-colored toenails peeked out from her robe, and her shoulder-length hair began to curl from her shower. How was he going to keep his hands off her?

"Caleb, I'm sorry I was so weak. You have to know I feel dirty, and cheap, and if Suzanne ever finds out, I'll die."

He shook his head and sighed. "No, I initiated what happened between us. I'm to blame, not you, understand? Suzanne doesn't deserve what I did to her today. She's a good woman."

"I should have been stronger and pushed you away. Nothing good will come of this. I'm sorry, so sorry that we got carried away."

Christ, she was stubborn. "Don't ever apologize for making love with me. You got it?"

She distanced herself from him, moving to the opposite side of the room, hands fisted at her sides.

Caleb shoved his hands in his jeans pockets, legs spread, and took a deep breath. He managed a tiny, nervous smile, but Taylor didn't return one of her own.

"First of all, I want you to know that before today, I've never cheated on Suzanne, ever. I'm a one woman man, you should know that. I care for her very much, but you have to know that after what happened in your office this morning, I can never marry her."

Taylor began to cry in earnest. If there was one thing that could bring Caleb to his knees, it was Taylor's tears. They tore him up every time.

She shook her head and crossed her arms over her chest. "Maybe if you talk to her, beg her to forgive you, she'll take you back. I can't be the reason for another break up, I just can't. I will turn your wedding arrangements over to an excellent planner who will do a wonderful job for you."

"No."

She shook her head. "I promise you, Caleb, this young lady will be an excellent match for Suzanne's tastes. She is a real professional."

"No!"

She stomped her foot. "Stop saying no."

He couldn't bear the distance between them any longer. He took several long strides to reach her. Her scent guided him to her like a beacon of light.

He gathered her in his arms, then tilted his head back to look into her red-rimmed, tear-filled eyes. "Listen to me. I was the one who came to you. I wanted it to happen, wanted you, and I couldn't leave without touching you and being inside you. I knew once I put my hands on you that marrying Suzanne was out of the question, okay? I just had to know if you felt the same."

Before Taylor could answer, he gathered his thoughts, then continued. "I told Suzanne what happened right after I left you. I told her to keep the ring, which she did. You didn't really think I could marry her after we were together, did you? She threatened to sue me, after she told me I'd never fit in with her friends anyway. And you know what? I don't give a damn. It's a good thing this all happened now. I didn't love Suzanne the way I should have. Not the way I love you, baby."

In one swift move, he ripped the robe from her, delighted to find she was naked underneath.

He grabbed her upper arms tightly and lifted her toward him. "Tell me you don't want me, want this, Taylor." He nipped at her ear, then down to her lush full lips.

"Caleb, don't—"

His mouth crushed hers, forcing her lips apart so he could plunder the wet heat inside. He swirled his tongue around hers, and his cock responded when she moaned softly and circled his tongue with her own. Her arms crept up to his shoulders, then locked behind his neck. Caleb rejoiced as she joined him and held him to her heat.

He broke the kiss, only to make her see that this was where they belonged. This was home. "Oh baby, I missed you so damned much."

His hands roamed her body and he palmed her beautiful, full breasts, pushing them together.

He sampled her pebble-hard nipples, suckling and licking, while Taylor writhed in his arms, naked while he was fully clothed. It was the most erotic moment of his life.

"You taste like summer," he whispered, his cock hard and heavy with arousal. He'd never felt this way with any woman, not even Suzanne. "What about this? Did you miss this?"

He fell to his knees and spread open her soft thighs, revealing her pussy, all pink and wet with arousal.

"Yes," she admitted and threw back her head. "I missed you, missed everything we shared."

He used his thumbs to stretch her swollen petals and pierced her wet slit with his tongue, delving as far as he could go. He licked and suckled rhythmically, until he sensed her oncoming orgasm.

"It's okay, sweetheart, don't hold back. Come for me, only me."

"Caleb, Caleb," she cried his name like a mantra.

Her body stilled, then shivered with her orgasm, and Caleb held her before she fell to the floor in a puddle.

"I've got you, sweetheart. I'll never let you go."

She nodded, silently in his arms, then looked up so he could see into her eyes. They were dark and filled with passion. Desire had taken her over, and Caleb needed to be inside her, and quick.

"Undress me, baby. I need your mouth on me, now. Tell me you still love me or I'll die."

Her gaze locked with his as she pulled his shirt over his head, then unbuckled his pants. Her mouth opened and she let out a silent "oh" as she slid her palm up and down his erection. Slowly, with deliberate movements, she pulled the zipper down, tooth by tooth, until his cock sprung free and she caught it in her soft, capable hands.

Taylor dropped to her knees." Your turn," she murmured, her voice a raspy, sexy groan.

"Take all of me, baby, I'm burning up. Put out the fire."

The first touch of her lips on his crown almost undid him. How he'd missed her lips, her touch, and oh yeah, the way she went down on him. She always made him feel like he was the only man in the world.

She took him fully into her mouth, as far as she could, and Caleb growled with lust. She sucked him hard, one hand pressing his ass closer to her mouth, the other fingering his sack until his balls rose high and hard with an arousal so deep and hot, he forgot to breathe.

He wasn't going to last, not the way she performed her own brand of magic with those lips of hers.

"Ah, Taylor, suck me hard, baby."

She took him deep, and bobbed her head, up and down, three, four, five more times, until he stilled and pushed her mouth away. He slid to the floor, into her waiting arms, and laid her on her back. He had to bury himself inside her — now.

As if she read his mind, Taylor spread her legs open in invitation. Yes, she wanted him. As much as he had always wanted and needed her.

No words were spoken as she wrapped her arms around his neck, her legs around his hips. He slid into her red-hot pussy. She responded by lifting her hips to meet his own when he began to thrust.

He was so hot, he knew it would only take seconds for them to burn in a blaze of sexual flames.

Faster, harder, hotter, their flesh slapped together, two people in perfect synch, reveling in the joy of making love.

He waited as long as he could. When she cried out in a long wail, his back arched, and together, they fell over the edge of the precipice.

* * * * *

"Now tell me why you broke our engagement, and I want the truth."

They were still lying on the floor, warm and naked. He'd wanted to take her to bed, but she couldn't move a muscle if the house was on fire.

"It was my father." A sense of embarrassment filled her. Amazing, after all these years, her father still managed to have some sort of hold over her.

His face contorted and his anger became evident. Here it comes, she thought. *Here's where he gets up and says goodbye. And I deserve it. I broke his heart, and I deserve to be left alone.*

"I had a feeling the old man was behind all of this. I didn't want to believe you'd leave me just because he thought I wasn't good enough for you."

His words stung.

"It was more than that, Taylor, wasn't it? Talk to me sweetheart, please."

She swallowed hard and choked away threatening tears. "He told me he'd destroy you if I didn't return your ring."

When he began to move away from her, she grabbed his wrist. *Fight for him now, Taylor, or you'll lose him for good this time.*

"Caleb, he said he'd ruin your reputation, that because of your police record, no one would ever want to work with you, or for you." Her words came out in a rush, but she had to make him understand. "You know how influential he is. He had people, you know, people who were going to doctor your specs, forge your name to the invoices and make it look as though you used inferior lumber, and cheap electrical products. Nothing I said to him got through. He wouldn't listen to me." Her tears fell freely now, and the whole scene seemed surreal. They were both naked, on her living room floor. She'd just had the most mind-blowing sex of her life, and he was going to walk away. "I couldn't let him do that to you. I loved you too much. So I gave you up, so he'd forget about you."

"You could have told me so I could've fought back." He sat up, tunneled his fingers through his hair in frustration.

She pulled him toward her, cradled his face in her hands, and kissed him gently on the mouth. He didn't flinch.

"I was afraid for you, do you understand?" She whispered, kissing him again on his cheek, then his nose and chin.

"I couldn't bear to see you go to prison," she added as he calmed a bit. "And he would have done it. You know that, don't you?"

He nodded slightly, and then she sighed in relief when he smiled and ran his thumb lightly over her lower lip.

"I guess he found out about my five month stint in juvenile detention when I was seventeen."

She nodded, gripping his hand to convey her support, her belief in him. "Yes, and there was nothing I could do to deny it. It was a matter of public record. And he was going to use it against you."

Taylor knew Caleb had made mistakes in his teen years. But he had paid his dues and had kept a clean record since then. He went on to college and received a master's degree in engineering. He worked his ass off to buy a small construction business that was his pride and joy. And there was no way Taylor was going to have her father ruin his life over one slip-up.

"After you left me, I was so angry and broken up I didn't want to be anywhere near you so I immersed myself in my company. I tried to live my life without you and thought I was doing okay." He ran his fingers down her arm, as if to soothe and comfort her. "I met Suzanne when I did some work for her father, and tried to love her. I cared for her in my own way, but for me there was always something missing." He leaned in close to her face, placed gentle kisses to her nose, cheeks and lips. "You."

She wrapped her arms around his neck. He smelled of soap and sex and man. "I missed you, Caleb, every day of my life since you've been gone."

Her admission of love sent him into motion. His kisses became hotter and harder, his eyes blazing a path of heat from her head to her toes.

Taylor grew warm under his gaze and knew he wanted her again.

"It's always been you, baby." He cupped her breast, and she sighed from the magic touch of his fingers as he rolled her the little button between his fingers.

She smiled. "Now what?"

He trailed lazy fingers past her stomach to her pussy, where he circled it with his palm. "Now we make love again. You don't think what we've done so far today was enough, do you?"

She nodded and tried to laugh, but all that escaped her was a sigh of need.

"Caleb, can you ever forgive me?"

His finger delved into her waiting pussy. "I can't pretend you didn't hurt me, because you did. But the fact you did it to protect me makes me love you even more. I'm just pissed off we lost nearly three years that we could have been together."

Those beautiful lips turned up in a wicked smile. Yes, he'd forgiven her. It was more than she deserved. "Thank you, Caleb. I promise to make it up to you."

"Oh, I know you will, and you can start right now, baby."

He covered her body with his and pushed her legs open with his knee.

"This time, we are getting married. You have a problem with that?"

She stiffened and her mouth dried up like a dead flower. "Married? How can we? Caleb, when my father finds out —"

His head snapped up and his entire demeanor changed. He pulled his warmth from her and left a cold trail in his stead. His voice was an empty monotone. "You're saying that unless he approves, you won't marry me?"

"Caleb, how can we? He never liked you, and he resented the fact you had a police record. He hasn't changed his mind, I'm sure."

"You're still afraid of him." It wasn't a question.

She reached for her robe with shaky hands. She stood, and with trembling fingers, pushed her arms through the openings, while her body ached for Caleb's touch. The reminder of her father's influence was coming between them. *This can't be happening again.* She had to make him understand.

"No. I'm afraid for *you*. Caleb, when my father finds out we are back together, I don't know what he'll do. You know that he's still capable of ruining your reputation, don't you?" When he didn't answer, she continued. "Do you think he'll just accept the fact and walk away? I won't be responsible for his actions and I can't live through that hell again."

"You won't have to." And with that he pulled on his jeans, threw on his shirt and walked to the door.

"Caleb, please don't walk away. We can work this out."

He shook his head. "I've lost three years of my life without you, and I'm not waiting another minute to get this bullshit resolved for good."

Taylor began to cry in earnest. "Where are you going?"

"I have something to take care of. I'll call you tomorrow."

He slammed the door so hard behind him on his way out she jumped.

She'd lost him again. And this time, her heart wouldn't survive the pain.

* * * * *

"What do you want, Bryant?"

The booming voice of Vincent Forrester accompanied his broad form. Caleb stood at Taylor's father's doorstep, ready to do battle. In his hand, he held a folder containing what he hoped was the key to end Forrester's threats that hung over him like a curse.

"I need to talk to you, sir, about Taylor. May I come in?"

Forrester didn't answer, just nodded and cleared the doorway to make way for Caleb's entry.

The middle-aged, silver-haired man led Caleb to an office, then shut the door behind them.

He directed Caleb to a chair that Caleb declined. Then the older man took a seat behind a large, oak desk.

"What is this about, Bryant?"

Caleb wasn't about to pull punches. "About Taylor and me. I love her very much and I want to marry her."

"Not going to happen." Forrester shook his head and smirked. "My daughter ended her relationship with you years ago. What makes you think I've changed my mind?"

Caleb wanted to wipe the smirk off the old man's face. He felt his face heat with anger and knew Forrester was trying to goad him. Be cool, Caleb thought, don't play into his intimidation.

Caleb was tired of this game. He sighed, then decided to take a seat opposite Forrester. "Look, what happened with me all those years ago is over and done with. I happen to be a good person, I make a good living, and I love Taylor with my life."

Caleb found himself pouring his heart out to Taylor's father, who sat expressionless, maybe to intimidate Caleb, but Forrester wasn't going to win this time.

"I own a reputable, honest company that I worked hard to establish and build. It was you who destroyed our engagement. Didn't you realize how sad Taylor was over our break up?"

Now Forrester rose from his chair, leaned over the desk, and looked Caleb in the eye with a heated look.

"I didn't see you try to patch things up. You just ran away with your tail between your legs to Alaska. True or not?"

Caleb clutched the folder so tightly, the papers crunched within his hand. "She didn't tell me why she was ending our engagement!"

"I don't believe you."

Caleb reached over the desk to the phone and picked up the receiver. "Call and ask her."

When Forrester didn't make a move for the phone, Caleb placed the receiver back into its cradle. "She didn't want me to get into more trouble. So she just told me she didn't love me anymore, and I left. End of story."

All of the sudden, Forrester seemed to run out of steam. He fell back into his chair, and Caleb followed suit and placed the file he was holding onto the desk.

He shook his head and pointed to the folder. "Look, this file contains some pretty nasty stuff about you and the last construction project you were involved in. I'm not going to tell Taylor about this, because she's my life, and I would never hurt her in any way. I expect you to do the same for me."

Caleb rose from the chair. "I'm going to marry your daughter, sir. And I don't expect any interference from you, unless it's a phone call to give Taylor your blessing."

Forrester didn't move from the chair. *Say something, you old bastard.* Caleb shook his head and turned to walk out. His hands shook, and he pushed them into his jeans pockets in order to steady himself.

"Bryant!"

Caleb turned to face Forrester one last time.

The old man held up the thick folder in one hand and nodded. "You won't have any problems with me."

Inside, Caleb was pumping his fist with victory. He looked at Forrester and smiled. "That's what I wanted to hear. Thank you, sir."

* * * * *

Taylor paced the room, up and down, back and forth. Where was he?

She was still recovering from the shock of her father's phone call over two hours ago, during which he'd described an "interesting conversation" he and Caleb had, and had virtually sang Caleb's praises. Taylor wondered if aliens had kidnapped her real father, and left a fake Vincent Forrester behind to them give his blessing!

She continued to pace, in one room, out another, hands clasped, peeking out the windows, looking for his truck.

"Oh, baby, where are you?"

As if on cue, the roar of a powerful engine grew closer, until, finally, he parked his truck in front of her house and stepped out of the cab. Was he whistling?

My goodness, she thought, did the aliens get to Caleb too?

She laughed for the first time in two days and ran to the door, threw it open and fell into his open arms.

"Ah, good morning to you too." He laughed, then dove in for a kiss that curled her toes and melted her heart.

They couldn't get close enough, couldn't kiss each other enough.

"Caleb, what did you say to my father?"

He walked her into the house, slammed the door shut with his foot, but didn't let go of her, just backed her through the house, to her bedroom. Just where she wanted to be with Caleb.

"Later," he murmured. "Right now, all I want to do is ravish you from the top of that gorgeous head, to your pretty red toes, okay? We have a lot of time to make up for."

Not one to argue with a man whose raging hard on pressed against her thigh, Taylor nodded.

"Good, no more talking." He dug his fingers through her hair while his kisses possessed and aroused her. Caleb was all she ever wanted, all she ever needed.

"So what do you say we fly to Vegas tonight and get married?" He kissed her neck then made his way down her breasts, paying homage to each one in turn.

"Hmm," was all she could manage.

"Was that a 'yes'?" His mouth slid lower, kissing his way down her tummy to her navel.

"Oh, Caleb, yes, yes," she moaned as his tongue licked over her bare mound and slipped into her throbbing pussy.

He lifted his head and slid up her body. He threaded his fingers through her hair and looked deep into her eyes. "Thank you."

"You're welcome, now don't stop."

She nearly vaulted off the floor when he kissed his way down her flesh, leaving a blazing trail of fire behind. He licked then sucked her clit, and she let out a long, low groan.

She exploded into shards of pleasure, and Caleb's arms surrounded her as he held her tightly in his arms. Only Caleb possessed the power to take her to heaven and back.

He pulled her to the floor, moved over her, and buried himself deep inside her hot, waiting channel. Then he turned them, so she lay atop him.

"Ride me, Taylor, take me, love me, baby. I'm all yours."

He filled her to the hilt, and Taylor rose up, stroking him with her body. Cherishing his large, calloused hands on her hips, she moved faster and faster, up and down his hard, long cock, until his body vaulted to meet hers.

His palms moved over her breasts, and he squeezed her nipples, until her hunger matched his, stroke for stroke.

He began to groan low and gripped her hips tighter. "Go over for me, sweetheart, now, now."

"Ah, I love you, Caleb," she cried, as his finger moved between her legs and stroked her clit until she exploded in orgasm.

Caleb joined her seconds later, crying out his release, then he pulled her body down onto his chest and held her tightly within his strong embrace.

"I need you close," he whispered. The room fell quiet. He'd fallen asleep.

She raised her head to look at him once more. "I need you too," she whispered, placing a tiny kiss on his chest. "Always. I never stopped loving you Caleb, ever."

She closed her eyes and fell asleep in his arms, a tiny smile curving her lips.

~The End~

About the Author

Heather Peters was born in New York City and has been a lover of the romance novel since she read *The Flame and the Flower* and fell in love with Kathleen Woodiwiss. She started writing and hasn't looked back since.

In between writing erotic romance, her day job nowadays is secretary for two very busy business owners. Her first erotic romance e-book, [Toy With Me](#), was a December, 2009 Freya's Bower release. Her July, 2010 release from Noble Romance is [Surrender](#), a contemporary Beauty and the Beast erotic romance, and later this year, [Oz](#) is a Red Sage release with her critique/writing partner, Eden Elgabri.

Heather is a member of RIRW, or Rhode Island Romance Writers, to whom she credits the support of all its fabulous members with her success. "I've never met such a great bunch of talented, supportive, generous people in my life, and if it weren't for them, I'd never be published."

When she's not writing, she loves to read, cook and enjoys time with her family. Heather lives with her wonderful husband in New York, not far from her daughter, son, and two amazing grandchildren.

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If you enjoyed *Best Laid Plans*, you might also like the following book from Heather Peters and Noble Romance Publishing:

[Surrender](#)