



Chemical Lust

By

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ISBN: 978-1-60088-560-0

Cover Artist: Sable Grey

Editor: Stephanie Parent

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Cobblestone Press, LLC

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Janet Hall. Thank you for all the sacrifices, Mom, and for letting me hide away in my room with a pen and notebook writing my stories instead of doing chores. Thank you for all the love and help you have given to me in my life. I would have been lost without you.

Part One

Leah Thurman sat at her desk lost in concentration. She was working with a complicated formula and no matter how hard her brain tried to wrap around the numbers, she just could not get it to work. A resounding crash startled her, and she quickly looked up. One of the new interns had dropped an entire box of beakers on the laboratory floor and they had shattered, scattering broken glass from one end of her spotless lab to the other! Leah was less than impressed. Looking at her sheepishly, the intern quickly dropped to the floor behind a lab table and began to clean up his mess.

With a tired sigh and quick, annoyed shake of her head, Leah went back to her formula. Unfortunately, her concentration was now completely shot. Looking up had reminded her that he was there, just assigned to this project, under her supervision, even more untouchable than before. Leah was depressed enough that the most appealing man whom God had ever created worked in her division of secret projects for the government's chemical warfare and research facility. Fraternization was greatly frowned upon, and she was not a rule breaker. Even if Leah wanted to break the rule, with her plain face and boring brown hair and eyes, she would never turn that Adonis's head!

Six months ago when Jericho Bennett had come in as a civilian consultant, she'd never thought he would be staying long enough to be involved with her pet project. He was the leading scientific mind in his field, and when she had needed a chemical component that derived from a rare plant synthesized for the final stage of her project, the men upstairs had asked Bennett to stay on for her project. She never let on how much it bothered her that he was there and did her best to hide her attraction to him from herself and the rest of her laboratory staff.

When she looked up again to study him, needing to see if her brain had exaggerated his perfection, he glanced her way and she quickly looked back down at his formula—but not before she noticed he had given her one of his sexy, relaxed grins. He was so beautiful. It made her want to curse and rail against the universe that he was

a constant tormenting distraction during the most challenging project of her life! Even without his super-sexy deliciousness, it would be frustrating enough to constantly be thinking about sex when she had not experienced it for so long, she doubted she could remember how it all worked if the opportunity ever presented itself to her.

For sex was what her project was trying to enhance and was all she had focused on for months. When she was promoted to chemical warfare research, she had never in her wildest dreams imagined her superiors would ask her to develop a sex drug! Nonetheless, here she was, trying as hard as she could to make a drug that, when inhaled, would make men or women so overcome with desire they would not be able to resist their carnal urges. How exactly the government wanted to use this compound was classified information; all she had to do was create it.

Leah had been uncomfortable from the start of the project because she had little sexual experience. Her classified military career complicated every relationship she had ever tried to enjoy, so she had finally just given up, and for the past year and a half she had been as chaste as a nun. Making her discomfort worse, the day she had seen Jericho her repressed sexual needs had come clawing to the surface, and shortly after that first titillating glimpse of his sex-a-lusciousness she had been briefed on what her superiors needed her to create. When they had dropped her current project in her lap, it was extra awkward for her because she was horny for the first time in ages!

Staring in vain at her numbers, instead of a complex equation she saw his perfect butt and sculpted abs and his gorgeously green eyes that always seemed to be smiling. Leah knew very little about the focus of her fantasies except for what she had read in his file. He had grown up in a nice middle-class Midwestern home and had been remarkably gifted in the sciences. He'd graduated from Yale at the top of his class. He had never married and had no children. He wore his black hair longer than was fashionable, but on him it looked right.

Oh, and his body so begged to be touched. For a scientist, he was in extraordinarily good shape. Jericho was brawn with a brain, and Leah found that very appealing. His strong jaw always seemed to have a trace of stubble, as if he had not taken the time to look at himself in the mirror. It made her long to run her fingers over his face and then replace her fingers with her lips and follow the path with soft kisses. His voice had an almost lyrical quality, which was surprising as it was also very deep and authoritative.

Shaking him off her mind, she laughed to herself—she was a very successful and talented scientist mooning over a subordinate like a teenage girl. Leah vowed to go out in search of someone to break her self-imposed vows of celibacy before she made a fool of herself. It was getting harder not to think about how good sex felt as the research and testing phase of the project got more and more about the sex and less and less about the formula. Her formula was almost perfect. Once the plant extract Jericho was working

on was finished, if it did what she truly believed it would do, she would be climbing the ranks again. Several others who had attempted similar projects had failed completely, but she had come much closer to the necessary results.

Leah could smell the spicy musk of his cologne before she looked up at him. It was just wrong that not only did he look great, he smelled great as well; fleetingly she wondered if he would fuck great too. Pushing the thought aside before it could become a scarlet blush on her cheeks, she looked up at him. He held out a test tube and simply said, "I've got it!" Looking at his face, she could see the cocky delight he felt for having solved a problem no one else had been able to solve. She smiled warmly, unable to help herself. "Mr. Bennett, I think we should add it to the mixture and see if we can't get project Potion Number Nine to make history. I am very impressed with how swiftly you have accomplished this."

"I still don't see how this will be a weapon. I fear we might have opened a Pandora's box if this becomes something that falls into the wrong hands." His beautiful face was etched with intense concern. Leah had to repress her gut reaction to take his hand and reassure him that whatever the government's plans for their drug, it was going to be well guarded. Instead she said in her best librarian voice, with as hard an edge as she could put to it, "Mr. Bennett, it is a classified issue. Please don't concern yourself with it any longer."

He quickly covered his surprise at her tone with a reassured nod and left her office. Leah cringed a little inside for how her words must have sounded to him, but she knew if she showed any sign of interest in him it would not be good for her career. Even if she had been free to see him, she was sure a man that good-looking could not have any interest in someone like herself, so the point was moot.

Her desk phone's annoying ring brought her out of her dark thoughts. Sighing with the acceptance that she could not change the situation, she took a deep breath before answering the line.

"Good morning, this is Lieutenant Thurman."

"Hello, Lieutenant. This is General Miller, and I just received an email from our Mr. Bennett. I am truly impressed. I thought it would take Bennett longer; I guess this is why he's the best. I would like you and Mr. Bennett to bring down the finished sample. I think we will begin human trials this afternoon. Meet me in the laboratory on level A1 in thirteen hundred hours, and Lieutenant, I want you to know what a service you are doing for our country. I know this project seems a little odd, but I assure you it is of the highest priority."

"Very good, General. I look forward to showing you the full scale of this compound, and I think you will be impressed. I did believe we would be doing some animal trials before the human trials began?"

"Lieutenant, I hope you are not questioning my authority?"

"No sir, of course not, but for prudence's sake I must request we do some lab and then animal testing before giving this to a human. It could even be fatal! We do not know what effect this will have on the patient's reproductive and endocrine systems or if it could cause cancer or other long-term health problems as a side effect. Think of past mistakes made by our government in human testing. We don't want to go down in history as another MKULTRA; the horrible things they did only forty years ago are unthinkable! I could not condone being part of anything like that. They used sex to blackmail and to alter perception; please tell me that is not what we are doing with this drug. I know the information is classified, but this sudden rush to human trials has made me very uncomfortable, and I would like very much to know what we have been creating here all these months."

"That is classified information, but this drug could help us in ways you cannot imagine. Our volunteers are aware of the risk and wish to serve their country. If you are unwilling to do what we must do and what we have the authority from the highest levels of government to do, I can find other capable persons who would happily fill your shoes. I appreciate your concerns, but this will be done with or without your blessing. Do we have an understanding?"

"Yes, sir; whatever is in the best interest of this country is what we must do." Leah gritted her teeth as she said the words. If this was going to happen, at least she was on board and could be the conscience of the project to monitor how it was being handled.

"Very good, Lieutenant. I will see you and Mr. Bennett at thirteen hundred hours."

Leah emailed Jericho, telling him to prepare for the human trials that afternoon, and she was very surprised when the door to her office suddenly banged open with rude force. Jericho stood very imposingly in her doorway, and Leah blinked repeatedly behind her thick glasses. She stared up at the man unable to speak. In three strides he was in front of her desk, his height and stormy countenance making her feel a bit uncomfortable. In her coolest and most assured voice, she asked, "Mr. Bennett, is there a problem?"

"Damn it, Thurman! I can't believe you're willing to let them test this on a human already. We haven't even started the animal trials with the new compound. Do you realize how strong that extract is? Too much and the subject may never be themselves again! Just the smallest miscalculation between the components, and we have killed your subjects! Do you want that on your conscience? I sure as hell don't. How can you be so cold about this? We need to do more research. We need to be sure the subjects will retain a normal attitude towards arousal in the long term and that the strain from all the adrenaline this produces won't cause long-term heart damage. Until we do so, this compound should not go anywhere near the inside of a human being! Do

your subjects realize how dangerous this is?"

"Mr. Bennett, please control your temper and maintain your professionalism. Please do not demean their willingness to assist their country by assuming they do not know the risk. When we brief our test subjects they are told of the risk. These patriotic men and women agree to participate as test subjects because they love this country. For a project of this level, I'm sure the participants are all career military with sterling records; they have probably done much more dangerous things for your freedom!"

"We have been very honest with you about the intentions and ramifications of this project. This is a high-priority for national security; we do not have the luxury of waiting for the normal procedures and times. I am sorry, Mr. Bennett, but this trial will commence at thirteen hundred hours with or without your continued help. I would like you to be a part of this, as we may need to reevaluate the quantity of your plant extract, but if you choose to leave, I have several associates who would very much like a hand in this project. Are you going to continue to consult on this project, Mr. Bennett?"

Indecision was evident on his face, and it added to his appeal. Leah could see the battle that raged in his caring and intelligent mind, but in the end, she had won him over. With his characteristic brisk nod, he left.

It was going to be a long day.

Part Two

Shortly before the designated time, Leah looked up and saw that Jericho had brought the required samples to her. He was carrying them in the most secure medium available but still held them as if they were going to bite him. Leah suppressed a smile. He was acting as if the vial was ready to explode. She rose, and they walked in silence to the elevators. The security on their floor scanned the bar codes on the vials and then their badges. Security took them to the elevator, and Leah was given the code that would provide access to the restricted level. They would have to go through the same scans when they got off the elevator at their destination.

Once inside the elevator, Leah punched in the code that would take them to the most secure floor of the building. Then she scanned her badge, and the elevator began to move. Jericho said nothing. Leah was disappointed in his hotheaded reaction to their decision. She had to remind herself that he was a civilian and that the procedures varied considerably from what he expected.

Nervously anticipating the trial, she was lost in thought until there was a sudden jolt of the elevator. She lost her balance and fell against Jericho, who was also having trouble with the fierce force of the sudden stop. Just as she was sure she was going to fall and hit her head, strong arms wrapped around her. It was a strange sensation. It was a wonderful sensation. "I've got you, Leah," he said quietly.

It was not until she was upright again that she noticed something important was missing from his warm arms. In alarm, she looked down. In order to catch her he had dropped the transport container. A civilian mistake, and if any of the vials had cracked, they were in major trouble—especially as the elevator had stopped moving.

"What happened? Why did we stop?" Mild alarm colored his questions.

"Someone must have activated level one security protocol on level A1, our destination. All doors have locked them in and us out. Since our elevator was trying to get there, we've been stopped until the situation is given the all clear."

"How long will that take? Could this be a drill or something?" Now he sounded

annoyed. Leah hid her smile—she could not think of anyone else she would prefer to be stuck in the elevator with.

“It normally wouldn’t take very long, if this is a drill, but until I know more about the situation I can’t give you a time estimate.”

Jericho bent over to pick up the vials; Leah could not resist a glance at his perfect *derrière*. His body was so perfect it put Michelangelo’s *David* to shame! She tried to swallow and noticed her throat had suddenly gotten very dry.

Jericho opened the parcel to inspect the precious and potent cargo.

“Leah, oh God, cover your nose!” Jericho’s alarm brought her to full attention. She noticed that both of the vials had cracked, and as the two chemicals came together, she could see them mixing and forming the most potent version of Potion Number Nine. If they did not plug the cracks and stop the reaction, they were about to become the human test subjects!

Jericho must have come to the same conclusion as she did, because he was trying to plug the cracks with his large fingers. In his fear and panic, however, he put too much pressure on the vials. They shattered completely. The blushing fumes began to rise. Jericho dropped all of it now and quickly removed his shirt. He tied it around his face to protect himself from inhaling the fumes.

Leah took control, throwing her jacket over the mess in hopes that it would not penetrate the thick fabric. Unfortunately, her efforts didn’t seem to be helping. She frantically jabbed at the emergency button and began to call for help. The chemical lust was making her choke and cough as her lungs filled with the oddly floral-smelling gas. She grabbed her BlackBerry and tried to dial. She cursed loudly, which was very out of character for her. There was no signal—the building was constructed of very durable materials, and in the elevator no one had ever gotten a signal. Leah wanted to scream when she realized just how screwed she was. Because of the previous emergency, no one was responding to their call; security probably assumed they were just getting impatient for their elevator to move again.

Leah tried to cover her mouth and nose, but it was too late. She was already feeling lightheaded, the first sign that the drug was taking hold of her. Jericho seemed to be fairing no better than she was, even with his makeshift mask. His pupils dilated; she assumed hers were as well. No matter what, she was still the scientist, so she began to mentally compile her data on their reaction. If they lived, she would have much to say about the effectiveness of the drug, as she was now experiencing it firsthand with her knowledge of its structure and of how the human body would metabolize it.

Jericho stumbled and dropped to the floor. His large frame made the elevator shake, but it still had not moved. Leah also lost her strength and sank down next to him. The gas was starting to dissipate, and they were still alive. For one moment of relief, she was sure that the gas was having no effect on her—and then it happened. Raging fire

shot through her body, and she gasped for air. Her head fell back as her back arched. She felt as if she was on the brink of an orgasm right there, fully dressed and untouched on the elevator floor. Her keen awareness of Jericho's eyes on her and the fact he was watching with interest, not saying or doing anything, made it all the more embarrassing and yet kind of kinky. Leah actually shook her head to try and clear that thought away. *I am a scientist, and this is a perfectly uncontrollable reaction to a laboratory mishap*, she reassured herself. *I am in no way responsible for my actions*, she thought as if pleading with her own subconscious.

Before she completely gave in to her loss of control, she managed to grab her jacket off the floor and flip it up to where the security camera was pointing directly at her. She did not want even more of an audience for her panting and writhing; it was bad enough that Jericho seemed to be completely aware of her predicament and enjoying it thoroughly. It made her hot just knowing he was the one seeing her need. She wanted him between her legs. She wanted him to fuck her right there on the elevator floor—an elevator that could start working any second, she reminded herself. Jericho's perfect lips made her want to kiss him more than she'd thought it possible to want to kiss anyone. She was never the sexual aggressor in a relationship, but she suddenly wanted to pin him to the floor and remove his clothing until nothing but skin was rubbing together in delicious friction.

Whoa! *Where had that come from?* She wondered, trying to get herself under control. She was career military and damn proud of it; Leah was one tough lady who had always prided herself on her control and her commitment to the job. She tried to breathe and quell her raging lust, but the panting and gulping for air only made her think of how nice it would be to make Jericho pant with need for her. Even if she was plain, there were things she could do with her tongue that would make him scream hallelujah. She wondered how his sexy voice would sound calling her name, begging her to wring the pleasure out of him.

Leah moaned and smacked her head against the elevator wall as she battled against the need. She wanted to yell at him. He looked so comfortable! How was that crap not affecting him? He seemed totally in control, and it was making her crazy. She turned on her side, rolling on her arms and pinning them down to keep herself from touching him or herself, so intense was her arousal.

She glared at him. He was still lying on the floor, but he had his head propped up on his arm and was watching her with a bored interest that made her want to slap him just to wipe that smirk off his perfect face. Control was officially gone; she had turned feral in her lust. She let out a deep, keening moan. Just giving in to the effect of the drug, she had finally stopped trying to analyze her reactions. Turning to him, she spoke, and her words sounded more like a moan.

"Oh God, Jericho, it's just too much. I think the compound is working and we are

now the first human test subjects. How can you just be still like that? What's wrong? Are you even alive?" Angry that she was suffering and he was not, she wanted him to suffer with her.

He watched her writhe a few more moments, and then in a swift motion he reached out and swept her towards him. She found herself pressed against his long, hard frame; absently she wondered how long and hard his cock was. His lips pressed against hers, and she felt his tongue sweep into her mouth. She moaned and let it in, then swirled hers into his mouth too.

Jericho was crushing her to him in a desperate embrace, holding her head between his hands and pinning her to the floor with his body. She was immobile, a prisoner of his lips, and she was ready to accept a long sentence. His talent at kissing was amazing, and he blew her mind. She had been kissed a lot; she had been kissed by different kinds of men in different kinds of ways, and not one single kiss compared to his. His breath was even sweet; she vaguely regretted not having grabbed a stick of gum or a mint after lunch. His kiss was not too wet or too dry—it was alive, with inflections of his changing level of desire. She could feel that he too was losing control.

Time didn't seem to be working right in the elevator. She knew it should have moved by now, yet instead they found themselves together, straining against the raw lust. She was blissfully glad that he had not walked off the project and left some pimply-faced college intern to carry the vials. Her mind whirled, thinking of all her secret little thoughts and fantasies about him. Somehow, during the kiss he had stripped her to her bra and panties. She was wet, and her desire was so strong she could even smell it, though she blushed and hoped that it was her imagination.

He certainly didn't seem to mind. She felt him slipping her panties off while his mouth moved to her sensitive nipples. He caressed her breasts with his large hand while his mouth sucked hard, first on one nipple and then the other. She gasped at his slightest touch and was overcome by her desire to touch him. Her hands found his belt and awkwardly tried to remove it. His masculine chuckle rumbled against her body as he easily made short work of his remaining clothing. Noticing that he had gone commando, she was sure she would never look at him in the lab the same way again.

She barely knew him, but at that moment it did not matter to her. She burned with the feminine glory of the moment. A handsome man making love to her in a place where discovery could happen at any moment—it was too good and kinky to be true. Maybe the gas had killed her? She moaned as the pad of his thumb found her clitoris and flicked wildly against it. Meanwhile, his mouth had found her neck, and he was kissing her and sucking at the tender flesh. Her head rolled back, and with her orgasm only a moment away she heard herself wailing his name. He had never spoken one word to her since it had begun, and it was a little unnerving, but somehow it fit him in this moment and made her pleasure even more blinding in its intensity.

Leah's hand found his cock, and she began to rhythmically stroke it. That wrung a gruff growl from him, and she realized just how close to the edge of his control he was. It made her smile. He once again took charge, and, with an ease that made her feel far more petite than she was, he flipped her so that he had her on top of him with her back facing him. Then he pulled her vagina down to his mouth and began to love it with his tongue. Her hands found his shaft once more, and she frantically ran her hands over him as her need built to a painful frenzy.

Then she came. Her body clenched, and pleasure robbed her of thought. She arched her back and just let the wonderful sensations ripple inside of her body. As the spasms that wracked her began to die, he flipped her to her back and once again began to kiss her. Leah did not even mind that she was able to taste herself on him, his kiss was so intense. His hands wildly spread through her hair, pulling and caressing at the same time. She moaned, and her arousal built again.

Jericho's skillful hands strolled across her body in a deliberate and distracting fashion. His cologne clung to her skin. He was so hard and thick she wondered if he would be too much for her. None of her previous lovers had been quite so well endowed. Her mouth wanted to taste him, but before she could he had her pinned on her hands and knees: one of his thick, muscular arms held her across her belly, and the other had a fistful of her hair. She felt the delicious shock of his entry in slow, precise increments. In her desperation she tried to impale herself on him, but he was still in control; she admired his restraint even if it was really pissing her off.

Then the restraint seemed to fall away as he slammed himself into her as deeply as he could. She had never felt anything like it. They fit together perfectly to pleasure each other. She was on the edge again, and with one more deliberate and deep stroke of his body, he pushed her back into the liquid heat of the most intense orgasm she had ever experienced. Crying out for him in an anguished wail that sounded more of pain than pleasure, she wanted to weep. Never in her life had she ever felt so alive. Never had she felt so thoroughly and perfectly used. Need roared through her. A moment after it seemed that she would break in two with its intensity. She heard Jericho call her name. He buried his face in the crook of her neck and hair and cried out. She sensed his release; it felt good.

They collapsed, panting and sweating, on the rough worn carpet of the elevator. Jericho pulled her into his arms and kissed her forehead. They did not speak—what could they have said? With a sigh, she realized how precarious it was to lie naked in an elevator that could start up again at any second. Her mind was starting to process normally again, and she quickly dressed and did her best to tidy herself. She could smell sex, and it made her self-conscious. What would the guards say when the elevator finally worked again? During their loss of control her jacket had fallen off the security camera, so now there was going to be a sex video of her for the security guys to watch

at their next Christmas party. With an angry *humph*, she picked the jacket up and put it on.

Jericho had not moved but simply watched her, amused and smirking. It was infuriating. He casually stood and pulled on his clothing again. He took her in his arms and whispered, "Thank you," into her ear. After what they had done, she should not still be able to blush, but his words caused her to go crimson.

Then a voice interrupted them. "We have the situation on level A1 contained, and we will restart the elevator shortly. Please be aware that the car will jerk slightly upon restart. Take the necessary precautions. Over."

Leah jabbed the call button. "There has been a chemical spill. Please inform the general. Over."

"Right away. Is anyone injured?" Concern and alarm were evident in the young guard's voice.

"No injuries to report at this time."

Even with the warning, the jolt of the car moving again made Leah stumble, and Jericho reached out to steady her. Shrugging off his hands, she moved as far away from him as she could, which, given the cramped quarters, was not very far. It was not hard for her to notice his knowing smile. Irritating, the man was irritating.

When the elevator stopped, the doors did not immediately open. Then the doors opened to a crew of soldiers in biohazard suits. Leah had expected it, but Jericho seemed unnerved. They found themselves quickly escorted to a decontamination room, and the process of decontamination commenced. Each of them was taken to a separate area to be debriefed. Cameras had caught a great deal of the elevator action, so neither of them needed to go into much detail. They each gave permission for the footage to be analyzed, and then they underwent a full medical evaluation to see what effect the drug had on them. For hours, they endured poking, prodding, inspecting, and interrogation about the drug's effect.

Leah was relieved that she had not seen Jericho since they had been decontaminated. What would she say to him? Did he feel angry or embarrassed; was he horrified that he had slept with someone as plain as she had to admit she was? It was going to be hard to face him in the lab again.

After the results of the medical inspection concluded that all traces of the drug had left her system and she had suffered no lasting effects, the medic gave her the green light to leave. Showered and dressed in a fresh uniform, she was just about to return to her office when the general stopped her.

"Lieutenant, I know that this has been an unfortunate and trying day for you. Please feel free to take the rest of the day to yourself. You may return to duty tomorrow if you choose, but I think both you and Mr. Bennett should take the day off tomorrow. This incident will remain quiet." Leah almost smiled at how uncomfortable the aging

general seemed.

“Thank you, General, I will return tomorrow. I do believe I will go home now; this has been a very awkward day.” He nodded briskly in response and marched away as quickly as he could. Once his back was turned, she could no longer stop the smile that erupted on her lips. She had never seen the general so twitchy.

Part Three

Quickly she went to the parking garage to find her car. Her keys had been in her jacket pocket, and she did not even take time to retrieve her bag from her office; she just wanted to get home. To her horror, she saw that Jericho was leaning against her car when she got to her assigned parking place. His casually crossed ankles gave the impression of leisure, but Leah could see that his muscles appeared tense; he looked as if he had been waiting for a while. With a quick breath, she squared her shoulders to face whatever lay ahead.

“Hello, Leah. I have been waiting for you.”

She said nothing, waiting.

“I wanted to ask if you’d like to grab a bite to eat with me. It’s been a long day for both of us.”

Amazed, she said, “Do you really think that’s a good idea?”

“Yes, I do. I know what happened in there was not something we would normally have done, but I’ve wanted to get to know you on a more personal level since the first day I saw you. I never dreamed I would have the most amazing sex with you before we had an official first date. Let’s get some dinner and just get to know each other and see what happens. I know you aren’t supposed to socialize with your laboratory assistants, but I guess what we did was beyond social. Besides, I’m only here until the project is complete, so give me a break and come out with me. That was the most amazing sex I’ve ever had, and I guess scientifically speaking, we should see if it was the drug or just us. We really need to try it again sometime with just our own hormones at work.” He was grinning his very adorable lopsided grin, and it made him irresistible. How could she say no?

“Why would you want to get to know me?” Genuine surprise made her voice crack.

He smiled. “You have no idea how beautiful you are, do you? That’s just one of the reasons I haven’t been able to get you out of my head.” He gently tipped her face up

to his with his index finger. She was too shocked to fight it. "You are an amazing woman, and just so you know, the doc said all the drugs are out of me." He kissed her then, gently at first; then, grabbing her and hauling her close, he crushed her to him, desperately drinking her in. Leah wrapped herself around him. This time she could not blame her wanton response on anything except nature. She wanted more of him. When he broke the kiss, she was panting and as hot as she had been in the elevator.

"Leah, will you come with me? I promise not to push you for more than you're willing to give me. I've never met a woman like you." She would have doubted his words if his eyes had not blazed with naked sincerity.

Swallowing, she tried to moisten her throat to speak, but no words would come. She could see hurt in his beautiful eyes. Finally, her voice found her again, and she quickly responded.

"Jericho, is this some kind of mixed-up guilt complex? You really don't have to try to make me feel better. I understand it was the drug, not us. I enjoyed what we did very much, and I do not need you to make this into something more than it was."

He looked hurt. Leah wished she knew the right thing to do and say.

"I'm being honest with you; be honest with me." He took her hands and looked into her eyes. She knew in that instant the right thing to do.

Getting up on her tiptoes, she kissed him tentatively. At first he was stiff, as if unsure what to do. Then he took control of the kiss. His lips told her all she needed to know. She knew he had been honest; no one could fake a kiss like that! She sighed against his lips and felt him smile against hers. When they finally broke apart and became separate entities again, he said, "So is that a yes to dinner?"

Smiling, Leah said, "Definitely, if you promise to be dessert!"

Jericho's cocky smile was his response. He led her away to his car and opened the door for her to get in. She sat down, and he shut her door and quickly slid behind the wheel. Leah had no idea where they were going, but she couldn't have cared less—she was with the most brilliant and sexiest man she had ever met!

Jericho drove while Leah perused the CD collection he had in his car. She was pleased to discover they had the same taste in music. He owned some of her favorite CDs, and she saw that he had several she had yet to purchase. His taste in the best alternative bands only caused her to be more enamored. Not a casual sex kind of girl, Leah wondered where this connection was heading. Did he have real feelings for her, or was it some kind of after-effect of the drug they had accidentally inhaled? Was he just pretending to care for her out of misplaced guilt? It was horrible not to be able to read him, but in truth she did not know him well enough on a personal level to have any idea what kind of man he was and what his normal reactions were.

He took her outside of town to a little bar and grill that overlooked a beautiful lake. There was a little waterfall coming out of the hillside, and she was entranced by

the charming natural beauty of the area. Jericho got out of the car and opened the door for her, and then he extended his hand gallantly to help her out of the car. She was so impressed by his old-fashioned but never out of style courtesies that her mental list of reasons she liked him just kept growing. As she tallied all the little quirks she was discovering, like how likable and real he was, she thought, *check, check, and double check—I want to keep him!*

Jericho led her inside the quaint country-style restaurant, and she loved the easy, casual rural ambiance of the place immediately. She never came to quaint out-of-the-way places, and she realized this was a great idea and something that she would have to do more often in the future. A pleasantly plump older woman came around the corner in a sweet checkered apron and handed them a menu handwritten in calligraphy and affixed to a hand-stitched sampler with the restaurant name, *Lake Faith Inn*. She glanced out the large windows overlooking the picturesque lakefront and wondered if the Lake was called Faith or if the name was not connected with the beautiful natural feature. Jericho must have noticed her interest in the lake, because he said, “Lake Faith is my favorite place to go fishing. Do you fish, Leah?”

She looked back at him and smiled. “I haven’t been fishing for years. I loved it when I was a little girl, but I wouldn’t even know how to bait a hook anymore.”

Jericho laughed. “You are in luck, because I just happen to have an extra pole in the trunk.”

“You’re kidding, right?” She could not believe the sexy brainiac drove around with his fishing gear.

“I never joke about fishing, but if you’re free on Saturday I would love to take you back here with me.”

Leah could not believe he was asking her out again. It was an odd second date, but considering they’d already done some wild horizontal aerobics, she knew awkward formalities no longer had a place between them. Somehow fishing with him seemed right. Smiling, she replied, “How early do you want me up and ready?”

He seemed surprised, but pleasantly so, and grinned his impossibly perfect grin.

“Six in the morning is when I usually get out to the lake, but I will make an exception for you and pick you up at six. We should be ready to fish by seven; I think that should work.”

Leah made a mental note to get a fishing license and hoped that fishing was not his way of telling her he just wanted to be friends. After experiencing the most fabulous orgasm of her life, she wanted seconds and would not be content to just be his new fishing buddy.

The waitress in the red-checkered apron returned, and Jericho ordered a steak and beer. Leah just ordered a chef salad and hard lemonade. They were getting casual, but she still wasn’t comfortable enough to scarf a greasy burger in front of the man yet!

He smiled, almost reading her mind, it seemed, when she ordered the salad. Glaring slightly, she thought, *Just because it doesn't look like I live on rabbit food doesn't mean I don't enjoy a good salad once in a while, buddy!* Her look made his smile widen.

After leaving to put in their order, the waitress quickly returned with their drinks and a basket of rolls. She smiled down at Jericho. "You've never brought a date in here before. Special occasion?" When the waitress asked her question, she reminded Leah of a nosy aunt or prying mother. It made her smile to see him squirm under the older woman's scrutiny.

"Now Roxie, it's not nice to interrogate your favorite customer in front of his date! This is Leah Thurman, and she has been nice enough to come out with me for a bite to eat. I thought of your good cooking and knew you would help me impress her." He winked at the woman, and she clucked her tongue and shook her head at him. Turning to Leah, she smiled and spoke with a conspirator's tone. "Every Saturday morning he comes in before going fishing, crack of dawn, been coming in for years and as you are the first girl he has brought in with him, I just figured you must be a bit special." She winked and left the table with her tinkling laugh trailing behind her.

Leah had to admit, having him bring her to a place he enjoyed did indeed make her feel a bit special. Yet she couldn't stop the darker thought, *He probably wants to just be friends, and he brought you here to prove you're not date material because this is his fishing dive!* Shaking her lack of confidence away, she sat back and took a sip of her alcoholic lemonade. He was so disgustingly good-looking that she would be content to just stare at him, if that wouldn't make him think she was totally nuts!

He looked over and caught her staring; she looked away with a slight blush. Jericho reached out and took her hand. "I'm really glad you're here. What do you think of the lake?"

"This is one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. I love the wild way the flowers and grasses have grown up the hill over there by the lake. It just looks so fresh and unspoiled out there, and the waterfall is just perfect—it makes the whole place feel special." Telling him honestly how she felt, she hoped he didn't think she was being cheesy or fake.

His beaming smile was her reward, and she was glad she had spoken from the heart. It was so weird, dating after sex—no wonder this wasn't the typical way people did it. She hadn't been out on a real date in so long that she speculated maybe they'd changed it while she was out of the loop, and now sex first, hello after was the normal way of things. She tried to hide her little smile at the thought, but he noticed it and asked, "What are you thinking about?"

That was a first for her—a man who asked her what she was thinking. Maybe he was a government experiment too, or this was some kind of mind control experiment and she was in a lab somewhere with electrodes on her head, having the hallucination

that she was with the perfect man, because no man could be this great! She could not stop her big smile and chuckle as she answered him.

“I was just thinking that this is too good to be true. You are just too perfect! Good-looking, smart, funny, and easy to talk to. Are you an alien?”

He gave a genuine laugh when she asked him the question. “Are you trying to get me out of my pants, Ms. Thurman, with all this sweet talk? Because let me tell you, I’m just not that easy.” His expression of feigned offense made her giggle—and Leah never giggled. He was either very good for her or very bad for her, she decided.

“If you are a very good girl, I will take you to my spaceship and show you how my people shake hands!” He wiggled his eyebrows, and she knew what parts of his body he wanted to involve in his alien handshake. Leah could not help herself; she laughed until she was wiping tears out of the corner of her eyes. He seemed pleased that she liked his joke, and her encouragement incited him to begin telling her funny antidotes about some of his lab assistants and a few foibles that only another scientist would think was hilarious. He was very funny, and before she knew it their food had arrived. Roxie smiled down at her, and she could tell the woman was pleased to see how much fun she and Jericho seemed to be having.

They ate and talked for the next hour. She found out that Jericho was an only child and his parents had both died when he was in his early twenties, and even with that trauma he’d still finished college a year early at the top of his class. He loved monster movies, especially the classics, and had a collection of original posters from some of the most historic films such as *The Wolfman* and *Dracula*. That launched the pair into a debate about which actor played Dracula best, and finally they agreed to disagree with good humor.

Leah told him about her siblings and growing up as a military brat. Her father had been very proud when she’d followed in his footsteps but disappointed that none of her brothers had done so as well. She told him about her crazy collection of salt-and-pepper shakers, and he laughed when she described some of the more novelty findings in her collection. By the time she had finished eating, she felt that she knew Jericho much better. He insisted on paying, and she noticed that he left Roxie a huge tip; it made her smile that he would be so generous.

When they were both seated in his car, he turned to her, and she saw genuine uncertainty in his eyes. “I want you to come home with me. I want to have sex with you again, but only if this is entirely your consenting desire. I want to have you naked in my arms when it’s just me and nothing is compelling you to do it.”

His blunt request brought a heated blush to her cheeks, and she looked down at her lap. What could she say? She wanted to make love to him too, but she didn’t want him to think she was the kind of woman who just had meaningless sexual encounters. If she went home with him, her heart would be going to bed with him too, not just her

body like in the elevator. She had no idea if this would be headed to more than a simple tryst, but she wanted more—much more.

Finally, she looked up and noticed the stricken expression crossing his face. Realizing how long it was taking her to formulate her answer, she cleared her throat delicately and replied. “I do want to make love with you, and that is the problem. I’m not a girl who can just have wild, mindless sex. I know my heart would be involved this time, not just my body. I would get hurt, and it would be uncomfortable between us—and that’s not fair to you. I had a wonderful time tonight, and I would like to make love to you and see if we can reproduce that reaction again without the aid of the drug, but I know it would be more than an analytical experiment for me.”

Jericho smiled at her as if she had just told him something brilliant. He spoke quietly, and she could see he was being honest; no one could fake the look she saw in his eyes. “I don’t want this to be meaningless. I want to keep seeing you, Leah; I’ve wanted you from the first day I saw you in your little white lab coat and those ridiculous goggles, supervising an experiment in the lab. You looked so adorably serious, and you were so sweet and patient with the young lab tech that you immediately captured my attention.”

Leah had no idea how to react to this! She fought her blush but lost the battle. “I’ve wanted to ask you out, but you’ve been so unapproachable that I never had the chance. I don’t want to just fuck and then be done—I want you to be more to me than a nice pair of legs and butt. I want you to be my girlfriend, I guess.”

Her head tilted to the side, and she tried to wipe the shocked look off her face. Biting her lip to keep from asking him to repeat what he had just said, Leah became worried that the drug they had created had damaged his brain! Out of her league did not even begin to describe how much this hunk-a-licious specimen of male was removed from girls like her. She held her breath as he continued.

“I know it sounds kind of juvenile, but I really want this to keep going and not just end. I meant it when I said I wanted to take you fishing. I really want to have you in my life, Leah. I’m not just saying this to get in your pants; I mean it.”

She was never at a loss for words, but it seemed like all night he kept surprising her and making her forget what to say. Being a natural control freak made her good at what she had chosen to do with her life, but it was a bitch in relationships. She had never gone into a sexual relationship without meeting family members, running a full background check and demanding a complete and clean medical history from her partner, yet this time she had absolutely no planning behind her decision. Finally, Leah decided not to play it safe and to give in to the most spontaneous and out of control relationship she’d ever had.

“Well, take me to your leader!” She noticed his confusion with the statement, but then he must have remembered his alien handshake joke, since he gave a whoop of

victory.

Looking into her eyes and becoming serious, he could not help but question her. "Are you sure about this, Leah? I don't want you to feel pressured into anything. I'm willing to slow things down if that is what you need or want."

Smiling, she could not miss the look of worried desperation in his eyes or the bulge in his pants. He was sweet, but she knew that even if he was willing to back down, his body didn't want to listen to his brain.

"Jericho, I would very much like to make love to you tonight, and we will just see where this backwards relationship takes us."

He nodded in agreement and then turned on the car engine. She noticed that they both seemed nervous and edgy on the ride back into the city. It was odd. They had already had sex; why was it freaking them out now? This time there was nothing pushing them out of control. This time they had no excuse if it was not as fabulous as it had been in the elevator. Leah worried that without that adrenaline rush of need, it was not going to be like it had been, and then he would not want to keep seeing her. She was really falling for him. Maybe she had made a mistake in consenting to a rematch of naked aerobics!

When they arrived at Jericho's apartment, he got her door for her again, and when she took his hand to get out of the low sports car she noticed it was a little sweaty. He was as nervous as she was. It was comforting but also worrisome that they both felt so awkward, and it made Leah sure they were rushing things too fast. She wanted this relationship to be a success, but she did want to know how regular, ordinary old sex (as if sex with that man would ever be ordinary!) with Jericho would be as hot. Her scientific mind was curious, and she knew his was too.

However, Leah hoped he was more than just curious. She knew some men would say just about anything to get a woman to remove her clothing, and after it was all over, they'd send the girl packing as quickly as possible. Was Jericho that kind of guy? He was unattached and very good-looking. Most men with a good job and a handsome face who were still unmarried at his age would be either gay or damaged. She hoped he was just the exception to the rule! He sure hadn't kissed her like he was gay, and he seemed like a soundly grounded guy.

He led her up a flight of stairs and into his small one-bedroom apartment. He was definitely a guy—there was no ornamentation, so to her relief, she had ruled out gay—and the only things she saw hanging on his walls were his diplomas. As she read them, she was very impressed; he had worked hard for his place in his field. Noticing her looking at his group of framed diplomas, he came over to her and seemed a bit embarrassed.

"I don't really know why I hung them on the wall. I'm not trying to brag about them, but the wall just really looked bare."

Leah looked up at his handsome and suddenly charmingly uncomfortable face; she would hang up those kinds of credentials too.

"I think it's great that you have them up here. These are something you should display and be proud of. I just couldn't resist looking—I wasn't trying to be nosy or make you uncomfortable. What kind of a middle name is Milton? How did that happen?"

He smiled that sexy half grin and sighed. "I usually try to keep that dark secret for the third date at least! My mother had a professor who really inspired her, and his last name was Milton, so when I was born she wanted to give me that name as a reminder to always be inspired and inspire others. Personally, I would rather she just have told me that a few times and called it good, but her heart was in the right place, I guess."

"That was a wonderful story, and it makes the name sound a lot better. I guess it could have been worse—she could have just called you Inspiration Bennett or something."

"That is too frightening to think about! Let's talk about you for awhile. What's your middle name?"

"I don't have one, actually. It's kind of a quirk that my parents had six children, and not one of us has a middle name. I guess it could be worse—mine could be Milton or something."

"Hey now, play nice! That was just uncalled for, Ms. Thurman with no middle name!" He chuckled as he said the words.

Leah laughed too. When she looked up at him again, he had an indescribable expression on his face, and she was suddenly in his arms being kissed. Wrapping her arms around his neck, she kissed him back with all the passion she felt for him. He was a wonderful kisser, and she was soon completely absorbed in the moment and his wonderful lips. Jericho swept her into his strong arms as if she was some kind of petite waif, and it made her yelp. Leah could not help worrying how she would explain his injuries to the paramedics when they arrived after he had thrown out his back and given himself a hernia! He never grunted or groaned or gave any indication that he was having a problem carrying her at all. She finally allowed herself to give in and wrapped her arms around his neck, letting the odd out-of-control sensation of being carried away in his arms make butterflies flutter wildly in her stomach. It was all so cliché. But secretly, she completely loved it.

His bed was made, and she gave him a point for neatness on her mental tally sheet. He just kept getting better and better—yup, he was definitely an alien! His bed was covered in plain navy blue, and nothing except the bed, an alarm clock and his television decorated the room. Jericho definitely needed a woman's touch to homey up the place.

He laid her down on his bed like she was some kind of old-fashioned heroine in a gothic novel. Looking up at him looking down at her, she could feel the heat and wetness of her desire for him. He leaned down and began to kiss her again, all the while undressing her. Leah grabbed onto the front of his dress shirt and decided to really throw caution to the wind; she thought, *Oh boy, let it rip!* And she did. Leah ripped his shirt open and heard the ping of the buttons scattering in all directions. He growled, and she could tell he liked it.

Jericho repaid her destruction with a little senseless clothing brutality of his own—when he couldn't get the snap of her flimsy bra unhooked, he pulled the stays apart, destroying the expensive bit of silk that holstered her breasts. Then it was her turn to growl. What was one bra when this man made her feel so alive! Leah had never felt so radiant in all of her life, and it was all Jericho. Something about him made the primitive woman inside of her roar and respond to him as a man. He was amazing! Vaguely she wondered if she could measure whatever pheromone made him so irresistible in the lab.

Without ever breaking the kiss, they were naked now, and Leah found herself straddling him with her legs wrapped around his waist as she sat facing him on his lap. His lips finally moved from hers as they trailed a path of fluttering sensation lightly over her neck and shoulder until he had made his way to her breasts. Taking one of them into his mouth, he sucked hard on her nipple, making her gasp, and she could feel herself growing hotter for him. He changed breasts, and she could not stop the reflex of her fingers pressing into his shoulders. She stopped herself before she dug into his skin, but she knew he felt it because he chuckled darkly and bit her nipple just enough to let her know turnabout was fair play. Laughing, she let her fingers slide into his soft, short hair to keep them from doing anything they should not.

Next, he stood up with her still wrapped around him and turned so he could sit her down on his bed. Kneeling beside the edge of the bed, he spread her thighs, and his mouth found her hot, wet and ready places. She cried out as he took her clit gently between his teeth and gave it a hard suck. His tongue danced over it, making her crazy with how good it felt. He lapped wildly on her, and she shattered with an intense orgasm. She cried out his name loudly in the grip of her orgasm; then, when she could think again, she vaguely hoped his neighbors were not home! He was looking at her and smiling with that grin of his when she caught her breath again.

It was her turn to make him wild! Growling the roar of her inner tigress, a sound that would have made her ancient cave women ancestors proud, she tackled him, and he willingly lay back on his bed. Taking his hard and splendid cock in her mouth, she ran her tongue from base to tip. She knew she was accomplishing her directive and this mission would be a success when she lightly ran her tongue over the tip, and he let out an anguished groan. She began to suck him loudly, and she felt him take her head

gently in his hands and direct her motion and speed. Groaning the words out, Jericho said, "If you don't stop that, I'm not going to be able to keep myself from coming."

Leah stopped what she was doing, and Jericho pulled her on top of him. She decided to do something with him that she had never done before, and she was surprised she did not screw up while screwing him! Straddling him, she lowered herself onto his cock, and he groaned as she slowly slid down his length. He filled her completely; she looked down at him, and his passion-hazed eyes told her she was definitely not doing it wrong. She began a slow rhythm, and soon his hands on her hips were encouraging her to increase her speed. Groaning, he tenderly moved the hair off her face and rubbed his thumbs lovingly down her cheeks. Crying out, she arched her back and let her hoarse cry of fulfillment echo in the room.

It was only a moment later that Jericho joined her and, panting, she ceased what she was doing and rolled down beside him. He propped up on his elbow and leaned over her; he was panting too. Naked aerobics was definitely a good workout. Tenderly he brushed the hair off her face. He kissed her reverently and with feeling. It was a sweet kiss, and it surprised her after the intensity of the sex they had just shared. It definitely wasn't the chemical compound that gave them their chemistry. It was them—they were good together!

Jericho pulled her into his arms, and she put her head on his chest and let her hand stroke the light sprinkling of hair on his rock-hard chest. They said nothing for a long moment, and then he made a request that took her by surprise.

"Stay the night with me, Leah. I want to wake up with you in my arms."

She did not know what to say. She seldom had stayed the night with the men she'd had sexual relationships with in the past.

Smiling against his chest, she kissed the skin next to her mouth and gave her reply.

"I snore terribly, but if you really want me to stay, I will. If you are just too tired to drive me home, I can call a cab, and I won't be upset or anything about it."

He made a disgusted sound and replied darkly. "I would not have asked you to stay if I didn't want you to stay! Do you want to stay, Leah?"

Leah knew he could hear the smile in her voice when she looked into his eyes. His relief was obvious. "I will stay if you promise to totally lie to me and tell me I did not snore and I slept like a dignified angel instead of the bed-hogging beast I know I am!"

"It's a deal, and I promise I will never let your dark secret about snoring leave my lips upon pain of death!" He dramatically teased her, and they snuggled up together.

For a while they talked about nothing of much consequence, until he asked her the question she had been afraid to let herself think about.

“Leah, do you think what happened in the elevator was really an accident? Do you think they might have planned that sudden stop in hopes that what happened would happen? Could we have been the human test subjects? I found it odd that they were in such a hurry to test it, and then they seemed content to just let the trials go for the day. I even heard the general say they would start the lab test today and start animal trials in the morning.”

“I wouldn’t be surprised, honestly. It seems like a flawed test, as we’ve known each other awhile, and I know I was genuinely attracted to you before the drug entered my system. If we were the lab rats, at least I was in the elevator with you and not some ugly old man!”

* * * * *

He watched her falling asleep. He was overtaken with her natural, sweet beauty. Leah acted as if she had no idea just how desirable she was, and that appealed to him. She was real; he liked that about her. Once she slept, he lay awake, listening to her soft breathing and just being glad she was there. He had not realized how lonely his life had been until he’d taken Leah out to dinner. She was delightful, and he wanted to know everything about her. Usually he was not all that interested in talking to his dates and after sex he preferred they go home, but with Leah he wanted her to stay the night. He wanted to see her when he woke up in the morning. The realization shocked him, and he wondered briefly if the drug had given him brain damage! He’d thought was happy being a bachelor and not having someone complicating his life, but looking down at her sleeping face, he wanted to keep her in his bed forever. Sleep took a long time to come for him as he pondered the change she had wrought in him.

* * * * *

Leah woke to the sensation of being in an unfamiliar bed, and for a moment she was confused and startled. When the fog of sleep cleared, she remembered the night before. Jericho lay looking down at her. She felt a little self-conscious that he had been watching her sleep, and she hoped she hadn’t done anything embarrassing like snore or talk while he was watching. He smiled, and she smiled back.

“Good morning, Leah. Today we are going to listen to the good general and take the day off. I am not going to wait for Saturday—I’m going to take you fishing today. We can go to your place and you can change your clothes, and then we’ll be off to the lake. It will be good for you.”

“I can see you have your heart set on this, so I will happily play hooky with you and go fishing,” she said with feigned exasperation.

Jericho suddenly rolled on top of her and kissed her tenderly. When he pulled back, he was looking down at her, and a lock of his hair was in his eyes. It made him look irresistible. He was very serious when he told her what was on his mind. "Leah, I don't want this to end. I can't explain it, but I just feel right with you here. I love you, Leah. I have never told another woman that I love her, but I do love you."

His declaration of love brought tears to her eyes. She felt the same way about him, but had not wanted to freak him out by saying it.

"Oh, Jericho, I think I am in love with you too. How on Earth did this happen so quickly? I'm not someone who rushes into things."

"I'm not going to question it; I'm just going to enjoy it!" he stated, grinning.

He sprang out of bed and plucked her up; tossing her over his shoulder, he gave a whoop of triumph and headed for the shower. As they laughed together at his fun-loving spontaneity, neither of them knew it, but they would spend the rest of their lives loving each other.

Author Bio

Ashlynn Monroe is a busy wife and mom. She enjoys writing about anything and everything paranormal or fantasy related while maintaining a career as a full-time customer service professional. When she is not lovingly raising her young family, she is dreaming up her next tale of romance. Ashlynn's books can be found published by Wild Horse Press, Cobblestone Press, and Keith Publications. She'd love to hear from you at ashlynn.monroe@live.com.