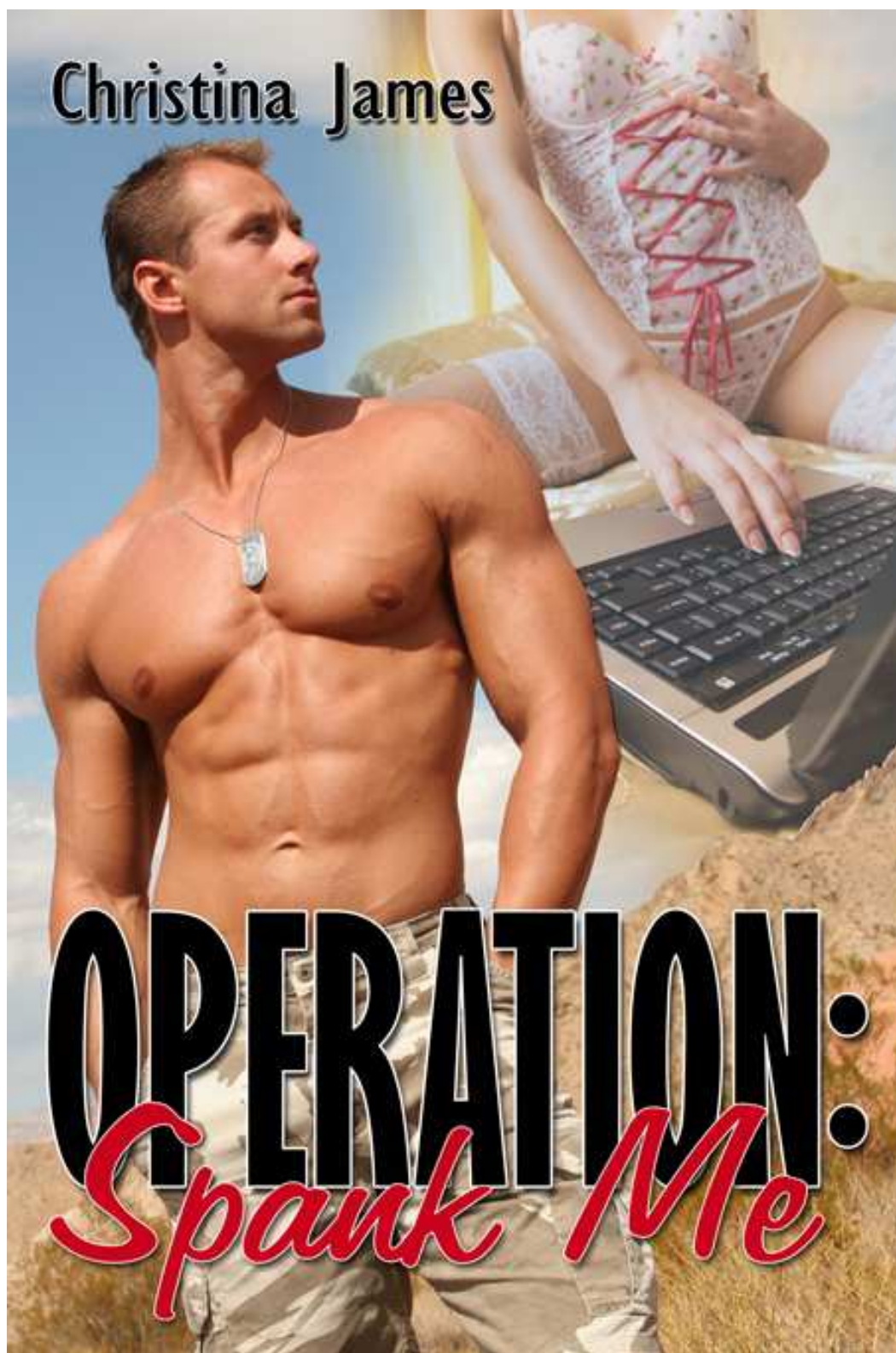


Christina James



**Emma lost her breath
at the sheer magnitude of his power.**

With quick movements, Finn cornered Emma, his large arms resting on the granite on both sides of her, locking her in place. "One kiss. Let me have one kiss, Emma, and if I don't give you the best damn one of your life then you can throw me out of here faster than you can flip a flapjack. I'll leave with no complaints."

Her heart slammed against her chest, her breath came in short gasps. His woodsy, clean scent teased her nose until she closed her eyes and breathed him in deeply.

Her eyes flickered open to find his searching her face with hopefulness. "Like hell," she scolded. "You'd rant and rave." She stared at him. "One kiss," she whispered.

Smiling, he bent his head slowly, his lips finding hers in a deliberate possession. Large hands moved to her ribs, his fingers digging gently into her skin, holding her against him. His tongue pressed against the crease of her lips, urging them to open. Giving in to his ministrations, Emma relaxed in Finn's embrace, her hands combing through his short, spiky hair keeping his mouth joined to hers.

When his tongue dove into the warmth of her mouth, Emma lost her breath at the sheer magnitude of his power, his strong body dwarfing hers, his strength a protective shield around her. With devastating slowness, Finn's tongue explored her mouth, trailing over her teeth, the roof of her mouth, pushing deeper to dance with her tongue in a fight for control.

PRAISE FOR AUTHOR

Christina James

AND HER BOOKS

MAKE A WISH AND BLOW

“From the start, you get the chemistry and the sexual tension that has been brewing between the characters...

“The writing is fantastic, allowing you to experience the intense longing Daren and Cass feel for one another, while the sex scenes blister...You’ll writhe like mad and fan yourself uncontrollably while reading this naughty and delightful erotic romance, and you’ll enjoy every wicked moment of it. This is the kind of story that increases the heart rate and keeps you coming back for more.”

~Whipped Cream Reviews

“Delightfully wicked and naughty!!!! Oh yeah! For those who read BDSM, here is a story with a Dom who has found a sub he wants and a sub who just can't seem to give up some of her defiant ways. Makes for some nice punishments...The play left me aching by the time the sex came around. Build up was wonderful and the delivery rocked.”

~Seriously Reviewed

“MAKE A WISH AND BLOW is a spicy erotica novel that will have you breathing heavy, because of the heat between Daren and Cassandra.”

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“With characters so full of depth and emotion this is a book that should not be missed.”

~Got Erotic Romance! Reviews

Operation: Spank Me

by

Christina James

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

Operation: Spank Me

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Cover Art by *Angela Anderson*

The Wild Rose Press
PO Box 708
Adams Basin, NY 14410-0708

Visit us at www.thewilderroses.com

Publishing History
First Scarlet Rose Edition, March 2011
Print ISBN 1-60154-917-2

Published in the United States of America

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Dedication

To my best friend, Tina,
for always being there for me
and showing me what true friendship is all about.

Prologue

MissionMan: Tell me your fantasies, Emma.
SexyLady4U: Oh, there R so many. U sure U have time?
MissionMan: LOL. I'll make the time, baby.
SexyLady4U: Gonna tell the bad guys 2 behave while U play with me?
MissionMan: Anyone interrupts me right now-I promise I'll shoot them.
SexyLady4U: Finn! Don't even joke like that.
MissionMan: Who's joking? My cock is hard as steel for U. The fool that interrupts us will suffer. OK. Start telling me those fantasies of yours. And tell me what U R wearing right now.
SexyLady4U: Oh, I think U would approve. White lace thong, matches my low-cut bra. Also wearing my thigh length baby blue satin robe 2 ward off the chilly evening air.
MissionMan: U know U R killing me here.
SexyLady4U: LOL. Then don't ask ?'s U can't handle, tough guy.
MissionMan: Go ahead. Be naughty all U want now. I'm keeping notes. And if I were there, baby, U wouldn't need any damn frilly robe to keep U warm.
SexyLady4U: Oh, yeah?
MissionMan: Yeah! Pretty hard 4 UR sexy body to get a chill with mine lying over it.
SexyLady4U: U have such a way with words. LOL. Got my long hair loose and just waiting 4 UR hands to pull it.
MissionMan: Mmmm. Love long hair. Gives me something 2 pull U close. And keep U close so I

can have my way with U.

SexyLady4U: Really? And what way would that B, Finn?

MissionMan: U tell me, Emma. I've been asking 4 UR damn fantasies. Now tell me what U dream of me doing 2 U.

SexyLady4U: Maybe it's what I dream of any man doing 2 me. Still wanna hear?

MissionMan: Hell, yes! I know it's me U fantasize about touching U. No one else.

SexyLady4U: Ah, true. There's no other man. Besides, I think U R spoiling me 4 other men with UR sexy attentions.

MissionMan: Good 2 know. Wouldn't want 2 kill the bastard.

SexyLady4U: Finn! Don't talk like that.

MissionMan: Get 2 those fantasies B 4 I have something else to spank U 4.

SexyLady4U: When will U learn that's no threat?

MissionMan: Emma.

SexyLady4U: OK. OK. Gosh, U R cranky.

MissionMan: No. Horny.

SexyLady4U: Mmmm. Me 2. I want 2 be tied up and @ UR mercy, Finn.

MissionMan: Tied, huh? How?

SexyLady4U: 2 my bed. Hands over my head. Maybe feet tied as well. My pussy exposed and @ your complete mercy 2 pleasure as U see fit.

MissionMan: God, Emma! U R killing me here. How'd U learn 2 talk like this?

SexyLady4U: I read a lot. Sex is very interesting 2 me but I bet U can make it a whole lot more interesting. Can't U, Finn?

MissionMan: I will, baby. As soon as we meet. I'll make every fantasy come true and we'll discover new fantasies 2, 1s we can think of together.

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SexyLady4U: U R such a tease. We will never meet.

MissionMan: Never say never, baby.

SexyLady4U: Oh, now who's got a fantasy? Just stop.

MissionMan: We will meet some day, Emma. That's a promise.

SexyLady4U: We come from 2 different worlds. Besides U R not even in the States.

MissionMan: True. But that's really only a plane ride or 2.

SexyLady4U: And if that were true, U'd have met me by now.

MissionMan: Just give me the address, baby. I'll make plans right now.

SexyLady4U: Tease! U said B4 that U hardly come back 2 the States cuz of UR missions. So we will never meet.

MissionMan: Again, never say never, baby. U never know. My next mission may bring me back 2 the States. Maybe I'll make U my next undercover op. Don't U want 2 feel my cock fill that sweet pussy?

SexyLady4U: Oh, yes. Deep. Hard. Fast.

MissionMan: I'm gonna enjoy bondage games with U. I've never tied a woman up.

SexyLady4U: Never? Thought U were a man of the world?

MissionMan: LOL. Never spent more time with a woman than it took 2 fuck her until I came. U'd be my first play date.

SexyLady4U: Somehow I can't imagine being UR first anything. LOL. So then I guess I'm special.

MissionMan: More than U know. U intrigue me. And I've told U I want pictures.

SexyLady4U: UR imagination will serve U better. U'll have a better erotic image.

MissionMan: Send me pics, Emma. I mean it.

SexyLady4U: LOL. Finn, when will U realize UR hard-ass ways don't work on me?

MissionMan: I'm gonna enjoy spanking U.

SexyLady4U: Mmmm. Another of my fantasies.

MissionMan: Won't be when I blister UR ass for not sending pics.

SexyLady4U: Hahaha. U don't scare me, Finn. All UR doing is making me wet.

MissionMan: Damn! Send fucking pics. Now. Let me @ least look @ UR picture while I jerk off 2 UR words.

SexyLady4U: All U have 2 do is close your eyes and picture me the way I described myself.

MissionMan: Damnit, Emma. Men are visual. I need 2 see what U look like.

SexyLady4U: Sorry, baby. I'm not sending pics. U haven't sent me any so stop complaining.

MissionMan: Told U, I'll send some when U do.

SexyLady4U: Ain't happening. Sorry. Don't want my image floating around cyberspace.

MissionMan: Fuck that! The only place it'll float is on my computer screen as I stroke my cock while looking @ how beautiful U R.

SexyLady4U: Gonna let U go now.

MissionMan: Of course U R. U always do that U know.

SexyLady4U: Do what?

MissionMan: Run. Every time we talk about U sending me a picture U gotta go.

SexyLady4U: I do not.

MissionMan: Whatever. Now U've just managed 2 pique my curiosity beyond my control.

SexyLady4U: How so?

MissionMan: Now I WILL meet U. I'll plan a special covert op 2 visit U.

SexyLady4U: LOL. Wishful thinking, baby.

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We have these times on the computer. That's all.

MissionMan: Yeah. We'll just see about that.
Run for now, Emma. U won't hide though.

SexyLady4U: U don't scare me, Finn.

MissionMan: Wasn't trying 2, baby. I want U
and plan 2 have U. Someday we'll meet. I'll make
damn sure of it. That, my dear, is a promise I plan 2
keep no matter what.

SexyLady4U: Mmmm. Well, until that day
comes all we have is these chats. But I do have 2 go.
Write soon. Mwah!

MissionMan: Damn it! Emma! I've got
something for U to kiss.

SexyLady4U: I'm sure U do, bad boy. Bye 4
now.

MissionMan: I'm gonna really enjoy
spanking U, baby.

Chapter One

Three months later

Spring had finally come to eastern Vermont after a long, grueling winter of blizzards and ice storms. As Emma Shields drove over the covered bridge that led to the middle of town, she inhaled the fresh warm air breezing through the open windows of her pickup truck. Wildflowers were springing to life, adding a fragrance to the air that chased away memories of the snow that had only recently melted. All the trees were budding and would be covered in green leaves within a few short weeks. The beautiful natural surroundings provided a pleasant backdrop to the unique shops, galleries, country stores, and family restaurants that crowded the center of town.

The residents of White Cap Creek, Emma's tiny hometown, were bustling about on this gorgeous Friday afternoon. The kids were out of school for the weekend, running and smiling. Mothers and grandmothers pushed strollers through the sunshine while window-shopping along busy Merridien Street, the only major thoroughfare throughout the small town. All other streets were narrow and quiet. But Merridien Street served a special purpose, a place where residents could converge and catch up on gossip and news-mostly gossip.

The older men smoked cigars and sipped coffee outside the Gin Mill Restaurant. It was nice to see the sidewalk patio open again for customers to enjoy their meals outside in the fresh air. Some sat with the newspaper, reading it front to back and

everything in between. Afterward there would be some heated debates concerning world events. Some of the men raced to be the first to finish the daily crossword puzzle. Emma laughed at the routine of her small hometown. Most residents may not be up to date on today's technologies like computers and the Internet, but that stopped none of them from being informed citizens.

Emma swung her truck into a parking spot on the side of Galway Florist. Jumping out, she quickly removed her packages from the backseat and strolled into the shop. Mrs. Galway came out from the back as the front door chime signaled Emma's arrival.

"Emma. How nice to see you, dear," Mrs. Galway said, bustling her short, plump body to Emma's side to lean up on her toes and kiss Emma's cheek.

The woman was always pristinely dressed in blouse, long skirt, and shoes. Emma didn't miss the once over Mrs. Galway gave her as she walked into the room. Emma's choice of jeans and T-shirts was always a topic for discussion and she was grateful not to have to listen to a lecture on dressing like a woman or on the fine art of applying makeup. Emma worked on a farm for Christ's sake. Who was she to impress anyway? The horses?

"Same here, Mrs. Galway. Here are the roses you ordered."

Emma carried the boxes of her prize roses to the back room for the older woman who followed closely behind.

"Oh, they smell so fresh and fragrant," Mrs. Galway announced, opening the boxes. "So beautiful, too. Your roses are just so exquisite, Emma."

"Thank you." Emma never tired of hearing compliments about her roses. Her hard work had paid off finally.

“Have some coffee, won’t you?” Without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Galway poured a mug and handed it to Emma.

Emma automatically accepted the coffee with a stir of panic in her gut. She absolutely couldn’t get stuck here talking to the well-meaning but nosy woman. She was too busy for small talk and gossip. “I can’t, Mrs. Galway, but I do appreciate the offer. I have some other errands to do before heading home.” To ensure she didn’t get cornered, Emma talked while walking back to the front of the store, placing her coffee mug on the counter.

“Oh, I do worry about you being all alone out there on your farm.”

Emma laughed, knowing that a typical match making session was in store for her if she didn’t escape. “I’m just fine out there. There’s nowhere else I’d like to be.” *Except in Finn’s arms.* Oh, hell. Where did that thought come from?

“You know, Emma. The Sanders’ middle boy is looking mighty fine these days. Why just the other day I saw him hauling groceries for his mama. What a kind boy and educated. You’d do good to catch his eye. I could ask him to take you to dinner, if you’d like.”

Embarrassment swamped Emma. Was she now so desperate that her neighbors thought she couldn’t get a guy to ask her out without interference from them? Christ, she was twenty-nine-years old and could find her own man. Why did everyone think she needed a man? There was nothing wrong with living alone. She could do as she wished, come and go as she pleased. Hell, if she didn’t want to make the bed then she didn’t have to. And it was a bonus to have the house to herself, if she cleaned something then it stayed clean.

“That won’t be necessary, but thank you, Mrs. Galway. I’m quite capable of making my own dinner

arrangements. I'm just not interested." Emma relied solely on her manners when she really just wanted to scream at the constant matchmaking. Her objections always fall on deaf ears.

The older woman sighed, her pudgy fingers resting across her belly. "I figured you'd say no. Oh, well, back to business. Emma, I'll need two-dozen more roses for early tomorrow. Can you make it?"

"Promise not to have the Sanders boy here when I arrive?" Emma asked with a bit more sarcasm than she intended.

Mrs. Galway made a face acknowledging defeat. "Oh, very well. But I really do need the roses. Right before you came in, I got a special order. The young man was very adamant about having the most perfect roses." Mrs. Galway clapped her hands together with excitement. "Oh, he sounded so romantic. Odd that I couldn't place his voice though, and I know everyone in these parts. He had an accent I just couldn't place. And his voice was very handsome."

Emma didn't want to know how a voice could be handsome, so she didn't ask. A question like that would suck her into a lesson on romance for sure. "Didn't you ask for a name?"

"Now, I didn't want to be nosy." Emma stifled a laugh while Mrs. Galway showed her the order form she had written the stranger's info on. "He just gave the initials MM."

Leave it to Mrs. Galway to find mystery in initials. "Guess that's better than nothing. I'll have the roses for you first thing tomorrow morning, Mrs. Galway. I do have to run now to finish my errands. I'll see you tomorrow." When Emma was finally allowed to leave, she walked quickly to the General Store for a few quick supplies. While she usually enjoyed talking and mingling with her neighbors and enjoyed the adult company on her trips into

town, she just wasn't in the mood today for small talk no matter how lonely she felt.

It had been over a week since she'd last talked to her pen pal, Finn, and she was worried about him. Stationed overseas in some God forsaken third-world country was part of his job as a military commander, but it still made her nervous when she didn't hear from him. And this had been the longest they'd gone without talking since they'd started writing each other. The seven days since his last email had been long and worrisome. It was unusual for him not to write. Unusual not to get even a quick email. So to keep her mind occupied, Emma kept busy with errands and chores, always able to find something to do on her farm. It was funny how her life seemed so boring now that she corresponded with Finn and heard his tales of danger and adventure, not to mention all of the sexual things he wanted to do to her body. It wasn't that farm life was boring, because she loved every bit of it. But now, it felt as if her life was missing something.

"Emma, how are you?" Mr. Langston asked as he rang up her groceries while she daydreamed of military campaigns and what it would be like to risk her life every day as part of a job.

Shaking Finn from her thoughts, Emma cleared her throat before speaking. "Very well. How's Peggy? I miss seeing her around."

He let out a heavy sigh. "Decided to stay in Boston after college. Her mama's not happy, and neither am I, but we understand. Not many young people can live this quiet life we got going for ourselves around here. You're one of the few youngsters to stay here, Emma. Didn't you ever want to go anywhere else?" he asked, bagging her groceries as he tallied them on the old-fashioned keypunch register.

"Not really, Mr. Langston, and I'm not a

youngster any more. I figure if I get the urge to see something else then I'll travel, but I can't think of anywhere else I'd rather live than White Cap Creek."

"Not gonna find yourself a fella around here since they're all moving to the city."

She laughed as another matchmaking session began. "Not looking for a fella, sir."

"Girl needs to have a man around the house. Don't you get lonely all the way out on that farm by yourself?"

This was the problem with living where you grew up. Everyone knew your business. Especially in a small town like White Cap Creek. Privacy just wasn't really an option. "Not at all. I'm very busy with my roses and my horses." *And writing erotic emails to Finn.*

"Well, to each his own I suppose," he stated simply as he handed her the change with her receipt. "You have a nice day for yourself, you hear?"

She accepted the two brown paper bags he handed her. "Thank you. I will."

After finishing the last of her errands, Emma drove through town on her way home. Suddenly the charming scene that she had so much enjoyed on the ride in only made her sad now. It was obvious how happy the mothers pushing their strollers and the couples walking hand in hand were. The smiles on their faces said it all. Emma wanted a part of that. She just didn't know how to get it. And Mr. Langston was right. There were not many eligible men in White Cap Creek. The ones that were left were more than likely already planning to leave to chase careers that would take them away from what generations of families had helped build.

Emma Shields was no quitter but, damn, she felt like running from this town as fast as she could. That would make no sense since she'd only end up

right back here. This was where her heart was even if her thoughts were overseas with a man she'd never meet.

Night fell silently around Emma's farm. The cool night air seemed a stark difference from the warm spring afternoon. Emma leaned against the porch railing, wrapped in her knit sweater, old T-shirt and jeans, and sipped a steaming mug of tea. Somewhere in the woods a creature made a shrieking noise. The sound wasn't scary, just something that went with the territory along with a thousand other noises that stirred the otherwise silent night. Looking out over her fields, Emma felt a sense of pride having kept the farm in her family.

Why wouldn't anyone want to live here? The air was fresh and clean. The weather was bearable and all four seasons paid a visit every year. Crime was practically non-existent. Neighbors were like family. But loneliness was abundant for those like her that lived farther away from the heartbeat of town. It had never bothered her before and she had a sneaking feeling why it was bothering her now.

Finn. He'd shown her what it was like to have constant male attention, even if it were only in the form of erotic emails. She closed her eyes and could almost feel his arms wrap around her and pull her against his hard body. She could almost feel the pleasures he promised. Could feel his warm breath against her neck, while his hands explored her body with exquisite caresses. She sighed for the lack of intimacy she yearned so much for. Craving something that much couldn't be healthy.

Her body hummed like a stick of dynamite waiting to ignite. The power was there, but only when the fuse was lit would it be useful otherwise it was just pent up energy. Fantasizing would surely drive her insane, but she loved how she felt when

her imagination envisioned her in Finn's arms. How many times had he described just how he wanted to fuck her? He had promised to taste every inch of her skin, running his tongue along her body and leaving wet kisses in its path. The thought made her shudder with excitement. She pulled her sweater tighter around her. He made her hungry for him. Hungry for his damn touch.

No matter what they talked about, Emma wanted it all. Every position he'd described to her, how he'd bend her over and fuck her from behind, fuck her against the wall, spank her ass until it glowed. Oh God, when had a spanking ever turned her on? She had to admit that she fantasized about Finn's powerful arms holding her over his knees when she refused to send him pictures. She laughed because a spanking from Finn would be the ultimate sexual experience for her, being at his mercy, having him soothe her punished bottom, while whispering sweet words in her ear and holding her tight before he fucked her brains out.

Oh God, she needed to take the sweater off. Her body heated too quickly whenever she thought of Finn.

She looked up into the night sky dotted with stars and sighed, sadness consuming her as it had for the past few days. Where the hell was he? Why hadn't he gotten in touch with her? He had always emailed routinely, almost every day, if not a couple times a day with a few sentences to tell her he was thinking of her or what he was doing for work that day. It was natural for her to get used to that routine. How she wished she had given him her phone number so he could call her like he wanted to. She longed to hear his voice. She already knew it'd be deep and strong. But she'd resisted because that would just make her little white lie even more complicated. It would just bring Finn closer to

discovering the truth about her, that she was a fake.

Emma stomped back into the house and sat in front of her computer. Her heart sank, a dull ache settling into the middle of her chest when she clicked on her inbox. No new emails had arrived since she'd checked fifteen minutes ago.

No problem. If he didn't want to email her any more then that was fine with her. After all, he had never promised her anything but fantasy. A fantasy that she had chose to live in for far too long. She no longer wanted his emails staring at her when she logged on, so she created a file and began transferring them. One particular email caught her eye and she couldn't help re-read it, remembering how it had changed their friendship from acquaintance to something neither of them knew how to explain.

My naughty Emma, oh the dreams I had of you last night. It took me an hour to fall asleep after reading how you would suck my cock. I swear I felt your mouth cover my dick as I read your words. My balls ached so badly. I closed my eyes and stroked until I shot my load onto my stomach, imagining how it would feel shooting my cum deep into your mouth. Watching as your little tongue lapped my cum from your lips. Do you know what you do to me you little tease? You drive me wild, so wild that I can't stop thinking about bending you over and entering that hot, slick pussy from behind. I want to feel my cock slide into your heat. Then I want to hear you scream my name, begging me to let you come. Would you come hard for me, Emma? I wonder how your juices will cover my cock as I thrust deep inside you. I dream of running my tongue through that bare pussy, licking at your sweetness collecting on your swollen lips. I want to taste you, baby. Oh hell yeah. I want to taste you over and over and over. Would you

like that? Want to feel my tongue fuck that hot pussy? Sweet, sweet, Emma. I'm gonna spank you for making me crave you. That sweet little ass of yours will soon feel the sting of my hand and you'll love each spank. I promise. Think of me Emma. Want me like I want you. Sweet dreams, baby girl.

Finn

Emma's body hummed in so many places that she shook. Logging off the laptop was the easy part. Walking to her bedroom was the hard part as her pussy throbbed with a need greater than she'd ever known. She stripped and dressed in her satin lilac nightgown. So what if she slept alone. Why couldn't she feel sexy while she dreamt of Finn?

She crawled under her blankets before opening her nightstand and removing her vibrator. Her heart was already pounding. Since she'd started IM'ing Finn and divulging her erotic desires, the slender pink plastic toy had gotten more use than ever before. She made sure to keep a decent amount of batteries in stock.

Closing her eyes, Emma sank onto her pillow, using her fingers to pull the edge of her nightgown up to her belly and imagining it was Finn's rough fingers baring her. Once she pulled her panties down far enough to access her clit, she envisioned Finn's hard body moving over hers like he promised. Her fingers gripped the long, slender vibrator, positioning it over her clit before turning it on. With the vibrations massaging her tender nub, she squeezed her eyes and gasped at the sensations rocking through her pussy.

The first touch of the wand was always the most sensual as it came in contact with her sensitive skin. The pulse from the wand's motion roared over her exposed clit, awakening even more need, and her hips automatically inched upward to meet the

buzzing rod. Just the sound alone, the loud, constant humming, placed her senses on high alert. Her body knew what to expect as the vibrator edged closer to her pussy until it made contact with her clit and the need to come built with every second. The heavy ache deep within her pussy was never immediately alleviated by the first touch of the vibrator, as should be expected from such a powerful jolt on tender flesh.

The humming of the vibrator matched her ragged breaths, her body tensed, edged on by the sounds of pleasure. She concentrated on keeping the toy against her clit even as she wanted to yank it away, the sensation almost too much to bear as she awaited her release. She wasn't completely sure if an orgasm was even possible tonight. The building climax seemed more than she could handle as her mind begged for her to come. Is this how it would be with Finn? An all consuming mindless bliss?

Her juices flowed freely over her bare pussy lips, coating them in thin, slick moisture. That was also another luxury she had afforded herself since Finn entered her life. Even though she had to drive an hour to the closest day spa, Emma consistently kept her monthly appointment for an intimate waxing. It didn't matter that only she saw the results, but her soft, bare pussy lips made her feel feminine and sexy. In her mind, in her fantasies, Finn was enjoying the results as well.

Enduring thirty minutes of torture once a month as the hot wax was applied then ripped off to create the perfect Brazilian was well worth it. Those first hours while her abused skin healed, she would soothe herself with soft caresses over her bare mound. She imagined coming home to Finn kissing her pussy until she forgot all about the pain and only remembered the pleasure his mouth brought.

Emma angled the vibrator hard against her clit,

immediately causing her hips to buck, lifting her butt off the bed. The blankets had long since fallen off, and she sprawled half naked in the middle of her bed. Quick spasms rolled over her pussy lips like a roller coaster of pleasure. She could feel her explosion so close as she imagined Finn ramming his cock deep into her cunt, caressing her vaginal muscles and claiming her as his. Soon, he'd brand her with his hot seed as he emptied his release deep inside her heated pussy. It didn't matter that she'd only experience this wild intimacy in her fantasies, at least she had that much.

She gasped, tossed her head side to side, and fought against the rising urge to remove the vibrator from her clit, the intensity almost unbearable. Almost. This was one orgasm she needed more than air. Her body felt feverish, like flames surrounded her, bathing her in their heat until her skin glowed in a fine sheen of perspiration. Her nipples ached and begged for attention she couldn't give them, needing teeth clamping onto them, tugging them with gentle yet firm jerks. Through one very descriptive email, Finn had taught her the fine art of how to pinch her nipples to mimic the way his teeth would tug on them so the pain blurred into pleasure, the pull on her nipples directly responsible for her pussy swelling in anticipation of a cock or dildo. Now, after months of erotic masturbation, her body was programmed to be greedy with every attempt at an orgasm. Her fingers or vibe may have worked her clit to reach orgasm, but every inch of her body was aware of the pleasure to come.

Holding the vibrating wand to her clit, Emma's hips shot off the bed again and she screamed, "Finn! Oh, Finn!"

The orgasm shattered her fragile control. Tremor after tremor snaked through her body, easing the tension in her pussy but building it in her

heart. She yanked the wand away from her throbbing clit, the spasms gripping her pussy like fiery whips. What kind of fool fantasizes about a man she could never have? To Finn, she was a totally different woman, one made from lies of well-meaning friends. It was an image she couldn't live up to and one that Finn lusted over. Every one of her instincts had warned her about going along with such a devious scheme. Disgusted with herself, Emma crawled from the bed, pulled her panties up, and adjusted her nightgown, the silk so smooth against her skin. She walked into the bathroom adjacent her bedroom and washed the vibrator under warm, soapy water then dried it.

One glance at her reflection in the mirror showed just how affected she was by her orgasm. Her face was flushed. Her lungs fought for air as she breathed deep to regain a normal rhythm. Her skin was damp with her efforts to reach orgasm. All thanks to one man at the center of her fantasies.

Walking back to her room, Emma tossed the vibrator back into the nightstand, climbed back into bed, and turned off the light.

With her pussy still pulsing from her orgasm and her body still warm, she kept the blankets off and snuggled into her over-stuffed pillow. Laying in her pretty nightgown, alone, Emma closed her eyes and dreamt of Finn, dreamt of a man who would forever only be a fantasy.

Morning came too soon. Emma had tossed and turned so much during the night that her body felt like it had been through a wrestling match. Of course, she had dreamt of rolling over her bed with Finn, his body hard and firm against hers. So, it's no wonder she'd tossed and turned.

Emma considered her full morning as she walked to the kitchen to start coffee. Walking across

the hallway's hardwood floor, down the stairs, the icy sting of the cold wood shocked her feet. While the heat was programmed to automatically turn on at five-thirty, it was only five so she first stopped at the thermostat to override the commands to get the chill out of the house.

Rubbing her arms with her hands, Emma yawned and stretched before starting the coffee pot. Her kitchen was a decent size, large enough for the six-burner stove and butcher-block table that seated eight. She laughed. For a woman who lived alone, she sure had an abundance of appliances and furniture. Still, she liked to believe that one day the house would be filled with laughing kids and lots of friends and family.

The canary yellow she had painted the walls last fall really brightened up the room. Now, as she inhaled the smell of freshly perked coffee, she looked out the window overlooking her backyard. In a few more weeks, she'd plant her vegetable garden but not until after the threat of frost was past. She was grateful her dad had taught her when she was a young girl how to can jams and veggies. Now she had a family tradition to pass on to her children some day.

Filling a large mug with coffee, sugar and cream, Emma sipped the hot liquid and sighed. She loved her morning coffee and was a bear without it. She didn't have the willpower not to check her email, even though she felt foolish waiting for Finn when it was obvious that he was either too busy to write or maybe had grown bored with her. She didn't want to think about how depressing life would be if she no longer had Finn's emails to spice up her otherwise plain life.

After her second cup, she walked to her bedroom to dress for the unavoidable trip to deliver Mrs. Galway's special order of roses. Emma wondered

who the mystery man was to make such an effort to get his special woman the best roses he could find. She sighed. What it must feel like to have a man so completely infatuated and go out of his way to please you.

Opening her Maplewood armoire, Emma chose an old pair of jeans that were comfortably worn. They, along with a grey short-sleeve shirt, would do for her first chore—feeding the horses. Standing naked in front of the mirror, she had to admire her body. While she had no regular exercise regimen and actually detested any kind of physical fitness program, she kept in shape with the multitude of tasks she was responsible for on her farm. Holidays and sick days didn't mean the work took a hiatus. Roses needed to be watered, horses fed and groomed.

So the slender body reflected back in the antique oval looking glass was toned and trim. She laughed as she stepped into pink lace panties and matching lace bra. Even if no one else would see her underthings, she felt sexy and feminine while she did her sweaty chores.

Before sitting on the king-sized four-poster bed, Emma pulled the comforter up over the messed up sheets from her restless night's sleep. She detested making the bed, doing laundry or the dishes, and all household chores. She would much rather be mucking a stall or brushing the horses than being stuck in the house. But since she lived alone, those chores wouldn't do themselves so she just sucked it up and did them.

She quickly laced her dark brown work boots and grabbed her jacket from the floor in the corner of the room. Wrapping her long hair into a ponytail, she walked out the front door toward the horse barn. Once she fed the horses then she'd have to take the trip into town to Mrs. Galway's. Despising another match-making session by the well-meaning but

annoying old woman, Emma sighed and prayed Mrs. Galway wouldn't disregard Emma's wishes and have the Sanders boy at the shop or, worse, have the unknown stranger waiting around while she brought his roses. Praying the old woman wouldn't stoop so low as to trick Emma into meeting some guy who was obviously already interested in another woman since he was ordering special roses, Emma shook her head and sighed. Emma was prepared though. She couldn't defend herself against another ambush, but she was prepared for today.

Strategy. Emma needed a damn good one.

The morning dew wet the grass as Emma trudged through the field to the horse pen. The sun was rising, casting its yellow tint over everything. Emma squinted against the bright rays breaking over the trees. It seemed like only yesterday that she'd run through these grounds and the surrounding woods as a pig-tailed kid, more tomboy than princess. She swallowed hard to fight the knot forming in her throat. Now wasn't the time to think about all she'd lost at such a young age and how her father tried to be everything for her.

When she'd lost her mom at seven, Emma didn't think she'd be able to live without her. But Daddy needed her, so she learned to be strong for him. And now Emma was envious of her own father for finding love again when Emma couldn't even be honest with her cyber-lover, leading him to believe she's something she's not.

Oh hell!

Emma wanted to avoid as many people as possible since she still wasn't in a socializing mood, so this trip into town would be quick. It was early, but people already mulled about Merridien Street, sipping coffee, having conversations, pushing strollers. With her foot a little heavy on the gas, she

roared through town, leaving her truck running as an excuse to escape the clutches of Mrs. Galway's matchmaking powers.

"Always on time, Emma. Too bad you weren't early though," Mrs. Galway noted with an edge of excitement to her voice as she cradled the box that held two dozen of Emma's favorite, long stem white roses. They were pure and simple, just like love should be.

Emma knew she shouldn't inquire but curiosity got the best of her. "Why's that, Mrs. Galway?"

"Because you just missed the most handsome fella. The customer who ordered these roses arrived early. I told him he could wait but he said he needed to get something to eat. If you wait a few minutes, I'm sure he'll be back very soon."

Emma laughed and kissed Mrs. Galway's cheek. "Remember what I said, Mrs. Galway. I can make my own dinner dates. My truck's running. Got to go."

"You always have an excuse, young lady. I didn't see a wedding ring," she whispered as though they were conspiring to run the guy down the aisle.

Emma placed her hands on her hips and stared at the woman. "The man is buying special roses for another woman. Wedding ring or not, I'd say he's taken. Besides, a lot of men don't wear wedding rings now-a-days."

"And what a shame that is. If my Neal ever stopped wearing his ring, well, I'd be heartbroken of course."

Emma sighed and patted the older woman's hand. "He would never do such a thing Mrs. Galway. But in today's world men go without so they don't get hurt on the job. You know, catching it on machinery."

"Nonsense. My Neal worked every day with his ring and never lost a finger for it. If you ask me, youngsters today don't know what true love is all

about.”

Oh oh. Warning bells!

“Everyone’s so rushed and don’t even take the time to eat supper together,” Mrs. Galway complained.

Emma admitted that it’d be nice to have someone to eat with other than her cat. She made a mental note to feed her cat, Freckles, as soon as she got home. Damn, he was going to be pissed that she’d forgotten him this morning.

Mrs. Galway continued her rant while Emma felt obliged to give the woman a few minutes. The old lady sure did live for romance.

“Maybe you have the right idea after all, Emma, dear.”

That snapped her out of her thoughts. “What do you mean?”

“Since your generation has lost the ability to be romantic, I think maybe you have a good idea to stay by yourself out on the farm. I mean, if today’s men can’t even wear a symbol of their love, then what’s a woman got to look forward to?”

Hot wild sex—oh jeez, there goes thoughts of Finn again.

“Well, I happen to envy you and Mr. Galway, since he obviously still adores you after all these years.”

Mrs. Galway’s face lit up like a Christmas tree. “And I him. Oh dear, look at me carrying on like I don’t have work to do. My special customer should be back any second.

Damn! When did the woman become so sneaky? Emma should’ve guessed that her ramble was her well-planned scheme to match her with some stranger. That was Emma’s queue to leave and quick.

“You have a good day.” Emma rushed from the store, ignoring the pleading look Mrs. Galway sent

her.

Emma jumped into the truck and sped off toward the comfort of home. She didn't care how many handsome strangers were in town. She only wanted one man, as impossible as that was, and he was nowhere to be found. Damn!

She promised herself that if she ever heard from Finn again then she'd come clean about the real her. She'd reveal all of the deceit and, if he chose never to speak to her again, then that's what she got for participating in her stupid friends' ideas. But how long would only having Finn online satisfy her? How long could she continue their erotic conversations with no physical touch? That was all something she would just have to deal with another time as she focused on the road. She knew she should be upset or even worried considering the dangers of Finn's job, but anger boiled through her veins. Finn better have a real good reason for not keeping in touch with her.

A real good reason.

Chapter Two

Finn had been to dozens of countries around the world while in the military, but never had he come across a town as nice as White Cap Creek. Since his arrival this morning, he sensed that he was the focus of everyone's attention. They must not get many strangers in this town. Of course, his military fatigues only made him stand out more. But he didn't have time to change his clothes, not when his cock throbbed at the prospect of meeting Emma within the hour.

Finn waited patiently as the florist shop owner, Mrs. Galway, wrapped up the two-dozen roses he'd special ordered for Emma. Just thinking of his sexy pen pal had his cock coming to life, straining against his pants. He took a steadying deep breath and slowly exhaled. It wouldn't do any good to walk around this quaint little town with a raging hard-on. And certainly not in front of a classy lady like Mrs. Galway.

She reminded Finn of his grandmother. His heart constricted with the memory of lost loved ones. He had seen more death in his lifetime than any man should have to, but it was the deaths not attributed to his work that made him grieve, so deep that he never allowed his feelings out. Maybe if his grandmother had lived a longer life with his grandfather, the old man wouldn't have turned into such a grouch. Finn understood that when a man loved a woman he'd do anything for her. Not that he had ever loved a woman or even planned to. Love didn't exist in his line of work. Hard to love someone

only to leave them on a moment's notice for God knows how long. Yeah, love didn't have a place in Finn's world, but fucking sure the hell did. And Emma was his trophy. One he'd waited too damn long for.

It had been hard enough to sit on the fourteen-hour plane ride, surrounded by his fellow soldiers, while in pursuit of a woman who had occupied his thoughts these past months more than he cared to admit. How many times had he looked at his watch only to find the time was still ticking by as slow as ever? How many times had he attempted to catch some Z's only to close his eyes and envision Emma's sexy body naked and sweaty as he rode her? He'd fought the constant hard-on that would expose him to taunts from his fellow soldiers should it be discovered. Christ, he was a man capable of displaying patience in the most harrowing or boring situations and, yet, there he'd sat on a trans-Atlantic flight hardly able to stand the anticipation of one woman's touch—Emma's touch.

"Here you go, young man," Mrs. Galway announced, while walking from the back room with the massive bouquet of flowers and interrupting his thoughts.

"You wrapped them beautifully, ma'am," Finn complimented as he handed her his credit card and took possession of the bouquet.

"I'll say you're about to make some young lady very happy. Care to share with me who they are for?" she asked, sparing him a quick, meddling glance.

Finn cracked a wide grin. "Sorry, ma'am. If I did that then she may find out before I can surprise her."

Mrs. Galway feigned shock as she handed him back his credit card, which he slipped back into his wallet. "Now, I wouldn't say a word."

Yeah, right! Ten bucks says the old woman would break a leg running with his news. “I do appreciate you making this so special. Thank you, ma’am.”

“You’re very welcome, but I can’t take all of the credit. There’s a very nice local woman who provides me with the best roses around these parts. Now do you need any directions to get to where you’re going?”

Damn! For an old lady, she was really good at attempting to drag information out of him. He could’ve used her to question that drug lord in Columbia last month when his team was trying to locate the drug lab hidden deep in the jungle.

“I know exactly where I’m going, ma’am. Thank you. You have yourself a nice day now.”

Finn quickly exited the store, grateful to be away from the woman’s prying eyes. He had no doubt she meant no harm, but he didn’t need to waste any more time getting to Emma.

As if he needed something else to draw attention to himself, he walked to his rental truck with the massive bouquet of flowers wrapped in pretty pink paper and tied with a white frilly bow. Of course he looked so damn out of place. Under the watchful eyes of passersby, Finn placed the roses on the front passenger seat before walking to the driver’s side. Once seated in the truck, he forgot about the strangers’ stares and dialed his cell phone slowly. He’d put the call off long enough.

When the old man’s voice sounded on the other end of the line, Finn swallowed the knot that suddenly formed in his throat.

“Hey, Grandpa. I’m in the States. Should be by to visit you by the end of the week.” Finn spoke calmly.

“Surprise you remembered me at all,” Grandpa said in his gravelly voice.

Finn rolled his eyes as he sat in the truck, staring at nothing in particular. "I didn't call to argue. Just letting you know when to expect me, if I can make it."

"Don't make an effort on my behalf. If you're in the States already then why haven't you been home already?" Always looking for a damn fight.

Finn mentally counted to five. Why did it always have to be like this? Why did they always have to argue? "I'm visiting a friend first, Grandpa. I'll be home soon, but only for a few days."

"Of course. Hell if you'd stay longer than that anyways. Why even fucking come?"

Finn asked himself that same question during each leave he made it home to visit his grandfather. "Again, I'm not arguing. I'll see you soon," Finn declared quietly before disconnecting.

Grandpa was still his stubborn damn self. Finn started the truck and backed out slowly to merge with town traffic. But Finn refused to let the old man put him in a bad mood when he eagerly anticipated meeting Emma. That was another thing that got in his craw. Never in his life had he lusted after a woman like a lovesick pup. Christ, he had never even seen a picture of Emma since the little witch had refused to send him one.

God, he was going to enjoy spanking her ass for that. A promise was a promise and she damn well deserved to have her ass paddled for making him wait to see what she looked like. There was something about her that intrigued him, yet he couldn't figure it out. There was no doubt in his mind that she wasn't the blond bimbo she'd described in her profile. Hell no. She talked too intelligently to pass as an airhead. Too many conversations she had shown an insight and opinion that had changed his own views once or twice. He hoped she hadn't lied about having big tits. He

couldn't wait to have her breasts in his hands and his mouth on her nipples. Fuck! He was hard just thinking of it.

Most of all, he couldn't wait to see her face when he surprised her with a visit. Yeah, he had contemplated letting her know ahead of time that he'd arranged leave and would arrive soon. But that would just take away the thrill of the surprise. And it may even make his darling Emma try to primp herself to impress him when what he really wanted was to see Emma for the person she was, not some painted shadow of the real her.

Finn followed the instructions on the computerized navigational unit until the mechanical voice calmly declared there was no further information on his destination.

What the fuck?

Finn pulled over to the side of the road, the tires on his Humvee kicking up a dusty cloud. "Son of a bitch!"

He tried to re-program Emma's address with no success. The navigational unit was obviously useless way out here in the hills of Vermont. The hills must be adding interference or something. From the back seat, he retrieved the map and went about finding Emma the old-fashioned way. Clearly, he was off course by ten miles. Fucking useless navigational equipment. It was times like this when Finn was forced back into the civilized world that he missed the latest technological gadgets the military used years before civilians. The GPS on his military vehicle was a hundred times more efficient than this piece of shit attached to the dashboard. If he had his military issued device, then he would have already been at Emma's house. Damn! For a man skilled in patience, he was quickly becoming agitated sitting here when he could be lying in Emma's bed.

Finn gunned the accelerator and spun the truck

around to get back on track and find Emma. He'd been in the mountains of Afghanistan and trained specially to hunt terrorists through the most unforgiving terrain. He'd spent months in jungles defying death as he stalked drug dealers. Finding a sexy woman on an isolated farm in eastern Vermont shouldn't be much of a challenge.

But then again, everything about Emma had been a challenge so far, from trying to get pictures to trying to figure out the real Emma. And wasn't that refreshing? She wasn't like all the other women who threw themselves at him, the thrill of fucking a military man too alluring for most to deny. Most of the women did curse him when he rolled out of their beds offering nothing more than a peck on the cheek. There'd be no commitments, which he'd always made clear before sex. He wasn't made for that shit. The military was his life.

Still, Emma should've sent him a picture. Now curiosity was slowly killing him as he passed acres and acres of green grass in the hunt of his Emma. His Emma? Ah hell, where did that come from? Probably from lack of sleep, traveling from Afghanistan to Vermont for over seventeen hours. Finn smirked remembering how he also refused to share his photo with Emma. At first, he thought it was a great plan, get her to give in when curiosity overwhelmed her. But she had surprised him with her resolve. Stubborn ladies never give in. Hell, he'd enjoy spanking her ass. When he wanted something, he expected to get it. Period.

Finn's sixth sense kicked in, warning that he should high tail it as far away from the woman who had teased him these past months with hot emails and controlling his dick from afar. But Finn had never been accused of being the brightest man, stubborn yes, but not the brightest when the female population was involved. And yes, he was thinking

with his dick right now. To hell with sixth sense bullshit. He faced dangerous terrorists on a daily basis. What the hell could one lone female do that he couldn't handle?

Laughing, Finn nailed the accelerator and headed toward Emma.

Emma sucked on her finger where the thorn had pricked her. That's what she got for trimming her roses without her leather gloves for protection. Inhaling the sharp scent of the roses made it worth it though. The soft breeze blowing warm air through the kitchen window caught the scent of the roses and filled the house. Not only were her roses fragrant, but the red color was rich and deep. They brightened up her kitchen instantly as she arranged them in the crystal vase. She could never imagine not having roses in the house. No matter what problems the days brought, the scent and sight of a rose always brightened her mood.

Emma froze when the doorbell rang. The ladies from the book club weren't due for another half hour and never arrived early. Their proper manners wouldn't allow for them to surprise their hostess by showing up before the appointed time. And no one else ever came to visit Emma. It rang again, the incessant, obnoxious ding-dong sound radiating from the parlor throughout the house. Emma finished filling the vase with water before wiping her hands on a towel and walking quickly to the front door. Who could it be? Her thoughts immediately went to her father and she hoped the sheriff wasn't bringing bad news.

She glanced quickly around the house as she walked to the door to spot any last second housekeeping needed, just in case it was the book club ladies. Not much she could do about it now. She sighed and forced a bright smile.

To say visitors were scarce at Emma's house wasn't a stretch of the truth. She lived far enough from town that people rarely trekked to see her, especially since she made regular trips into town during the week. The book club ladies had sucked her into joining their small group that met weekly, wanting to offer her some company since she lived alone. She couldn't think of one other person that would ride all the way out here without phoning first to make sure she was up for company and not busy with the horses or her roses. Besides, she was a single, twenty-nine-year-old woman living quietly on a farm. It was rare for one of her friends to visit since Emma didn't offer any fun incentives like parties or alcohol.

To say tall, handsome men were scarce at Emma's house *was* the truth. Not only were they a rarity, they were friggin' non-existent, so the man Emma spied through the screen door was either lost, dropped here by aliens, or a serial killer. Either one meant he wasn't here looking for her, unless she could point him in the right direction, return him to his planet, or be his next victim. Her smile faded. What did he possibly want way out here?

With a sigh, she opened the door and stared at the man blocking her entire doorway, the late afternoon sun at his back. Dressed in camouflage pants, tight black short-sleeve T-shirt that encased a vast supply of hard muscles, black combat boots, and sunglasses, the man oozed pure masculine power and arrogance. There was something oddly familiar about him, although Emma had never met such an alluring, powerful man. In Vermont, while men kept in shape working the countless farms and doing other honest, hard work, none came close to this finely tuned physique. Was she drooling? She certainly knew her mouth had opened in an 'O' for a good thirty seconds before she reminded herself to

shut it. Just because Finn had occupied her thoughts for so long didn't mean she couldn't appreciate another man's body.

Her panties were wet from just looking at him. Did she know him? He looked familiar, yet she couldn't place him. A man like this a woman wouldn't forget, but she obviously had since she couldn't explain how she felt like she should know him. Could she have seen him, or someone like him, on one of her trips into the neighboring towns? When he smiled, her cunt unleashed a river of cream to soak the silk. That's what she gets for having no sex life, she creams her undies at the first gorgeous guy she meets. She had to be sure to breathe.

She found her voice and spoke. "Hi, can I help you?" she asked as casually as she could. It was then that she recognized her roses, wrapped prettily in pink paper and a ribbon, the same two-dozen special order she'd dropped off to Mrs. Galway two hours earlier.

Oh my God! How cruel was fate to send this handsome mystery man to her doorstep, most likely lost and needing directions to his sweetheart. Emma admitted Mrs. Galway's taste in her matchmaking choices for Emma had drastically improved. Now Emma wished she'd stuck around the flower shop to discover more about the yummy eye candy in front of her.

"Sorry to bother you, ma'am, but is Emma here?" the deep southern drawl serenaded her.

Oh my God! He was here to see her. "And you are?" She stared at the massive bouquet of roses in her hand. The man was not only gorgeous but a romantic, like he'd jumped out of one of her novels.

When his voice interrupted her thoughts, Emma's gaze fixated on his face, the hard features so masculine. There's only one man she knew who could possibly look this magnificent. She swallowed

hard, not needing his reply to answer her own question.

"I apologize, ma'am. I'm Lt. Finn Coleman. An acquaintance of Emma's."

Oh shit! Emma's world shattered. Her jaw dropped and she teetered on wobbly knees until a strong arm reached out with lightening speed and a firm hand grasped her elbow, effectively holding her up and keeping her from making a fool out of herself by landing face first on the floor. *Lt. Finn Coleman here at her house! Oh double shit!*

"You all right?" the stern voice asked, his eyes watching her carefully as he removed his sunglasses.

"Y-yes," she stuttered softly, trying to pull out of his grip with no success. Looking up at him stole her breath away. He was so tall and wide, the largest man she'd ever seen.

"You don't look it. Come sit down," he ordered and, without waiting for her permission, he walked through the door, carefully kicking it shut, holding her firmly, tugging her with him to the couch where he gently pushed her down.

He sat beside her, his hand still on her elbow. On the coffee table he placed the flowers and turned his full attention on her. She felt like she was under a spotlight in an interrogation room the way he glared at her with those intense eyes, that hard look slowly roving over her from head to toe before he settled his eyes back on hers.

Then he was silent. She lowered her head but still sensed his eyes upon her, studying her. She couldn't look at him. How could she face this gorgeous man and tell him the tall, beautiful, voluptuous blond he thought was Emma Shields was no more than the average brunette sitting next to him? She couldn't bear the truth, couldn't face his disappointment. Humiliation gnawed at her gut while her mind worked at warp speed to devise a

decent, believable lie. If there was one thing she'd learned about Finn Coleman these past months as his email pen pal for the 'Support Our Troops Military Pen Pal Program' was that he was intelligent and saw through lies like a window. How many times did he tell her he thought she was holding something back from him? Well, surprise. Now, he knew what.

Think, smarty-pants. Figure out how the hell to get out of this one. Okay, she'd just have to tell him Emma wasn't here. *Oh, God, another lie!* What choice did she have? She'd have to tell him that Emma had gone away. Yeah, that was it. For a long time. She'd tell him Emma was never coming back and he'd leave.

"Did you think I wouldn't know it was you, Emma?" His voice broke into her thoughts and she cringed. Of course he would figure out she was really Emma. Not the woman she'd described to him, but she was certainly Emma. What else would explain her reaction to him?

"I didn't think we'd ever meet." She couldn't face him. Caught in a boldface lie, she was utterly embarrassed. Finn laughed, his breath tickling her ear and sending a million goose bumps cascading down her body straight to her pussy that was currently humming with a life of its own. His hand left her elbow to slide around her back, twirling lazy circles across her shirt with strong fingers. Breathe, she instructed herself and drew in a deep breath through her nose to calm her nerves, but only managed to become intoxicated on his clean, woodsy scent.

The deep sound of his voice drummed in her ear. "I told you we would, darling. You should've believed me."

Emma slowly faced him. "I told you we couldn't meet."

“No, you didn’t. You only said we would never meet. I merely corrected that.”

There was his famous arrogance. Her gaze roamed slowly over his body. He was as tall as the six feet three he’d said, with wide shoulders, muscular arms and chest, short black hair, serious blue eyes, and a six inch jagged scar on his left cheek. He looked every bit the man of her fantasies, hot, sexy, and dangerous.

“I never gave you my address. How’d you find me?” she demanded, suddenly aware that this man that she’d never met had tracked her down with little or no information at all.

His smile lit up his eyes, the deep blue orbs studied her face, roaming slowly and stopping to stare at her lips. “I’m in the military. I have connections.”

“But I didn’t give you any identifying information like my last name.”

“Honey, I track terrorists through the hills of Afghanistan. Tracking down one little sexy woman like you was not hard when you know how to do it.”

“And how the hell was that? I want to know,” she demanded, needing to not feel as vulnerable as she did.

He smiled. “It’s not as mysterious as I make it sound. Sorry. I didn’t mean to frighten you. I simply had my contacts look up your information through the Pen Pal Agency.”

“What if I didn’t want to be found, Finn?”

“Didn’t you?” he asked, arrogance shining through his simple question.

She frowned and didn’t offer him an answer. “What if I was married? How can you just show up on my doorstep?” Those fingers caressing her back were so distracting.

“I know you’re not married. You’re the only one listed at this address, so my sources indicated.” His

eyes watched her intensely. "Plus you wouldn't have had so much freedom to be on the Internet as much as you were. You were never rushed or in a hurry to talk and get off line, so I figured no one would be walking in on you and your dirty little emails. I knew you weren't the type of woman to lie about another man in your life, even if you did lie about your appearance."

She ignored that comment and the sting to her pride. "I can't believe you abused your authority like that to hunt me down."

"Emma, I hardly hunted you down and I certainly didn't abuse my power. Just pulled in a few favors from friends in the right places to get me the address I needed to come visit your sexy ass." He sighed. "I promise you, I'm not a deranged killer. I didn't come here to hurt you."

"Not like you'd admit it if you *were* a killer."

"Suppose not."

Her body had never felt this hot before. Maybe she was getting a fever. "What did you come here for then?"

His expression was serious, tired. "To see the woman who's become my best friend these past few months. I needed to meet you, Emma. But if you want me to leave, just say so and I'll be gone. No hassles."

"No," she said quickly, not wanting him to leave. She was absolutely curious about him and, of course, he was gorgeous. Maybe not in the GQ model way, but in a rugged, caveman manner that exuded power and arrogance. "It would be silly for you to come all this way for nothing."

"Agreed." He sounded relieved, or horny, or maybe both.

"So, now that you've met me, you can tell me how disappointed you are. I'm not exactly what you expected."

He reached for the bouquet of flowers and handed them to her. "That you are not. But we'll discuss that later. These are for you. I remembered how much you like roses."

She laughed and treasured the flowers. "Oh, you surprised me all right. So you're MM?"

He smiled. "Now who's using their connections to find out information?"

She looked at him confused. "What do you mean?"

"Well, how else would you know the name I used to order the flowers if you didn't pry it out of the old woman?"

Emma laughed. "I hardly pried it from her. Believe me, if you knew Mrs. Galway, then you'd know there's nothing you need to pry from her that she doesn't offer willingly and quickly. So she mentioned you only left the initials MM."

"I see. Yeah. She asked for my name and, knowing how gossip runs through a small town like fire does through a dry forest, I gave her the initials for my email name, Military Man. Wasn't against giving a name for reference, just wanted to make sure I had the chance to surprise you. Still doesn't explain how you came to talk to her about what name I left."

His gaze bore down on her like he could wait all day for an answer and wouldn't allow her to skirt the question. She smiled. "There's a funny story behind these flowers, Finn." She cradled the roses. Funny how she'd never received roses from a man before. If she wanted flowers, she had to give them to herself.

"Yes, there is. It's about a nosy old lady who tried her damndest to get out of me who the flowers were for."

"That's Mrs. Galway for sure. Yes, she's been on a matchmaking trip forever it seems. I'm sorry if she

tortured you.”

“Torture isn’t the word I’d use. I’ve been through torture and it was easier than dealing with her questions.”

She paled. “You were tortured?”

His expression was grim before he masked it with a smile. “Figure of speech.”

Like hell. She didn’t believe him for a second, but she really didn’t want to know the truth. Her stomach would hurl. “Mrs. Galway means well. I dropped these flowers off to her this morning.”

He looked so confused and adorable. “I don’t understand.”

“That’s the funny story. Remember I told you I grow roses as my business. Mrs. Galway said she had a request from a gentleman for two dozen of her finest roses.”

“Are these are your finest?” His finger toyed with one delicate petal. Oh, how she wished that was her nipple he was rolling between his fingers.

She cleared her throat, but it still was dry. “They are. And my favorite.”

“Perfect. Exactly what I wanted for you then.”

“Want coffee?” She stood abruptly, needing to put some space between them before her pussy detonated from being this close to such a sexually potent male. She didn’t know what to do about this situation and space would help her think.

“I would love a decent cup. Haven’t had a chance to stop for any. Wanted to get right here.” He stood and reached for her, his large, calloused hands rubbing her upper arms gently. “But first, I’d really like to just hold you a moment, Emma.”

The simple declaration, with its honest sincerity, stunned her. “Okay,” she whispered, her arms automatically circling his neck after placing the bouquet on the table.

Standing on her toes, she hugged him.

His arms wrapped tightly around her, holding her slender body against his hard chest. "You have no idea how good you feel, baby," he whispered. "I've waited forever for this moment. Just give me one moment, sweet Emma."

His heart beat wildly under her ear as she rested her cheek against his breastbone. Her nipples hardened against his firm upper body muscles, a line of fire shooting directly to her pussy that left her aching in places she'd never been aware of before. Emma fully expected Finn's hands to slide over her ass to cop a feel or reach around and squeeze her breast, but he did neither, to her surprise and, she had to admit, her disappointment. Instead, he held her possessively like he never wanted to let her go. Like she was the most important thing in the world.

She didn't know how to respond to him. In all her fantasies, she'd always dreamt of him ravaging her, ripping off her clothes to just fuck her. This hug was so delicate, so intimate. Was she ready for the closeness it promised?

His arms were like iron shackles around her and she should feel crushed yet all she felt was safe and warm. She swore he trembled in her embrace but before she could delve further into that observation, he pulled away, his head bent to look into her eyes. Staring back at him, she saw the fine line of wrinkles around his eyes and the exhaustion he was doing his best to hide.

"I'll take that coffee now, Emma."

The way he said her name tied her belly in knots. The combination of a southern drawl and commanding authority gave him the ultimate in sex appeal. Never before had Emma seen a man so sure of himself, so powerful in his stance, yet so appealing.

She picked up the bouquet and walked into the kitchen, expecting him to follow and he did.

“So now I understand why you never wanted to send me a picture,” Finn said, leaning against the counter, arms crossed, watching her as she busied herself with making the coffee. “Always told me to form a picture of you in my mind.”

She shrugged, opening the cabinets for two mugs. “And did you?”

“I sure as hell did and it wasn’t of the leggy blond with big tits you passed yourself off as. I just couldn’t picture you like that.”

Emma flinched. “Sorry I lied to you, Finn. My friends had a lot to do with creating my profile to make me interesting.”

His jaw tightened. “From what I can see, you’re a helluva lot more interesting than the damn blond you tried to be.”

Her cheeks flamed. “I take it that was supposed to be a compliment?”

“That was a nice way of saying that you’re one hot lady without pretending to be someone else.”

She snorted in a very unladylike way. “Hot? Now that’s a compliment I can honestly say I’ve never been given before.” His eyes darkened, but she ignored them. “Tell me what picture of me you formed in your head, Finn, if it wasn’t the blond persona I’d created.”

His eyes roamed her body slowly from her shoes to her hair then back again until they met her eyes. “It sure as hell didn’t come close to the knockout you are. And I don’t like it when you put yourself down, so don’t do it again.”

She studied him for a moment. “So you’re as arrogant in person as you came across in the emails,” she stated and laughed. He was refreshing in his hard-ass sort of way. Better than all the proper men in town whose impeccable manners drove her crazy with boredom.

He smiled. “Told you when we wrote that I was

a demanding man.”

She laughed. “If I remember correctly, you said you were dominant.”

“Yes and you were, are, hardly submissive. But there could be a lot of fun in that challenge—for both of us.”

His words were so like the many emails he’d sent. He was obviously a very sexual man, one used to being in control and getting his own way. His pledge to show her sexual fulfillment was believable. How he would describe in detail the many sexual acts he’d do to fulfill his promises had sent her to bed many nights with her pussy wet and throbbing for his touch.

He towered over her so when he spoke she had to crane her neck up. “Do you know, Emma, there were nights I lay awake dreaming of your kisses, how hot they’d be, how sweet you’d taste? I dreamt of your touch, how your fingers would feel stroking my cock, how your mouth would feel as you sucked me off. Damn! I’ve had a raging hard-on ever since our first emails. Not a good thing to have when the only woman who could satisfy it was a thousand miles away, way the hell over here in Vermont.”

Her mouth opened in shock. “Thoughts of me kept you awake at night? I think you’re lying.”

She handed him a cup of coffee. Taking a sip, he placed it on the counter before turning back to her.

The dangerous look came back into his eyes. “I’m not the one who lied from the beginning, Emma. I’ve been completely honest. So you better believe what I tell you because it’s the God’s honest truth. I’ll also tell you there were many nights when thoughts of you *helped* me *fall* asleep only because I could dream of your kisses, of holding you in my arms, of making love to you all night long. Sometimes, when on patrols and sitting for hours in deafening silence while praying no noise came

because that meant trouble and trouble always meant the possibility of death, I'd try to imagine what your voice would sound like. In my head, I could hear your sweet words talking to me. I printed a few of your emails. I'd read them over and over in the field. They got me through." Looking down at his feet, he took a long steadying breath before returning his gaze to her. "Emma, you got me through. You did. Not your blond persona. Don't ever forget that."

That was the most touching thing anyone had ever said to her. Her heart swelled. "Where are you staying while you're in town?" she asked nervously, hoping he wasn't ready to high-tail it out of there now that he realized she'd lied to him.

He looked at her with a sly grin. "I thought I'd stay here."

"Here?" she asked, shocked. He wanted to stay with her? Oh God!

"Yeah. Afraid the horses will talk now that you have a man staying over?" he teased. "Think they'll think bad of you?"

"Oh, shut up. I'm just not in the habit of having men sleep over."

"Good. Because I'd hate to have to punch some asshole out."

She leaned against the counter, her voice lost somewhere in her throat.

Quickly, Finn cornered Emma, his large arms resting on the granite on both sides of her, locking her in place. "One kiss. Let me have one kiss, Emma, and if it isn't the best damn one of your life then you can throw me out of here faster than you can flip a flapjack. I'll leave with no complaints."

Her heart slammed against her chest, her breath came in short gasps. His woodsy, clean scent teased her nose until she closed her eyes and breathed him in deeply. She was about to kiss the

man whose emails had creamed her panties over and over for months. God, her cunt would probably flood with her juices once those firm lips got a hold of hers.

Her eyes flickered open to find his searching her face with hopefulness. “Like hell,” she scolded. “You’d rant and rave.” She stared at him. “One kiss,” she whispered.

Smiling, he bent his head slowly, his lips finding hers in a deliberate possession. Large hands moved to her ribs, his fingers digging gently into her skin, holding her against him. His tongue pressed against the crease of her lips, urging them to open. Giving in to his ministrations, Emma relaxed in Finn’s embrace, her hands combing through his short, spiky hair to keep his mouth joined to hers.

When his tongue dove into the warmth of her mouth, Emma lost her breath at the sheer magnitude of his power, his strong body dwarfing hers, his strength a protective shield around her. With devastating slowness, Finn’s tongue explored her mouth, trailing over her teeth, the roof of her mouth, and pushing deeper to dance with her tongue in a fight for control. Both were equal opponents in this match, each wanting to taste and devour the other. But Finn’s determination won as he leaned Emma sideways into his muscular arms, manipulating the kiss until Emma felt it in every cell of her body. Her pussy spasmed with tender aches, echoing her need to feel his kisses everywhere on her body, to feel his tongue fucking her pussy as it was her mouth. She tasted the pure animal need in him as he feasted on her.

When he pulled away, she was horrified by the look on his face. Was it disappointment?

“You don’t kiss like I’d expect from a woman who wrote such sexually explicit emails.” Finn’s breathing came in quick, short, controlled gasps.

“Wha—what do you mean?” she hated stuttering over her words, but her tongue was tied in knots, humiliation strumming through her body.

He hadn’t moved away from her, his hands still glued to her ribs. “You kiss with an innocent hunger.”

Her chin came up with a stubborn flinch. “I’m no virgin if that’s what you’re getting at.” So what if she’d only fucked one man. And a long time ago. Damn it!

His eyes darkened. “Not at all. But you sure as hell aren’t the experienced woman you claimed to be in your emails. More lies, Emma?”

Her cheeks flamed with a mix of embarrassment and temper. “No. The only thing I ever lied about was what I looked like. Read your emails again. I never claimed sexual prowess. I just talked the talk.”

Those serious blue eyes interrogated hers, searching for an answer to his question. Like she’d be that easy to read. Ha! “So you’ve never been tied to a bed and fucked until you trembled from the orgasm?”

Her wide eyes gave him his answer and he cursed. He moved away from her and crossed his arms, leaning against the counter again.

Okay. Maybe she was easy to read. Feeling the weight of the world suddenly on her, Emma sighed deeply. “I’m sorry I lied, Finn. It’s not something I make a habit of doing.”

“I gathered as much.”

She forced herself to keep eye contact. “The emails were just a fantasy. I never meant to lie, just to fantasize,” she said, her fists clenched and her humiliation overwhelming. “I know I’m not the type of woman someone like you would want. Look at me.”

Looking down at her old faded, yet so comfortable, blue jeans, plain white T-shirt, and the

bandana holding back her mass of curly hair, reminded her that she fit the part of the farm girl she was—simple.

“You deserve a spanking,” he said plainly, his steely gaze pinning her in her place.

She stopped her ranting to stare at him. “Excuse me?”

He leapt away from the counter and reached for her, pulling her hard against his body. Looking down into her eyes, he repeated himself calmly with an air of authority. “I said that you deserve a spanking and, by God, I’ll give you one if you put yourself down again. I told you in the emails how I’d spank your ass. You may have lied about your appearance. Although, God knows why, because I like what I see better than what you pretended to be. But I won’t stand here and listen to you make yourself out to be some ugly duckling. You’re far from it, sweetheart.”

She pushed at him, her hand like a feather against concrete. “You can’t come into my house and threaten me.”

He cracked a grin. “It’s not a threat, darling. It’s a promise.”

“Oh really?” Now she was pissed. “Get off of me.”

“Believe me, baby. If I paddle your bottom, you’ll like it.”

“You just try it and I’ll make you sorry.” For emphasis she poked his chest. Okay, so even she knew that she was no match for his physical strength, but she had to stand up for herself even though the idea of his large hands slapping her bottom made her pussy clench and her ass tingle delightfully.

“Given how close we became over the Internet, I don’t think you’d fight me if I tried to spank you. I think you would very much enjoy my kind of spanking.”

“That sure of yourself, huh, Finn?”

"I just believe in being open and honest. And since you insist on putting yourself down, then maybe a spanking will teach you a lesson and prove to you how sensual you are. Especially if I caress that very fine ass after each spank."

"Hardly. That'll just make me want to smack you. But then, it sounds like you like to play rough," she teased, her voice husky, seductive.

He smiled, showing off brilliant white teeth. "Want to hear how I'm going to make love to you the second time?"

"I don't recall saying I'd make love to you, Finn." And damn, but didn't she just drench her panties!

His lips curved in a mischievous grin. "You want to. I can see it in the way your eyes flare up when I touch you. I bet if I reached between your legs right now you'd be nice and wet for me. Wouldn't you?"

She stilled in his grasp. "Maybe." Her cheeks were flaming so much they hurt. "What happened to making love the first time?"

Leaning his head down, he spoke softly in her ear. "The first time is obvious. I'll be gentle. Allow your body to adjust to my thick cock. I have no doubt you'll make it the hardest and longest it's ever been just by standing so close to me. And if your sweet kisses are any indication, I'd say that hot little pussy of yours is as tight as a virgin. So the first time we fuck, I'll be a gentleman. I don't want to hurt you. I want to enjoy you. I want you to enjoy me." His lips touched the side of her jaw, feathering kisses along her neck.

She gulped. "And the second time?"

"The second time, I plan to tie you to the bed and fuck that sweet pussy until you beg me to let you come. I've never tied a woman to my bed but always fantasized about it. I'm gonna fulfill that particular fantasy with you." He stopped kissing her neck and looked at her. "Have you ever had an

orgasm, Emma?”

God, it was so much easier to have these erotic conversations via email where she could hide behind her screen. Talking to him face to face was too intimate, making her belly roll with waves of nervousness. “Of course I have, but not with a man. With my vibrator.” She felt her cheeks blush harder. “God, why did I just blurt that out? Why didn’t I just lie?”

His hands hovered at the top of her ass. “Why would you want to lie to me again? It doesn’t seem to fit your personality.”

She sighed. “Because you’re larger than life and I’m, well, I’m just a plain woman on a farm. There’s no way I could possibly hold your attention.”

His eyes flared with anger, the deep blue growing darker.

“What?” she asked nervously.

“Thought I warned you about putting yourself down? Guess I have to drive that particular point home.”

He took her by the hand and walked over to a kitchen chair, pulling it from under the table and sitting. Before she guessed what he meant to do, Finn pulled Emma over his knees with little effort.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing, Finn? Let me go.” Her temper quickly heated with indignation. How dare he?

When his hand landed across her ass, the sting was like a flash fire and quickly followed by another slap. Emma knew she should be pissed at him for manhandling her, but the pressure building deep inside her womb had her gasping for breath and riding a wave of unbelievable desire to be fucked. He wasn’t spanking her to hurt her. No, he was spanking her to arouse her. Sneaky bastard!

As the spanking continued, her hands automatically moved to cover her poor behind, but

Finn was too quick and caught her wrists in his hand. Removing the bandana from her hair, Finn quickly but gently bound her hands behind her back with the red cloth and returned his attention to her bottom. This time the spanking was more intense, not because he hit her harder but because she was bound and at his mercy, unable to defend herself. The loss of control overwhelmed her at first, until she realized she was completely safe in his arms. He wasn't there to hurt her and, while the spanking warmed her butt, it was soon her pussy that kept her attention. The smooth flesh between her legs throbbed as it swelled with the need for release. Wiggling to avoid the spanks ground her hips into his thighs, giving her clit the pressure it wanted.

"I like you tied like this, Emma, baby. It makes you squirm so adorably."

It took her a moment to realize the spanking had ended and his hand was caressing her hot bottom through her jeans. Emma ceased her movements. To her amazement, her legs parted automatically, offering him access to her cunt.

"That's it, baby. Open those lovely legs for me," he said, pushing them further apart as she tried to catch her breath, the ache in her pussy pulsed with its own heartbeat.

"Oh, God, Finn. Make me come. I need to come. Please."

Long strokes caressed her ass and inner thighs. "Oh, I don't know. You've been such a naughty girl, lying to me in those emails then putting yourself down as if you weren't worthy of my attention. Maybe I should take you to your bedroom, tie you across the bed and give you a little whipping with my belt. Think you deserve that?"

"Yes. I mean no. Please. I just want to come." If Finn kept talking to her like that, she'd explode without his touch.

Caressing her ass with that large hand, his fingers dipped between her legs every now and then to stroke against her pussy, leaving her wetter and hotter than before. "Maybe you don't deserve to come. Maybe that'll be your punishment. Keep this pussy nice and hot, keep it aching for release."

She cried out when his firm fingers drummed over her clit, pressing the material of her jeans into the hard nub. Sharp spasms pulsed through her cunt to her womb, but release wasn't given to her.

"Finn! Now! Please!"

"Before I allow you to come, you must tell me what you think of yourself, Emma."

Damn tricky bastard! She couldn't form a complete sentence and Mr. Macho Military Man wanted her to talk about herself. Oh, double shit.

"I'm pretty," Emma panted between words.

"Ah. I need more than that. Wish you could feel the heat coming from this sweet pussy. I can feel it right through your jeans. Mmmm."

"I'm very pretty," she screamed, needing to orgasm soon or die waiting.

A sharp slap on her ass caused her to yelp. "Emma, you're testing my patience. Tell me in detail what you think of yourself or I'm keeping you tied and blistering your ass."

She collected her thoughts, moaned, and spoke desperately. "I'm a beautiful woman. I'm sexy and fun. Smart. Special. And you're damn lucky to be with me. Now make me come!"

Finn laughed, a deep hearty sound. "Now that's what I wanted to hear."

As promised, his fingers manipulated her clit, pressing hard circles through the material of her jeans. He gave her no mercy as he applied more and more pressure to her pulsing nub, moving faster and faster until she bucked against his touch, eager for release.

“Oh, God! Yes! Oh, yes, Finn. Don’t stop. Please don’t stop.”

“Never, baby. Come for me. Emma, I want to feel you come.” His thumb pressed hard against her clit, the throbbing in her cunt exploded in a burst of fireworks, blinding her, deafening her, completely shaking her as she rode wave after wave of the longest orgasm of her life. Not wanting it to end, she pressed back against his hand as it gently stroked her between her legs. Her hands still bound behind her back, she fought against the binds, needing to touch him, to hold him close.

Chapter Three

When Emma caught her breath and was upright again, she found herself sitting on Finn's lap, his arm securely holding her against him.

She was embarrassed about getting off over a spanking, but thrilled just the same. She'd always wondered what a strong man's hand across her bottom would feel like. Now she knew. And she wasn't ashamed to want more.

"Now listen carefully, sweetheart. Put yourself down again and the next spanking will be on your bare bottom. I'm not shy. I'll tear your panties from you quicker than you can whisper sorry. Imagine yourself tied up and bent over a chair. I'll do it too."

She nodded. "Can you untie me?"

"No."

"No?" She watched him in bewilderment. "Untie me now."

"Temper, temper. Nothing turns me on faster than a feisty woman."

"If you don't untie me, I'll show you just how feisty I can get, Finn." She practically growled.

He laughed, a solid, throaty sound. "Maybe I should've told you up front that threats don't bother me. I look at them like a challenge. And I do love a good challenge."

Damn, this was getting her nowhere. "So let me get this straight. You think you can just show up on my doorstep, after being out of touch with me for weeks—weeks, Finn!—and that you can waltz in here, spank me, seduce me, and I'm supposed to melt right into your arms?"

“Yeah, something like that.” His grin was devious.

“Aarrgghh! You’re impossible. And too smug for your own damn good.” Attempting to loosen the binds on her wrists was useless.

His smile softened as his gaze roamed her face. “Yeah, but you like me.”

Emma stopped wiggling. “Of course I do. You don’t need to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out.” She glared at him, doing her best to reign in her temper so he could explain his lack of communication. “Tell me why you stopped talking to me, Finn. Why?”

His sigh feathered across her neck, spreading goosebumps in its trail. “It wasn’t my choice to stop talking to you, Emma.”

“What the hell does that mean?” Her belly filled with fear of the unknown, her mind conjuring up all sorts of reasons. “Oh my God. Please tell me you’re not married.”

His laugh was hard. “Yes, as a matter of fact I am married.”

Her heart sank. *What the fuck?*

“But not like you’re thinking, Emma. I’m married to the military. I have to put my work above all else in my life, including playing.”

She hadn’t realized she’d been holding her breath, so when she let it out dizziness made her sway. His arms wrapped tighter around her waist as he continued to hold her on his lap.

Well, if that was meant to make her feel better, it sure as hell didn’t. Emma came second to his career. “So why didn’t you have a choice when you stopped emailing me?”

“A mission. I was on a mission. That’s the nature of my job, my responsibility to my nation, to my men.”

“So you couldn’t at least tell me that?” Her voice

raised a decibel.

“No, ma’am. The ops that my team and I get called out on can come in with only a few minutes’ warning. I need to use that time to get my gear, piss, and get out the door. Sorry. I know it sounds harsh to a civilian, but it’s actually very orderly and we save lives.”

“Well, you could’ve at least warned me that I may not hear from you without any notice. I have no idea what it is that you do in some foreign land. Would’ve been a good head’s up for me, Finn.”

He smiled. “Yes, ma’am. It would’ve. And I apologize. God, I’m so glad you’re the same feisty woman who took my ass to task with your stubbornness and willful opinions and debates. I don’t think I could’ve stood it if you had lied about that side of you. I really like that damn ornery side of yours, Emma.”

Her mouth opened in an O. “I’m ornery? You’ve got to be kidding me, Finn Coleman. You’re as ornery as they come. And arrogant. Stubborn. Pig headed.”

“Let me know when you’re done assessing me. Then I’ll make love to you.”

His words silenced Emma instantly. It was here. Oh God. Her pussy was swelling with excitement. Her nipples were so stiff she expected them to slice through the cotton T-shirt.

Finn kissed her neck, his hand cupping her breast. “Can I love you the way I’ve dreamed of for so many lonely nights?”

“Oh, Finn,” she whispered, craning her neck back to give him complete access.

“Tell me how bad you want my cock, baby.” The whispered demand was thrilling.

“Yes, I want it. Damn, Finn, I’ve wanted you inside me for so long.”

“Then let me fulfill your wish, Emma, baby.”

As soon as his mouth captured hers, a sharp rap on the door signaled the arrival of her book club ladies.

“Emma? We’re here,” a shrill voice said from the front porch.

Emma jolted away from Finn, who only smirked. “Expecting company?”

“Oh God. It’s my book club. Those ladies are all elderly. Quick untie me.”

“Nah. I like you tied up.”

Her heart pounded and her eyes widened. “Finn!” she said through clenched teeth.

He laughed, but untied her wrists. Once she was free, she jumped off his lap and straightened her clothes.

“Oh no. How do I explain you to them?”

He stood and took her hand. “Explain me? Just tell them I’m your lover come to ravish your hot body and make you tremble with orgasm after orgasm.”

“You’re so not helpful, you know.”

“Emma?” a lady called.

“Coming,” Emma replied, unable to free her hand from Finn’s grasp so he trotted behind her as she rushed through the parlor to let her guests in.

Oh the tongues of every gossip in town would be wagging for months. Emma was about to unwittingly give them enough to talk about for a long time thanks to Finn’s massive body standing beside her as she opened the door.

“Oh, Emma. You have a guest,” Mrs. Finbar announced, unable to hide the shock in her voice.

“A very handsome guest,” Mrs. Cloughton whispered.

“Ladies, this is my friend Finn Coleman. He’s stopped by for a visit while passing through town.”

Finn grasped her hand that he still held tightly. She didn’t know whether to take that gesture as a warning or as encouragement. But he really was just

passing through.

“Finn, this is Mrs. Finbar, Mrs. Cloughton, Mrs. Harrison, and Mrs. Bennett.”

“Ladies. The pleasure’s all mine, I assure you,” Finn said, acting as close to a perfect gentleman as she’d ever seen.

“I wish I had a friend like that,” Mrs. Bennett commented.

“Finn, tell us if you will, where did you meet our sweet Emma? I mean, you’re not from around here,” Mrs. Harrison asked.

Emma froze. She’d kill him on the spot if he told them the truth. No military training would save him. God, when had she become such a fan of lying? That was something to ponder later. Right now, she had to pray hard that Finn used more finesse with these ladies than he had with her.

“Now, ma’am. Are you trying to make me blush?” Finn asked sheepishly. The ladies sucked in their breath.

Emma decided that death would be too easy for him. She’d torture him first!

“Actually, I don’t like to soil the reputation of a sweet lady, but I believe in being honest.” Finn shot her a smug look before turning his attention back to the four sets of wide eyes eagerly watching him. “And Emma is far from sweet.”

A collective gasp filled the room while Emma concentrated on squeezing Finn’s hand, warning him that he was being suicidal. But, of course, Mr. Macho Military Man ignored her. He probably didn’t even feel her squeezing his hard hand.

“Emma has me so intoxicated by her beauty and wisdom that I had to travel halfway around the world just to see her. She began as my pen pal, but has become so much more as a friend.”

Emma breathed once again. Okay, she could live with that. Wasn’t he just adorable when he was

civil?

“Do you ladies read erotic romance like Emma? Is that what the book club is about?”

Emma wanted to kick him. If she could find her voice, she'd shut him up but it was useless. She didn't even know how to salvage the conversation. And to top it all off, her bottom tingled from the spanking. She was thankful the ladies hadn't walked in on that or Finn rubbing her pussy. Suddenly, Emma's normally boring life didn't seem so bad.

“Well, no, we haven't,” Mrs. Cloughton answered carefully. “But maybe we should consider one. I hear they are a bit spicy. Honestly, I am getting tired what we've been reading. They've been mysteries and biographies.”

“I'm sure Emma can suggest a good erotic romance to start the group with,” Finn offered. “I must excuse myself to take a shower and leave you ladies to your business.” Finn bent to kiss Emma's cheek and walked out the front door.

“Is he going to shower outside?” Mrs. Finbar asked excitedly and moved to the window.

“No, of course not,” Emma said, but also wondered where he'd disappeared to.

“Wow, Emma. No wonder you wouldn't let anyone set you up with a young man. You have such a handsome one already.” That was Mrs. Cloughton's sneaky way of getting information without asking for it. Emma was smarter though. She'd been around these ladies her entire life and knew they would use any angle to secure juicy gossip.

Emma felt her cheeks redden as she squirmed under the multitude of questions as the ladies talked over each other, each wanting different personal information on Emma's relationship with Finn.

“I'm afraid I have to cancel the book club meeting because I didn't read the book. I'm so sorry.

I should've called you before you made the long trip out here."

"Oh, it wasn't a waste at all. Not everyday we see such a handsome man."

"With a man like Finn around, I wouldn't read either," Mrs. Harrison added. Laughter erupted from the four older women. Emma rolled her eyes.

Finn walked back into the house holding his duffel bag. "Now, ladies, I can personally vouch that Emma reads a lot of books and has a great memory on a variety of subjects."

His killer smile didn't stop her from shooting daggers at him.

"Excuse me. I'll be in the shower," Finn announced and winked at Emma before strutting from the room as each woman eyed his fine ass.

The gossip was sure to be all over the town within minutes of the women leaving.

"Emma, we'll leave and let you get back to your guest," Mrs. Finbar said, already walking to the door. No doubt they would step on each other to be the first to share the news about Emma's sexy houseguest.

"You're welcome to stay awhile. There's no rush to leave. I'm sure Finn will want to take a nap after his shower." As soon as Emma took a seat at the dining room table her bottom protested and reminded her of how Finn's hands had first spanked her and then brought her the best pleasure she'd ever felt. If she blushed now, the ladies would never let her live it down.

"Wearing him out are you, dear?" Mrs. Harrison asked.

"Now some things are better meant to be kept private. Let's get going. Emma, we'll talk soon," Mrs. Harrison ushered the other ladies out the door and they hurried to the car before disappearing up the road.

Finn was dead meat for feeding their wagging tongues.

Twenty minutes later, Finn walked back into the living room, his short hair damp. He was dressed in a pair of blue jeans and white T-shirt. Emma admired the way the fabric clung to his skin and outlined his muscles. Soon, she planned to run her tongue and teeth along his hard physique.

“Did the book club ladies leave?”

Emma remained seated on the couch, a magazine opened on her lap. But she hadn’t read one word. “Yes. But not soon enough. Thanks to you, the gossip mill will be working overtime.”

With his arms folded, he stared down at her, focusing on her face. “Hey, that’s what keeps small towns going. I think it’ll do you some good to be the center of hot rumors.”

Now he had her attention. “Oh yeah? How so?”

When he shrugged, the T-shirt tightened across his chest, her fingers itched to touch him. “It’ll give you something more than sitting in the house emailing me. I can’t believe how stupid the men are in this town. They’re letting a gorgeous woman like you remain single. Not that I’m complaining because it’s good for me.”

She was beginning to believe that he really did think she was gorgeous. No man ever undressed her with his eyes like he had done since his surprise arrival. “They’re not stupid, just non-existent. Most men my age have moved away in search of better careers and more action.”

“I’m thinking there’s plenty of action right here, baby, now that we’re alone. Hope your door has a lock because I’m so horny I don’t really care who walks in on us this time.”

The lust in his eyes turned her on as much as his toned body. “Then you don’t have to worry because I never get visitors unless planned way

ahead. You happen to be the only man to show up on my doorstep with or without an invitation.”

He stepped closer and pulled her up to stand in front of him. “That’s because I’m very smart. I know a damn good thing when I see it. Do you know how hard my cock was when I was in your shower surrounded by your frilly soaps and your scent?”

Emma’s cheeks warmed and her belly tightened. “How hard?”

His thumb skimmed across her parted lips. “I enjoy seeing your good girl side war with your naughty girl side. I really look forward to seeing the naughty side win. I know it will.”

This was her chance to participate in her fantasy. Could she seduce him? “You didn’t answer my question, Finn. Tell me how hard your cock was while you showered.”

A growl escaped his throat before his lips clamped down on hers. She really had the power to seduce her real-life hero. His kiss was rough and delicious, everything she’d expect from a man who was such a hard-ass. But he didn’t fool her. Their first kiss revealed a new side of Finn Coleman—a nicer, softer side—that she was sure he’d never purposely show. But now that she’d caught a glimpse of it, she’d be damn sure to expose more of it.

Without breaking the kiss, Finn pressed her hand over the bulge in his jeans. The outline of his cock was obvious as she let her fingers run along the smooth fabric.

“Emma, you’re killing me,” Finn exclaimed, pulling away but staying nose to nose with her. His warm breath rasped against her open mouth.

“Ditto.”

“I never thought innocence would be such a turn on, but in you it is.”

Her chest heaved as she tried to catch her

breath. "I told you I'm not innocent. I've fucked a man before."

His knuckles brushed lightly over her cheek, the roughness noticeable against her soft skin. "Just a man, Emma? Only one man? See what I mean? Innocent."

Refusing to be embarrassed by her lack of a sex life, she held her chin up and looked him in the eyes. "Doesn't mean anything. Just means there's not a whole hell of a lot of opportunity around these parts for a girl to have numerous sexual partners. And I'll have you know that the sex was good while it lasted."

"No need to get defensive, Emma. I love your innocent nature but I'm not a patient man. So, while you're the type of woman that deserves to be wine and dine, well, babe, I just can't do that."

"Did I ask you to do that?"

He smiled that devastating smile that warmed the creases of his face. "Nope. But I'm being honest. I want to fuck you, Emma. I know what lies beneath your innocence—a vivid and wild erotic imagination. I want to experience all of you."

Ah, then let the seduction begin. "You know for a man of few words, you're awful talkative when you should be fucking me. Just like you dreamed. Just like I dreamed. Time's a wasting, tough guy."

Finn growled. "Damn, I love how you think."

Her fingers danced across his chest. "Ah, so refreshing, a man who loves brains."

"Nah. I love your tits more," he said, laughed and slid his arm under her knees, easily lifting her. When he held her close to his chest, her arms automatically circled his neck.

"So poetic," she teased and laughed, enjoying his strength as he lifted her without flinching, easily holding her like she weighed no more than a feather.

"Which way?" His demand was stern, desperate.

“Up the stairs.” When she realized the moment had come to be intimate with Finn, her voice grew breathless. “Second door on the right.” Her mind swirled. Her pussy already throbbed in anticipation of his touch.

Taking the stairs two at a time, Finn reached Emma’s bedroom in record time. Walking into the large room, he stood before her, holding her steady.

“Emma, if you have any thoughts of saying no, then say it now. This is your only chance. Once I see you naked, I don’t think I’ll have the ability to not touch you.”

“Then it’s a good thing I want you to fuck me.” She skimmed her fingertips over his freshly-shaven cheek, keeping her touch light. “Take me away, Finn. Take me into my fantasies. I want to live them with you.”

Without a word, his hands moved up her sides, taking her shirt with them. She totally expected him to shred her clothes from her body, to bury his cock deep inside her with one long thrust. Was she disappointed that he didn’t? As exquisite as his slow moves felt, she was dying a slow death waiting to feel him slip his cock into the wetness of her pussy.

She watched his face, the concentration of his movements, like he was mastering a plan. Absorbed in the moment, the usual chill in the air for a spring evening wasn’t noticeable to her heated flesh. She’d even forgotten to turn on the furnace. With Finn this close, she didn’t need any other heat source, the warmth from his body was sufficiently keeping her comfortable.

His head bent to lay hard kisses on her shoulder, up her neck to her earlobe. Who knew that was so damn erotic? Her knees weakened with each stroke of his lips against her sensitive skin. As she leaned into his embrace, he easily held her body, keeping her from melting into the floor. Never would

she have believed that could happen except in romance novels, if she didn't feel it for herself now, if she didn't feel the complete loss of control over her senses, as Finn took her under his spell.

His hand cupped her breasts, those long fingers toying with her nipple through the bra's pink lace. Arching her back, she pressed against his touch, the sheer magnitude of pleasure hitting her. Finn Coleman was in her bedroom and ready to fuck her. Her breathing hitched, nerves exploded as panic set in. What if he didn't think she was any good in bed? What if their fuck session didn't live up to their fantasies? Did that mean the end of their friendship too? How could they continue their erotic chats via email if the real thing fizzled?

Emma abandoned her thoughts when his large hand slid beneath her jeans to skim the top of her mound. She couldn't help squirm as heat built so deep inside her pussy that she expected flames to shoot from her body. When she glanced at him, he was watching her, smiling, his eyes dancing with amusement.

"You like to see me squirm?" she scolded.

"Not at all, baby. I just really enjoy watching you fight your arousal when what you really want is to wrap those gorgeous legs around my hips and let me drill my cock deep inside you."

"Mmmm. Stop talking and do it."

Removing his hand from inside her jeans, Finn quickly worked on undoing them before using his free hand to tug the jeans free from her body.

Standing before her cyber lover, Emma felt exposed even though she still wore her pink bra and matching bikini panties.

"How fucking beautiful you are, Emma. I'm gonna enjoy every inch of you."

Tugging her bra strap over her shoulder, Finn freed her breast. Wasting no time, his mouth covered

the hard nipple and sucked with an urgent need. Emma shrieked, throwing her head back. The bite of pain was exquisite. Her pussy agreed as it spasmed and begged for his touch.

He lifted her without regard for chivalry, laying her on the bed, his movements rushed and urgent. Stretched out before Finn, Emma lay watching as his rough hand caressed her skin and trailed a path from her neck over her breast to stop at her hip.

His eyes met hers. "Don't move. I need to get my bag from the bathroom. Don't move, Emma."

Without another word, Finn disappeared through the door to return holding a blue duffle bag. Emma was where he'd left her, nervously anticipating their loving. It'd been years since she'd been with a man, and then it had only been the one.

Finn kicked the door shut behind him and pulled off his T-shirt to reveal a chest ripped with tanned muscles. God, he made her mouth water just looking at him.

"What's the bag for?" she asked, thrilled to be the center of his attention.

"I brought you some toys. Still trust me, Emma?"

"Of course."

"Good, because I'm going to tie you to this bed and fuck you like crazy."

God, yes, please. "Oh? What happened to making love the first time? You know, the gentle part," she teased.

"To hell with gentle. I won't hurt you, but I can't wait any longer to see you tied up. Baby, you're gonna come so hard you'll forget your name."

"As long as I don't forget yours," she whispered, holding her arms up for him to move into.

He leaned over her, kissing her lips hard. "I plan on making sure you never forget my name, darling. We're going to make lots of hot memories so we

never forget.”

“I want you back in my arms and in my bed, Finn.” Ignoring her protests, Finn moved away from the bed.

“I’ll be in your bed, darling. But your arms are going to be bound, just the way I fantasized.” He removed two items from the bag.

“What are those? They look weird.”

He laughed and glanced at her before returning his attention back to the task. “They’re restraints. Don’t worry. They won’t hurt. I’d never do anything to hurt you, Emma. Always remember that.”

“Of course I know that.” She swallowed hard, her bravery quickly deserting her.

“Kinky sex can be lots of fun. I want it to be so enjoyable for you. And of course, for me too.”

There was that killer smile again, the one that mesmerized her. No wonder her senses were screwed up. He was thrilling and invigorating like no one she’d ever met before.

“Okay, baby?” he asked, when Emma hesitated to answer, too interested in watching him adjust the long black straps with a metal lock attached to the end of each strap.

“I believe it’ll be fun, well, at least different. But if you’ve never tied a woman up before, then how do you know what to do?”

His grin came easily. “Long, lonely nights in the military watching porn. I think I learned a thing or two. We’ll soon find out.”

He efficiently fastened a strap to each corner post of the bed as she watched. His musky after-shave teased her nose when he leaned over her. Without thinking, Emma’s hands caressed his back and ribs, enjoying the tight muscled skin, the hard flesh.

“Can’t keep your hands off me, huh, babe?” Finn’s words may have sounded cocky, but the tone

didn't reach his gorgeous blue eyes as they danced with amusement.

"Considering you're preparing to tie me up, I have to get my fill while I can. I happen to enjoy touching your hard body," Emma admitted, her voice soft and husky. Her fingers dug into his flesh wanting to hold him close to her as long as possible. Breathing deeply, she committed his scent to memory, hoping the aroma would linger in her bedroom, so that when she slept she could smell him all around her.

A low growl escaped his throat as his movements quickened and worked steadily to finish with the restraints. "You are such a naughty girl."

"Mmmm. Does this mean I'm to be punished?" She couldn't believe she was actually talking like this to a man who was practically a stranger to her and now in her bedroom preparing her bed for kinky sex. It was too surreal for her brain to compute, so she allowed herself to just enjoy the moment.

"Oh hell yeah. I'm going to punish you exquisitely, starting with your pussy. I've been kept up for hours at night just thinking of how hot your bare pussy would be when I fucked you with my thick cock."

Emma had learned to talk provocatively by reading hundreds of erotic novels, romances deemed too hot to advertise without warnings of their explicit nature. Most were nicknamed 'not your grandmother's romance book.' But how had Finn learned to talk so damn sexy. He certainly didn't look like a man who'd take the time to read a romance novel, especially with his sex drive. He'd probably jerk off after each chapter.

"Show me your cock, Finn. You're just teasing me. I want to feel you inside me. Now." Her bottom wiggled for emphasis. Christ, would he just fuck her before her pussy swelled any more?

“Baby, the teasing has just begun. Consider this payback for all those nights you got me hard and left me to jerk off on my own.”

“Well, I could hardly help you. I was half-way around the world.” Why was she defending herself when they should be fucking?

“Oh hell yes! You could’ve helped me out each time if you weren’t so damn stubborn and refused to get on a web cam. We could’ve have cyber sex these past few months instead of me relying on my damn imagination, picturing what your sexy ass looked like.”

“Cyber sex? Now that’d be a real first for me. Have you done that?”

“Nope. But wanted to badly with you. And don’t think you’re not spanked for refusing to send me a picture. But I’ll take care of that later.”

The simple promise of a spanking should’ve scared her coming from such a huge man, especially since she had first-hand knowledge of how his hand felt on her bottom. But the thrill that shot through her body to her pussy caused her slick folds to vibrate.

“Well, I’m here now and you’re taking too long to fuck me. Do you want me to beg?”

“Yes.”

“Finn!”

He laughed. “One thing, baby. If you want me to stop at any point, you say stop and I’ll untie you. But if you trust me, then I promise you’ll enjoy yourself. I won’t hurt you, Emma. All I’ve thought about since our email conversations began was bringing you pleasure. Be sure you trust me, Emma. I need you to believe that I won’t hurt you.”

Emma watched with growing curiosity as her fantasies unfolded around her. “I totally trust you or you wouldn’t have gotten this far. You know, for someone who claims to never have tied up a woman

before, Finn, you seem pretty capable of fixing those to the bed.”

“I’m a Navy SEAL, remember? My training covers a wide range of talents.” His wicked grin said he meant more than military talents.

His arm encircled her back, unclasping her bra, and brushing it from her shoulders to free her breasts. “Beautiful,” he declared before taking a hard nipple into his mouth.

His tongue lapped over the mound of her breast, his teeth biting gently at the nipple. The borderline between pain and pleasure was a new feeling for Emma as she cherished every flick of his tongue and scrape of his teeth. Her hands cupped the back of his head, keeping his mouth on her breast. With his short hair, it was impossible to grab a fistful like she would’ve preferred. Then he wouldn’t be able to pull away until she let him.

After giving the other breast the same consideration, Finn leaned down and slid her panties over her legs, effectively baring her for his perusal. “You’re so fucking beautiful, Emma. Do you know how hard I am for you right now? Do you even have a clue as to the effect you have on me?”

She smiled a clearly feline grin. “Remove those pants, tough guy, and show me how hard you are. I want to see all you’ve been bragging about.”

His long fingers encircled one of her wrists. “As soon as I get you presentable.”

Attaching the restraint, he arranged her arm to stretch over her head. His fingers moved quickly, fastening the cord through the metal lock. When it was secured, he moved to her other arm and then her legs, performing the same task until she lay spread-eagle on her back and at his mercy. Her cheeks flamed at being so exposed, while his intense stare concentrated on her most intimate areas.

Standing at the end of the bed, Finn stripped off

his clothes, his huge erection saluting her once it was freed from the constraints of his jeans. The thick length of him was something Emma believed to only exist in romance books. God, was she grateful his cock was real and soon to be inside her. He leaned his long, hard body over hers, advancing on her like a tiger stalking prey. Why it made her feel sexy and wicked, she didn't know. But the look in his eyes, the dark blue heat, warned that he could eat her alive. Her heart pounded as she did her best to keep breathing, the anticipation of being bound and fucked without control of the rhythm or pace was killing her.

"You're more beautiful than I imagined, Emma." The strangled sound of his voice left her wanting his touch, ready to beg for it.

"Please, Finn. I can't wait. Fuck me!"

Finn ignored her pleas as his tongue flicked over the tender skin on the side of her neck, leaving wet kisses as he moved down her body, stopping to take a hard nipple into his mouth. Emma moaned as his teeth bit gently over it. God, how she loved that! His hands moved over her breasts to her stomach, the rough pads of his fingertips grazed her tingling skin, the attention delightful. As he inched down her thighs to rest his head over her throbbing mound, awareness finally hit her.

Emma panicked and struggled against the binds. "Oh, Finn. Please not that." No man had ever placed his mouth on her pussy. She'd read about it so many times, even teased Finn about how she wanted him to lick her pussy, but now with his breath on her exposed bare lips, she lost her courage.

His eyes stared up at her, a hardness in his expression that should've been scary if she didn't feel completely safe with him. "Careful, Emma. Your pleas sound like you may be thinking you're not worthy, not pretty, or desirable enough for me to eat

your pussy. If that's true, I'll turn you over and paddle your bare bottom for putting yourself down again." He watched her for a moment as she stared at him before he spoke again, his southern drawl thick with desire. "Is it true?"

"No. It's just that, well, I've never had a man kiss me there before." She was blushing, but she had no way to hide her face, so she met his gaze with as much pride as she could muster.

He crawled back up her body, a smile lighting his face. His lips kissed hers gently, resting for a moment before pulling away. Staring into her eyes, he spoke softly. "I'm glad no other man's lips have been on your sweet pussy. I've wanted to taste you for so long. Let me taste you, baby. Let me."

Her breath caught in her throat with the need hidden deep in his voice. She couldn't make a sound so she nodded, giving him the permission he sought.

With controlled, silent movements, Finn edged back down her body and rested his head between her legs. Those large, powerful hands gripped her buttocks, raising her bottom closer to his face. Kissing her inner thighs, his warm breath tickled her skin, lighting a fire deep in her belly. His fingers crossed over the milky white of her upper legs to spread her pussy open, the intimate touch thrilling her beyond reality. When his tongue licked her moist folds, she thought she'd died and gone to heaven. Never had a man given her such attention, such pleasure. Closing her eyes and enjoying the building tension in her womb, she gave herself over to Finn's expert pussy licking.

"You taste so fucking sweet, Emma, just like I imagined. Just like the sweetest candy."

His tongue licked her folds thoroughly, up and down in long languid strokes, while his fingers held her open to his exploration. He drew her clit into his mouth, sucking on it hard, driving her wild with

need. She fought against her binds, twisting her body relentlessly with no luck of attaining freedom.

Breathless, she gasped her words. “Finn...fuck me...please...this is too much. I...can’t stand...it.”

“You want me to fuck you, baby?” he asked, stopping his feast long enough to pose the question, before his fingers dove into her cunt, slowly at first, building speed until each stroke caressed her vaginal walls and the pressure in her womb forced to build relentlessly.

“Yes!”

“Far be it from me to disappoint a lady. Just how should I fuck you, huh? I think I know a very good way.”

She was quickly becoming unglued, wanting the orgasm that was so close yet so far out of reach because Finn controlled whether she came, when she came, and how hard she’d come. Wishing she could gnaw her cuffs off, Emma concentrated on the mini-explosions rippling through her cunt—it had lacked a man’s touch for too long. How had she gone without sex for this long? Then again, sex had *never* been this good with that one man. Not even her best fantasies or dreams lived up to the real thing with Finn.

With his thumbs, Finn held her pussy lips apart, his rough fingers blazing on the bare flesh, and positioned his head low to shove his tongue into her pussy, lighting her channel with molten hot tremors.

“Oh....my....God....Finn...” she gasped, shaking her head back and forth, tugging on the binds so effectively holding her in place.

He tongue fucked her swollen pussy with the tactical maneuvers of a man on a mission. In and out, hard and fast, strong and determined. Emma swirled into a cloud of pleasure as the orgasm wracked her body, jolting her arms and legs against the restraints, her shoulders lifting from the bed,

and her hair flying wildly around her face as she screamed.

“Finn! Yes, Finn! Finn! Finn!”

Why was Finn making that crinkling noise when all she wanted was to feel his cock deep inside her? What the hell was he ripping? And why was he stalling when she was lying here waiting to be taken?

Before she could regain a thought, Finn buried his cock deep inside her in one long, hard thrust. She cried out as the width of him stretched her vaginal muscles, the feeling too good to think of anything else. Her breaths were long and harsh, honing in on deep breathing techniques to calm her. Accommodating the size of his cock was challenging when all she was used to was dildos, but the tightness of her pussy soon gave way to a suppleness that allowed his cock to move freely within her. Feeling his length slip into her was breathtaking and her legs widened to allow him the access he needed to ride her hard and fast. The sound of his cock burrowing into the silky fluid of her pussy filled the room with a slurping sound so erotic it thrilled her to know it came from the connection their bodies made. Her body awakened from head to toe, every inch of her skin wanting to feel his touch, his power. Every inch of her cunt flexed as if to draw his cock inside her, deeper, deeper, deeper.

Embedded to the hilt in her pulsing core, Finn eased back all the way and slammed into her again. Finally! No more fantasy. Just a reality so hot and pleasurable, Emma welcomed every movement he made as his body claimed hers. He fucked her over and over with a steely concentration that built another orgasm on the heels of the last one. Never had Emma exploded more than once in a day, and never right after such a potent orgasm. But the orgasm's greedy tremors sought out every cell of her

vagina until her muscles trembled deep inside her pussy. The dance began slow, building to a rhythmic drumming and shaking her to her bones.

Finn straightened, thrust deep inside her, and growled as he shot off his hot seed. Every muscle and fold of her cunt clenched, tightening without mercy, and detonated with an explosion strong enough to register on the Richter scale.

With her limbs still securely held by her binds, Emma melted into the bed, Finn's muscular, long body covering hers as he gasped for air. Emma couldn't believe how horny the loss of control made her, as the reminder of her restraints had her pussy heating up again for Finn's cock. Never had she come so hard, even with her trusty vibrator—the Orgasminator.

Then her eyes flew open in a panic. "Finn. Oh shit, Finn! What have we done?"

Finn lifted his head to stare at her with dangerous blue eyes. "God, if you tell me you regret making love to me, Emma, I'm seriously going to paddle your bottom until you can't sit down for a fucking month. Just try me, darlin'."

Her eyes widened with despair. "No. No that's not it. Don't be foolish. I enjoyed every minute but, damn it, I'm not protected. I'm not on the pill. I'm not sexually active so there was never a need. Oh, shit, Finn! What are we going to do?" She closed her eyes and slowly breathed deep to ward off an anxiety attack that she hadn't experienced since she was a teenager.

His smile came easily, the gesture comforting and genuine. "Relax, baby. I wrapped it. Had condoms in the bag. The restraints weren't the only thing I needed."

As proof, he stood to show off his condom-covered erection. She watched with relief as he cleaned himself up.

“Oh, thank God, one of us was thinking clearly.”

He laughed. “I don’t know how clearly I was thinking since you had me so fucking wild and horny, but I would never burden a woman with an unwanted pregnancy. I like to think I’m more responsible than that.”

“Good to know.” Flexing her arms, the leather binds held her tight. “Can you let me out of these things now, Finn?”

“Are you uncomfortable?”

“No, but since we’re done, I’d like to be let go.”

“Who said we’re done?” he asked with a mischievous grin.

Her jaw dropped. “You want to do that again?”

He crawled back over her, bracing his weight off of her by placing his arms on both sides of her ribs. “Honey, I want to do that over and over and over again.” His lips kissed hers possessively, re-igniting the fire in her pussy. “But, I want a change of position.”

His hand slid up and removed a restraint from one arm then one leg. He refastened her freed limbs with their counterparts so that she lay on her side, her arms and legs tied to one side of the bed. Finn crawled behind her, his rough hands caressing her breasts. His fingers caught a nipple and pinched it, sending a lightning streak to her womb. Her pussy awakened completely, needing attention for the growing desire flowing through her. Emma closed her eyes and imagined what it’d be like to lay in Finn’s arms forever without having to worry about leaving the bed.

Her honey-suckle scent swirled around him as he whispered to her. “Tell me what you want, Emma, baby.”

She craned her neck back to look in his eyes. “Oh, Finn. I can’t believe I can need you again, so

quickly. But why tie me up? I mean, do you really like it that much?"

Wasn't she the sweetest creature he'd ever laid eyes on? "Do you enjoy being tied? Did it make the sex more intense for you?"

"Well, considering I've never had an orgasm during sex before, I'd say yes it was very intense. I loved it all."

Did he just hear her right? "You mean to tell me no man has made you come?"

Her cheeks brightened to a light shade of pink. "No."

"Shit. Have you ever even had an orgasm before today?"

"Of course I have. That's something I didn't lie about. My vibrator gives an awesome orgasm, but nothing compared to what you just did to me."

He smiled. "All I did was help you put aside your inhibitions and enjoy the pleasure your amazing body has to offer. But you didn't answer my question. Do you like being tied up and at my total mercy?"

The pink deepened to a rosy stain on her cheeks. Just when he didn't think she could look any more adorable, her innocence shone through like a lighthouse beacon.

"It was definitely a different experience than I expected. I thought it would just be awkward, not being able to move around as I wished. Relying on you for my comfort and satisfaction only heightened my pleasure."

Kissing her cheek gently, he tightened his arm around her belly, holding her to him. "That was my goal. I want you at my mercy, Emma, so I can show you how damn horny you've made me these past months. I want to pleasure you in every way your body has ever desired and deserved."

"Ah, so it's safe to say you enjoy tying me up as

much as I enjoy you doing it.”

His hands stroked over her flat belly, the skin soft and smooth. “I do. Like I said, you’re the first woman I’ve played bondage games with. Thanks to your suggestive emails, I can’t get the idea out of my head. There’s something about you, maybe it’s your underlying innocence and willingness to try new things, that brings out my deepest sexual fantasies.”

“I do that?” She all but purred her words, his gut tightening painfully in response. “Wow, and here I thought all I was doing was reaching out to a lonely military man.”

He took a steadying breath, his emotions for this lovely woman too raw to allow to the surface. “You did so much more than just email me. You reached me, Emma. Your friendship means the world to me. The sexual tone of your emails gave me something to look forward to. Tying you down to the bed like this, well, I admit I like the power.”

“Power?” she asked, her body relaxing against his.

“The power is fucking amazing, a natural kind of high I’ve only felt during combat missions.”

She craned her neck again to make eye contact, the brown circles enthralling him with their brilliance. “Oh, wow. Sounds pretty intense then.”

“Very much. Knowing you trust me enough not to hurt you, but to bring you the greatest pleasure I can. That you’re willing to fulfill my need to feel that power, my need to dominate you and have you at my mercy. And the thing I enjoy most is to look into your eyes and see the vulnerability there, to see your innocence awaken to new found desires, to know I had something to do about that.”

Emma blew out a long shaky breath before speaking, her voice like an angel’s, tender and musical. “I was afraid to admit how much emailing you meant to me, how much a part of my life a man

I'd never met had become. I kept thinking, worrying, that some day I'd never hear from you again. Maybe you'd get bored and stop writing, maybe you'd be deployed and not have email access, or maybe, well, maybe you'd be killed. I was so frightened about that."

The genuine concern he saw in her eyes pulled fiercely at his heart, and his emotions were on a roller coaster ride that he didn't know how to control. But he knew how to give her pleasure and that's what he was here to do. Tomorrow could wait. Right now he was exactly where he wanted to be. In Emma's bed. Where he prayed time would stand still at least for a little bit.

"Ssshh. Let me take all those thoughts from your mind." His hand found her breast again and squeezed, pinching her nipple until it perked.

She was simply exquisite. And to think, he came here only to get laid and meet the woman who'd described her body as any man's wet dream. Instead, the innocent creature lying beside him piqued his interest so much that he found it hard to think or do anything else. She may have lied about what she looked like but he was glad. He preferred how she looked much more than her fake blond persona. He couldn't hold a grudge against Emma for the small white lies, since her emails had kept him focused on coming home safely. She made him feel wanted, needed. Jerking off to her emails was a hell of a lot better than using any porn magazine.

Finn had known instantly that the slender woman, standing a good eight inches shorter than his six-foot-three, with caramel eyes, long, thick, curly hair the color of cocoa and tied back in a ridiculous red bandana was his Emma.

Smiling, Finn moved his hand over Emma's bound body, enjoying the way she quivered under his touch, the way her breathing sped up, the way she

wiggled her bottom back toward him to keep him close. *Don't worry, baby. I'm not going anywhere yet.* While he'd planned on bedding her just for the night and then getting on a plane to Texas to visit Granddad before his next assignment, he'd have to reevaluate those travel plans after making love with Emma. Sweet Emma here in his arms. He sighed with complete satisfaction and lowered his lips to her creamy skin, trailing kisses up her arms and stopping where the restraints held her firmly in place. Oh, and he planned make her explode and implant this memory deep into her mind.

His fingers circled her wrist where the restraint covered her skin in an unbreakable hold. "These feel okay, Emma? I don't want you uncomfortable, just at my mercy."

She moaned, her head falling back against his shoulder. "I feel naughty lying like this, stretched out before you to see my entire body. No one, not even my doctor, has ever seen me so damn naked. Finn, how is it that you can get me to do things I'd never done before?"

"Aw, honey. I'm not getting you to do anything you don't want to do. Am I?"

"Uh-uh. Finn? Make love to me."

Her words should not have affected him so damn much, but they did. That desperate need deep within her voice, the soft sighs coming from her parted lips, lips that invited him to drink his fill. Far be it for him not to take what was offered, especially something as delicious as Emma.

With Emma still bound in place on her side, Finn maneuvered his long body over her. His lips closed over her mouth in a fierce possession, his tongue diving deep into that sweet heat. He sipped her warmth, her tongue matching his in ferocity as a moan escaped her throat. Finn moved his lips across her jaw, down the side of her neck, nipping and

biting gently as he went. His hands roamed the curves of her waist and hips, breasts and thighs, anywhere they could touch her.

“Finn! Please. I need you inside me. Don’t make me wait.”

“Bossy little thing,” he teased, his teeth scraping harder along the underside of her ear, causing a squeal of delight to erupt from Emma’s lips. “Who would’ve guessed with the innocence in your eyes?”

“I’m far from innocent, Finn, and you know it. Damn it. Fuck me, will you? Or untie me and I’ll get myself off.”

He landed a smack on her bare bottom and laughed when she yelped. “Nice try, baby, but you’ll remain bound to this bed until I’ve had my fill of you.” He smiled when she moaned and pushed her bottom back at him.

“This is so unfair. God, I want you, Finn. Why won’t you let me have you?”

“Well, since you put it that way, and you’re so fucking adorable writhing against these binds, I’ll fuck you until you scream my name. How’s that sound, darling?”

“Now, Finn,” she demanded, her cheeks flushed, her skin warm and glowing with a fine perspiration as she struggled to turn around onto her back, stopped only by the limits of the tethers and not by her determination.

Moving back, he stretched off the side of the bed to grab his duffel bag and the supply of condoms he’d been sure to pick up after arriving back in the States. With an expertise he’d perfected since those awkward days as a teenager, Finn had the condom covering his throbbing erection in no time.

His heartbeat sped up as he pushed his cock between Emma’s thighs to her waiting, drenched pussy. Her cunt muscles clasped his thickness in a vice-grip, ensuring he couldn’t pull back out. But

Finn had plans for Emma. Spooning her to him, her back against his chest, Finn gripped her hip, his fingers digging deep enough to leave an impression he'd be sure to apologize for later. Holding her firmly in place, he thrust deep inside her pulsing channel, burying the length of his cock to the hilt.

"Oh, baby, you feel so fucking good."

"Mmmm. Ditto," she whispered through rough breaths.

Never had Finn desired a woman like he did Emma. She wasn't the usual type of woman he took to his bed. Usually he fucked women with plenty of experience, women who had the ability to take a man's cock in every hole, fast and hard. Finn never felt any emotion for these women he'd fucked. Sex was just sex, a way to get his rocks off and relieve the ache in his balls. The woman he typically chose to bed just wanted sex, a quick fuck to scratch an itch, using his body as he did theirs, just for pleasure.

But Emma was so different, something he'd immediately sensed in her emails, something he immediately realized when she opened her door today. She was caring, sensual, and totally ignorant of her sexual power over him. She lacked the confidence of a woman who fucked often. He would enjoy teaching her to treasure her body and his, and the leather binds tying her to the bed now would help him. Losing her freedom of movement would give her the motivation to loosen up and allow herself to blossom into the sexual being that wrote the explicit erotic emails she'd sent him. Some of those damn emails made him so fucking hard that he'd almost come in his damn pants. Wouldn't that have been the talk of his troops?

"Finn! Yes, Finn. Don't stop. Don't you dare stop."

"Come for me, Emma. Come now. I want to hear

you scream my name, baby. Scream.”

He raised her leg up as much as the restraint allowed and pushed deep inside, his cock ramming into her pussy muscles like a jackhammer. The salty smell of sex filled the room coupled with the sound of skin slapping as he fucked them both closer to release. His arm and leg muscles trembled. Now it took every bit of his strength to control his muscles before they shattered into full-blown shudders. The feel of Emma’s tight pussy sliding over his throbbing cock was almost too much to handle.

“Finn! Finn! Finn! Finn!” Emma screamed out, her voice husky, thick with desire.

When her cunt tightened unmercifully around his cock, each thrust became a wonderful, torturous movement, pulling at him until he spilled his seed against the thin rubber of the condom. How he wished he could forget the latex sheath and feel the smoothness of her pussy against his cock. He was disease free since he’d always wrapped it before touching a woman, and Emma, well, there was no doubt she was clean. If she were on birth control, he would ask her how she felt about him going bareback. But since she wasn’t, he wasn’t about to take the chance of an unwanted pregnancy, even if the image of Emma’s belly swollen with his baby gave him thoughts he had no right to have. He wasn’t the settling down type and never would be. The military was his life, and he’d married her twenty years ago.

Finn released Emma’s body long enough to clean himself up. Once the condom was disposed of, he concentrated on removing the restraints. From the sleepy look in her eyes, he’d guess Emma was completely sated. He wouldn’t push her body any more tonight. She needed rest for what he had planned for the rest of the weekend.

“Come here, baby,” he said, lifting her in his

arms and walking into the bathroom.

After giving them both a quick shower, he toweled them off. Regretting the loss of the musky smell of their heated loving, Finn carried a heavy-eyed Emma back to her bed, her slender body limp in his arms. He tugged down the sheets to gently place her on the bed and, after shutting off the light, crawled in beside her. She snuggled onto his chest, her cheek resting against his breastbone. Finn held her possessively, his arm wrapped tightly around her as he drifted off to sleep.

A very welcome sleep.

Chapter Four

Bright sunshine filled Emma's bedroom, the rays teasing her eyes until she dared open them to see if she'd been dreaming about making love to Finn or if he really were here. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes, Emma propped herself up on her elbows and surveyed the room. No Finn in sight. Disappointment riddled her, but her body came to the rescue. The soreness between her legs could not have been done with just her vibrator, so that meant Finn was here and she hadn't been dreaming.

Jumping out of the bed, Emma donned the faded oversized T-shirt she used for sleep and walked to the door. Off to the side, on the floor beside the bed, sat Finn's duffel bag. A light blush heated her cheeks as she remembered the naughty articles he'd taken out of that bag. Now that she had shaken the remaining sleep from her head, she focused more clearly on last night's events.

Never had she slept in a man's arms before. Her one previous lover never stayed over at her house after sex and had never asked her to stay at his house. So afraid of local gossip, he had been unable to give her the type of loving relationship she'd always fantasized about during the long, lonely nights. She had always wondered what it would feel like to be held in masculine arms, to bury her nose in a man's neck inhaling his scent. Now, she wondered no more as she hugged her mid-section, the morning air brisk. Turning on the heat had never occurred to her last night after their shower. He had supplied her with enough body warmth to

heat the entire house.

Opening the bedroom door slowly, she stepped onto the cool hardwood floor in the hallway and quickly walked to the bathroom. Her morning breath would scare him off faster than he had already planned to leave. A small knot formed in her throat at the thought of Finn leaving, but she swallowed hard before brushing her teeth. No sense dwelling on the inevitable when she should be enjoying the moment. And damn wasn't it a good moment. She at least waited to giggle until she spat out the minty mouthwash.

Splashing water on her face helped wake her up, but also managed to wash away the kisses Finn had placed all over her face. After drying her skin, a quick look in the mirror showed that she was halfway presentable again.

Now came the hard part. Facing Finn after such hot, sweaty sex. What was she supposed to say to him? What were they suppose to talk about? Oh, damn, this could be very awkward, and she wasn't good at awkward situations. She stepped back into the hallway and slowly walked down the stairs, her ears straining for any sign of Finn.

Walking to the kitchen, Emma tried not to chastise herself for sleeping so late. So what if she had a million errands to run today? She'd fucked Finn Coleman. Nothing else really mattered right now as she basked in the glory of such wonderful lovemaking. She never knew she was so kinky. Hell, she never knew how much she could enjoy the rougher side of sex. As if to remind her of her sexual needs, Emma's pussy dampened to prove her constant state of arousal. Maybe she should've worn panties. And why hadn't she thought to do so? Finn Coleman, that's why. She didn't think wearing panties around him would happen often. In fact, wearing clothes around him probably would be rare

as well.

Smiling, she entered the kitchen to find Finn preparing breakfast, her cunt throbbed in awareness of the striking male figure standing at her stove making scrambled eggs and sipping coffee from her Mt. Washington souvenir mug. Too bad Finn couldn't take the time to go with her to New Hampshire's White Mountains and drive up Mt. Washington. With his love of rugged, wild terrain he'd absolutely love the breath-taking views atop the mountain. Since it was early spring the mountain wouldn't be open yet to the public.

Not sure if he'd feel awkward if she hugged him, Emma hung back at the counter and watched him. "Morning. Mmmm. I like a man who can cook."

Finn turned and offered a crooked smile, the look in his eyes restless. "Is that all you like in a man, Emma?"

"I think you know by now that I like a variety of talents in a man."

"I like how you think, baby."

The satisfaction on his expression reinforced her wanton behavior. She had his complete attention and loved it. But since she was famished, she'd hold off on any further teasing until she could reload on the food Finn prepared.

"That smells so good," she said, practically whimpering, ready to beg to eat as her stomach growled in needy protest.

"It does, huh? But you don't get any until you scoot that very fine ass of yours over here and give me a proper 'good morning' kiss."

Her smile came easily as she walked to him, stretched up on her toes and kissed him, her tongue searching his mouth, tasting the remnants of unsweetened coffee.

"Are you hungry, darling?" he asked, plating the eggs with buttered toast.

“Sure am, but not only for food.” Never had she heard her voice so husky before. It took on a life of its own as the sex-goddess hidden in her awakened. It was invigorating!

“That’s a good thing because I happen to have a special treat in mind for you, Emma, baby.”

Finn led her to a kitchen chair. From the chair legs floated long red cloths that looked like ribbons. Her curiosity piqued as to why he’d tied those to the legs, and why he chose that particular chair for her to sit in. A forewarning of impending pleasure elevated her senses to high alert. Finn’s imagination had been impressive in all his hot emails, so Emma had no doubt that he was up to something deliciously wicked. Didn’t she feel like a kid on Christmas morning? In this case, she hoped she was about to get something special for being a naughty girl.

When his large hands tugged her T-shirt over her head, she didn’t even have time to protest. His movements were fast and his task accomplished before she could even find her voice. His hand splayed over her lower back edging her toward the kitchen table. When he forced her naked body into the chair, she didn’t know what he was about. But the smug look he flashed warned her that he’d given it plenty of thought and planning.

Her belly growled, demanding food, but Emma couldn’t deal with that as she watched Finn kneel beside her.

“Make sure you’re comfortable, Emma. You’ll be in that chair for a while.”

“For how long?” she asked, as a chill ran up her spine. Not from fear but from lust. From the lust that she saw deep in his blue eyes as they studied her intently.

“For as long as I decide.” The smugness now reached his voice. That tone usually signaled he was

in a teasing mood. She'd been intimate enough with him to recognize the change in his behavior.

"Yes, I'm comfortable." As much as she could be as anticipation built deep in her pussy.

Finn quickly and efficiently bound her wrists with the silk ties, her arms straight by her sides. The scrape of his calloused fingers against her soft skin left goosebumps in their wake. Her pussy lips quivered so much that she couldn't help squirm to alleviate some of the pressure building up in her most private places.

"This gives a whole new meaning to 'all tied up for breakfast,'" Emma teased, her body continuing to heat from the defenselessness position.

"Close your eyes," he demanded, his voice stern but gentle as he stood behind her.

She obeyed, but flinched automatically when he attempted to cover her eyes with a piece of silky fabric.

He knelt in front of her, his fingers under her chin forcing her to look at him. "Trust me, Emma. You know I won't hurt you. It's only your pleasure I seek. Okay?"

She nodded, trusting him with her life. "Of course, I trust you, Finn. Is there any reason not to?"

"None at all, but if I crave you any more, I may just have to kidnap you. Sneak you back with me. Smuggle you with me on my missions."

"Yeah. I'm sure you could fight the bad guys while carrying my ass around." The thought did thrill her though. There was something sexy about covert operations that intrigued her. Maybe it was the fear of the unknown or the sure power of winning, good winning over evil. Good didn't always win, but Emma quickly forced thoughts like that from her mind, not wanting to dwell on the dangerous parts of Finn's job. She didn't need any more to worry about in her life.

“Careful, babe. I happen to love a good challenge. And carrying your pretty little ass around with me so I can have my way with you whenever I wanted, well, that’s very tempting. Mmmm. Very tempting indeed.”

She laughed at the easy smile he flashed her. He was totally out of his element, standing in her country kitchen in backwoods Vermont. But he looked just as comfortable here as she expected he’d be in a foreign land or humid jungle.

“Now let’s try this again. Close your eyes, Emma.”

She gave up the urge to escape, as it would only exhaust her and she wanted to enjoy whatever game Finn wanted to play. Taking a deep breath, she willed herself to relax as Finn fastened the silk cloth over her eyes. The softness of the material provided warmth to her closed eyelids, the doubled-up handkerchief blocking out all light as her eyes descended into the darkness applied to them.

The loss of function tore something from deep within her, a dark need she wasn’t sure she wanted to face, wasn’t sure she wanted to believe possible. She was in the hills of Vermont for Christ sakes. Once Finn left—and he would—then where would that leave her and her new found kinky desires? Alone. That’s where. There were hardly enough men in these parts for a conventional love affair let alone a full blown sexual relationship that included spankings, bondage, and anal sex. Oh, hell, she’d be left a fucking horny mess for sure. With the blindfold lightly over her eyes, just enough to stay in place and block her vision, and her arms secured to the chair, Emma wondered how she looked sitting naked in her kitchen with a gorgeous man ready to tease her into sexual bliss.

Christ, if the book club ladies could see her now. A soft laugh escaped her lips.

“Something funny?” Finn asked, his voice no longer near her ear, so she determined he’d moved elsewhere in the kitchen. What was he up to? The curiosity of her situation was slowly burning her alive with desire.

“I was just thinking that if the book club ladies could see me now...Oh, God.”

“They’d be jealous as all hell at the glorious attention your beautiful body is about to get from me.”

She laughed again as his voice grew closer again. “They’d all have heart attacks before they could make it back to town with their juicy gossip.”

“Probably. Now, Emma, open your mouth.”

Her belly flipped but she complied, not knowing what to expect but hoping it was his cock. She’d been dying to know what he tasted like.

When the sweet taste of strawberry hit her tongue, she was shocked and confused. Was he feeding her? That’s all this was! Disappointment was an understatement. Well, at least her stomach would finally get the food it craved as the loud growl indicated.

When she went to bite, Finn yanked the small fruit away. “No, Emma. You’ll eat it when I say so. Right now I want you to feel the sensation, the texture, taste the sweetness. It reminds me of how sweet your tight pussy is.”

She opened her mouth again slowly. He obliged by placing the juicy strawberry on her tongue, rolling it from one side to the other. She would never have guessed this to be so erotic, but the loss of sight and movement gave her a new sense of defenselessness that heightened her awareness to everything. Now she imagined Finn’s balls taking the strawberry’s place while she sucked on them. Without realizing, she’d closed her lips and sucked gently.

“That’s my girl. I can’t wait to see these pretty lips wrapped around my cock.” For emphasis his finger rubbed leisurely over her parted lips, the delicateness of the strawberry upstaged by the hardness of his fingertip.

Emma sucked harder on the little fruit, forming the mental image of giving him a blowjob, the need to taste him overwhelming.

“Go ahead and eat this one, baby. I’ve got more for you.” When he pushed the strawberry into her mouth, she chewed quickly. She didn’t know if she hungered more for food or for his touch. If she understood her body’s reaction—the way her heart pounded and her pussy throbbed, its wetness coating her bare pussy lips—then she’d guess she could do with food. She couldn’t do without Finn right now. If he didn’t fuck her soon, she’d incinerate from the heat building deep in her womb.

After eating about a half dozen good-sized strawberries, her belly had finally stopped making weird noises. He better keep the food coming because she wanted enough energy to rock his world once he let her. Without her hands to wipe her face, the sugary juices flowed down her chin with each bite of the ripe fruit. She should’ve felt ridiculous sitting blindfolded and bound, with red juice streaming down her chin and neck, but she couldn’t. She only felt need, the need to touch Finn, the need to hold him, the need to fuck him.

Finn ran his tongue along her jawbone and neck, licking away the juice. Her mouth opened and begged for his tongue to find its way inside. But he only licked around her lips and ignored her tongue when it stuck out to touch his.

“Open, Emma,” his voice commanded, the deep tone echoing in her small kitchen.

She smelled the orange slice before it hit her taste buds. Slowly, he darted the sliver in and out of

her mouth not allowing her to bite. When his finger joined the fruit and slid into her mouth, she couldn't help but close her lips over both and suck gently. Her pussy throbbed and ached for his touch. She imagined his finger was inside her pussy, pushing her closer to release. The smell of the fresh fruit tickled her nose, but she still smelled his musky cologne through the sweet haze. The combination of shower soap and cologne drove her wild with the need to bury her face into the side of his neck and inhale deeply, inhale until his scent was etched into her memory forever.

"You're doing very good, baby. Wish you could see how sexy you are. Maybe I should take a picture," he said so matter-of-factly, like he took pictures of bound, naked women all the time. Maybe he did. After all he wasn't hers, and she wasn't his. They'd made no commitment to each other and wouldn't. That she understood. They were from totally different worlds. He was a fighter and she was, well, a country girl.

If not for the blindfold, her eyes would be wide right now in shock. "No pictures. I'll just use my imagination," she said.

"Hmmm. Just like you made me use my imagination the entire time we emailed, you naughty girl." His voice hummed like a finely tuned instrument, its only purpose to serenade her.

"Going to keep throwing that in my face, huh? I'm sorry I sent no pictures, but neither did you." If her arms were free she'd give him a shove.

"I would've if you did. Maybe I'll just take my own now since you have a bad habit of so ignoring my wishes."

"Finn!"

He laughed hard. The swine!

"No pictures, Emma. I promise. Here, take a bite now."

Again, when she bit, the ripe juices flowed over her chin. But she didn't care, she just leaned her head back offering her throat to his ministrations. Emma wasn't disappointed when his tongue licked her entire throat and nipped kisses along her jaw.

"Mmmm. You taste so good, my sweet Emma. So delicious. You're delicate skin is so soft it invites me back for more."

Damn, he was good at romancing her. She may not have any life experience in the romance department, but she was an avid reader. She knew romance when she saw it and wasn't he so freaking good at it. Again, probably from lots of experience on his part. Imagining him with other women would surely turn her temper in the wrong direction. Emma happened to like the giddy feeling she had now, so she quickly banished all thoughts of Finn's women from her mind. Finn was here with her. That's all that mattered. It didn't matter that he was here only for a short time. He was here. With. Her. Here.

Her senses were an overloaded circuit, every part of her body wanting his attention. When his yogurt covered finger pushed into her mouth, she clamped her lips around it as if she were circling his cock and the yogurt his sweet cum sliding down her throat. Her head bobbed up and down. Did he just moan? Or maybe it was her. Either way, she needed to come soon or her body would spontaneously combust and she'd be a pile of ashes.

When he removed his finger, she protested with a whimper. His laugh would've got him a pinch if her arms were free. Maybe that was the purpose of tying her up. The binds were meant to not only add to her pleasure but to keep the game going longer than it would if she were able to call some of the shots.

Damn tricky bastard! Mr. Macho Military Man strikes again.

"I know what you're thinking, Emma," Finn confirmed as he placed more yogurt onto her tongue with his finger and stroked her pussy with his other hand. "You want to come."

Now that moan was definitely hers. There was no mistaking the pleading within that sound. Words escaped her. She'd moved right into the begging phase.

"Tell me what you want, Emma, baby. Tell me in detail or I won't do it. You can just sit here with your throbbing pussy that is so very wet right now." He removed his finger from her mouth, clean of the yogurt.

She whimpered as he slid a finger over the slick folds of her pussy, the firmness of his touch signaled that his possession of her cunt was part of this intriguing game and he obviously meant to win. But if she got to come then she would win as well. Hmmm. Very interesting. "Please, Finn." She loved his imaginative sexual games.

"Uh-uh. Talk to me. I want to hear those erotic words come from your beautiful mouth. You know the ones I mean. The ones you wrote me in those damn hot emails. That is, if it was really you who wrote them."

She gasped. "Of course it was."

"Then talk dirty to me. Now."

Gasping for breath, she did her best to collect her thoughts and form a sentence. But the best she could do was short and to the point. "Finn. Oh, God. I need to ride your fingers. Stick your fingers in my pussy."

"I like that idea. Go on," he demanded, as two fingers breached her wet entrance.

"Yes. Oh, yes." Her hips bucked against his invasion.

"Keep talking or I stop finger fucking you, and you'll stay tied to that chair with your pussy aching

for my touch.”

“Don’t...you...dare. Deeper. Oh, harder. Yes.” Air was robbed from her lungs with each word, but she couldn’t shut up and risk him stopping. “I want you to make me come. I want my juices to run over your fingers. Yes. Don’t stop. I’m coming. Oh, God, Finn, make me come harder. Yes!”

She may have been blindfolded, but her eyes erupted in a light show of fireworks and stars. Clamping her pussy muscles onto his fingers, she rode every wave of the orgasm until she sank into the chair, her muscles weak, her breathing rapid.

Lightheaded, she cried out, tears welling behind her closed lids. “Finn. I need you. Please hold me. I think I’m going to pass out.”

Instantly, he removed the blindfold and worked on untying her. “You won’t do no such thing. You hear me? If you do, then no more orgasms.”

If he thought that threat would work, well, he was damn right. Her eyes opened slowly, squinting a few times before adjusting to the light.

Finn lifted her out of the chair and switched places with her, gathering her trembling body into his arms and cradling her on his lap. Against her ear, his heartbeat was strong. The slow rocking back and forth soothed her. He placed soft kisses against her hair. If he let her stand right now, she’d float to the floor the way her binds had done when he untied her.

“Sorry,” Finn whispered against her ear. “But I’m afraid your eggs and toast got cold.”

She laughed at the absurdity of that statement. That’s why he’d said it. To get her back to reality.

Lifting her head slowly, she looked into his smiling face, his eyes dancing with pride. “That’s okay. I think I’ve quite had my fill this morning.”

He laughed and dragged her into a bear hug, kissing her lips hard. “Shower time, my girl.”

Taking her hand, Finn walked up the stairs to the shower. “Finn, I think I know my way to my own shower,” Emma protested.

“I have no doubt. But I need a shower too. Let’s conserve water.”

When he stripped off his shirt, Emma realized the meaning of his words. “We’re taking a shower together?” She wished she didn’t sound so shocked, but how was she suppose to clean when he was so close, witnessing all her private feminine hygiene routines?

“Yes, ma’am. And since you’re already naked, then I need to catch up.” Which he did by removing the rest of his clothes.

He adjusted the faucets before stepping under the spray and reaching for her hand. He tugged her into the tub and shut the curtain, the space very cramped with his massive body taking up most of the room. When he leaned his head back to wet his hair, his body brushed hers, keeping her pussy aware of his close proximity and nakedness. Pinching his eyelids to remove excess water, he finally focused his gaze back on her and turned so that she was under the stream of water.

“Ever experienced mutual masturbation, Emma?”

“Mutual?” she asked, wondering if she had heard him right or if the noise of the water was playing tricks on her hearing. “I definitely don’t think so. No. I’d remember something like that.”

His smile lit up his face as his hand fisted around his thick cock. “I didn’t think so either.”

“I masturbate in the privacy of my bedroom, thank you.”

“Never in the shower?”

Her cheeks flamed. “Yes. If you must know. On occasion in the shower too.” And only since she’d started talking to Finn and the fantasies were too

wild to forget. Too hot not to touch herself every time she thought of him.

“As much as I’d love to hear you tell me how you pleasure yourself, I’d much rather you demonstrate for me, baby. Right now,” he commanded, gliding his hand up and down his cock in long, slow strokes. That simple gesture had every inch of her body tingle.

“What do you mean?” she asked, honestly not understanding his intentions. He couldn’t possibly want to watch her masturbate? *In the shower? In front of him?*

Oh God. She was even more inexperienced than she thought if this was how couples to shared loving.

He placed his free hand over hers and drew it down past her belly, his other hand never leaving his cock, never interrupting the strokes. His long fingers slid over his engorged penis in long, slow strokes. His grip around his cock was strong, the slight sound of wet skin moving over wet skin permeated the shower as the water sprayed them with a fine mist. What she really needed was to change the showerhead back to the firm jet stream so he couldn’t hear her play with her pussy lips and clit like he wanted.

“Touch yourself for me, Emma. Let me watch you play with your sweet pussy.”

She swallowed hard, tearing her eyes from his cock long enough to stare at him. “I don’t think I can do this, Finn. I mean, well, I’ve never masturbated in front of someone. Even when my cat’s in the room I feel awkward. And it’s usually pitch black.”

He laughed, the corners of his mouth creasing slightly, his body leaning against the wall as his hand slid up and down the length of his cock, his fingers paying special attention to the purplish head now slick with the water. “You can do whatever you put your mind to, baby. I know you want it because

your eyes give you away.”

“What? How?” Her body heated from deep within her core as she watched him masturbate. Opening her mouth, she took advantage of the shower to wet her dry mouth. Swallowing hard only made her thirst worse as her temperature rose steadily and the heat emanated from his body as he stroked faster and faster, a determination set deep in his eyes as they clouded with lust.

“As soon as I began stroking myself, your eyes turned the deepest color blue I’ve seen them,” he declared, never missing a stroke over that thick erection. “Gorgeous. I could look into your eyes forever.”

Then why don’t you? She cringed silently. Oh hell, where did that thought come from? No way could she hope for forever after with Finn Coleman. No way could she protect her heart if she pined over this man if she ever imagined forever with him.

To avoid any more emotional in depth studies of herself, Emma inched her fingers into the warm dampness of her bare cunt. Her greedy pussy sucked her fingertips into its darkness, begging for the pleasures she had brought many times before.

“No, don’t look down,” Finn commanded as his free hand lifted her chin. “I want to watch those beautiful eyes and witness the passion running through them as you fuck your pussy with your fingers and watch me rub my cock. It’s so fucking hard. Christ, baby, look how hard you can get me and you’re not even touching me.”

Pride swelled her chest as she studied the full length of the steel shaft held firmly in his hand. His hand fisted around the thick cock and pumped up and down, his thumb brushing over the head. Yes, she was damn proud to arouse a man like Finn, so sure of himself and his experience, and keep him that way for a while, suspended in ecstasy. Her

pussy pulsed with jealousy, wanting that cock filling it while she yelled his name and begged him to go deeper and faster. Her fingers couldn't keep up with the demands from her pussy. It wanted to be filled with Finn's cock, stretching her, claiming her, possessing her.

"Wish you could feel how wet you've made me. Just when I thought I've heard of everything, you surprise me with that fascinating imagination you use so well."

"Fuck your pussy, Emma. Rub your clit. I'm going to come soon. I want you to come with me," he commanded, his voice raw with a need that she too felt deep inside.

"Well, you did start before me," she exclaimed through breathless words, her cunt heating up faster than it ever had. "I have some catching up to do."

"Then catch up. Fast. Oh fuck, this feels so good," he yelled as his fingers gripped his cock in a tight hold, stroking up and down the massive erection so fast the sound of his hand moving over the wet cock filled the shower.

"Mmmm. Yes. It does," she agreed as three fingers worked inside her cunt fucking her like his cock would do with fast, determined strokes in and out, over and over, the building pressure in her vagina obvious when her pussy lips quivered with little spasms.

"Only feel better....if your hands were on....my cock instead. I'm close. Hurry. You need to join me."

"I'm getting close," she whimpered, bearing her fingertip down hard on her clit, rubbing hard circles faster and faster, her hips wanting to buck as if to accept his cock.

"I want to watch my cum shoot over your flat belly. Watch the warm water clean it from your skin. Watch my cum flow down your body to mix with your cunt juices running down your creamy white

inner thighs. Fuck! Come. With. Me. Now.”

Emma didn't know if it was the rough command or the work of her fingers, but she came hard on Finn's demand and joined him as they both hollered as the magnitude of their releases hit them. “Oh, God. I'm coming.”

As promised, Finn shot his hot cum all over her belly. With her head flung back, living her own orgasm, she didn't see him come but knew the moment that he had. The warmth of his cum spread quickly around her belly button before sliding down her body with the help of the shower's spray. Her fingers still toyed with her clit as her body basked in the last pulses her pussy unleashed. His thick cum combined with her slick juices to be washed away down her legs.

The smell of sex was replaced with the strong scent of soap. She wiped the water from her eyes after rinsing her fingers under the spray. When she opened her eyes, Finn had already soaped her sponge and handed it to her. When his hand stayed over hers as she moved the sponge over her body, the touch seemed so intimate it pricked her skin with tiny goosebumps. Just when she thought she might have Finn figured out, he changed her perception. Now he was tending to her needs before his like the gentleman he was. Although, she had a sneaking suspicion that he very much enjoyed rubbing the suds over her slick skin, around her breasts, down her belly, over her shoulders, down her back, over her ass.

Emma re-soaped the sponge and handed it to him, watching in awe as he bathed. She didn't feel quite as awkward as she expected showering with a man. It was oddly romantic, the way the suds washed over his muscles, the foamy white bubbles glistening on his skin as they rinsed from his body. It was so erotic standing in a tub hardly big enough

for Finn by himself let alone with her in there. The closeness, the fact that their bodies continually touched all the time, kept her aware of his presence even with her eyes closed. She would feel his presence wherever he was, whenever he was close to her. She wouldn't need eyesight to do so. There was no way to describe the incredible receptiveness of her body, mind and soul when Finn was near. How the hell did he do that to her? And just what the hell was she supposed to do about it? How could fate be so cruel to allow her to be so in tune with the one man not available? If only she were alone, then she could scream her displeasure at her odd set of circumstances.

They weren't supposed to ever meet. If he'd just stayed away, then she wouldn't be thinking about what forever meant or what it felt like to be so desired. She wouldn't know how his touch felt or how he smelled of raw male, clean and musky. She wouldn't envision a future filled with laughter and sexy glances. She wouldn't dream of nights filled with the passion and how it could happen every night if only he were here with her. If only. If only got her exactly shit.

"Water's getting cold, babe," he said, knocking her out of her thoughts. "Let's get you rinsed before we lose all the hot water."

In his usual way, he didn't wait for her reply, he just moved her into his spot under the showerhead. Forced to close her eyes, she wasn't at all shocked when Finn's hands roamed her body. She had expected him to tend to her. It was nice to have someone take care of her needs for a change. A girl could get used to being this pampered.

Well, don't, dumbass, she silently chastised herself. It wasn't meant to last.

When the water stopped, she opened her eyes. Finn handed her a towel then wrapped one around

his hips. Without warning, he lifted her out of the shower and stood her in front of him. When he reached for another towel she wouldn't have guessed what he'd do next. Unfolding the towel, he encased her thick hair in it, gently squeezing the excess water from the long strands. Scrubbing the towel over her head reminded her of when she was a child and her mother did the same for her after a bath. Sadness gripped her heart before she could force the memory from her mind. She missed her mother.

"Hey, you okay?" Finn asked. "I'm not hurting you am I? Sometimes I don't realize when I'm being too rough."

She smiled brightly. "It's okay, Lieutenant Coleman. I'm learning that I like a little roughness."

A low growl emanated from his throat before he dragged her up onto to her toes to plant a loud, wet kiss on her lips. "Thanks for sharing that little bit of info, babe. I'll be sure to keep that in mind." He tweaked her nose, the gesture so sweet her toes curled. "You mentioned that you had horses. Show them to me."

"Yes, sir." When she mocked him with a salute, he swatted her towel-clad bottom before scooting her out of the bathroom. "Hey, not fair," she protested.

"Life ain't fair, babe. Now get dressed. I want to see the damn horses," he bellowed, but the sarcasm didn't reach his tone.

Yeah, he was stealing her damn heart and she was defenseless to stop him.

Chapter Five

“So you take care of all this on your own, Emma?”

Finn walked with Emma through the pastures in the back of her house, holding her hand, something he'd never done with a woman. The simple romantic gesture just wasn't in his nature, yet he surprised himself by sliding his large hand into her smaller one as if it were the most natural thing to do. He didn't know what was more shocking to him, that he was holding hands with Emma or taking a leisurely stroll. Finn never had time to do more than have drinks with a woman before he ended up back at her place. Missions always dictated how much play time he could have, and it usually wasn't much so he didn't spend a lot of time with the opposite sex. The women he had met never seemed to mind, so he hadn't ever had the chance to experience romance like he was now with Emma. Funny how thoughts of the women in his past didn't even arouse him. But one look at Emma walking beside him through the budding green fields made his dick hard as steel and walking uncomfortable.

Damn woman was getting under his skin. How the hell did she manage to accomplish that when no other woman had managed to do so?

“Yes. It's a lot of work, but I don't mind. My greenhouse is over here. That's where I grow my award-winning hybrid roses. The horses are my other business.”

Emma's long brown hair flowed over her shoulders, blowing gently in the wind. Every so often

a wild strand tickled across his arm. He was glad he convinced her to wear it down. Long hair on a woman was almost a fetish to him. Images of fisting his hand in her hair and dragging her mouth up to his wreaked havoc on his control.

“Aw, hell,” he exclaimed, stopping on the spot, and did just that. His hand gathered most of her long hair, twirling it into a ball around his fist, as he hauled her up on her toes. Appreciating her wide eyes and the passion deep within their blue depths, he sucked air into his deprived lungs. When the hell did he stop breathing? Shit, he hadn’t even noticed. Now the woman was about to be the death of him. Fuck!

“Finn?” Her soft whisper would’ve had the power to undue every ounce of his control on its own, but when her little tongue peaked out between her perfect unpainted lips, well, he was a lost man.

“God, Emma. What the fuck are you doing to me?”

Without waiting for an answer, or even expecting one, Finn crushed his mouth down bruisingly onto those beckoning lips. The little whimper she let out only turned him on more. Never had he desired a woman so intensely to be drawn to her lips like he would to her slick pussy, tight ass, or perky tits. Since when did he need a kiss to live? He sure the hell didn’t know. But now that his lips were joined with Emma’s, drinking her sweetness as his tongue foraged inside her warm mouth, he felt alive again.

He needed control or he’d be thinking of ways to go AWOL and run away with Emma to Canada or Mexico. Nothing or no one had ever competed with the oath he’d taken the day he joined the military, or with the pledge to fight and protect those who couldn’t protect themselves, or with the honor of serving the most magnificent country in the world.

Until Emma.

Just as abruptly as he began the kiss, Finn ended it. His hand dropped from her hair like it had been holding a hot pan instead of a soft, brown mass of hair. Emma just stared up at him like she expected him to start all over again. God, he wanted to. He wanted to do so much more, like drag her to the ground and fuck her.

Maybe just one more kiss. One more would be simple. Aw, fuck! The hell it would be. Thank God, he was trained to hide his emotion because Emma would definitely see the war raging inside him. The 'should he, shouldn't he fuck her' war. It wasn't fucking her that worried him at that particular moment. God knew his cock was straining against his jeans, demanding freedom and playtime. It was the emotion raging through his blood, swelling his heart like never before. If he didn't know better, he would have thought he was having a heart attack. But his heart problems were named Emma Shields and he was terribly afraid there wasn't a cure in the world for her except complete surrender.

That was something he couldn't ever do. He'd never surrender.

"Finn, what is it?" Emma finally asked, breaking the awkward silence.

"Nothing."

"Nothing my ass. You kissed me."

He snickered, begging the embarrassment not to show. He'd acted like a damn teenager with his heart on his fucking sleeve and she'd caught on to him instantly. Of course she would. Men were stupid to believe they could ever get something past a woman. And he'd be a damn fool to think Emma was any easier to fool.

"So? I've kissed you lots of times," Finn replied, not looking at her, needing all his energy to keep his tone matter-of-fact when all his muscles ached in the

effort to keep them from shaking. Maybe he was coming down with the flu or something. Hell, he'd suffer through an illness just to avoid *the love bug*. That L word wasn't part of his vocabulary for a reason, damnit.

"True," Emma agreed. "But that kiss was different. Oh, never mind. Sometimes I get romance stuck in my head and read into things too much. I can't wait to show you my horses. They are so majestic. Each has its own personality."

Finn tried to pay attention to the conversation, but he was preoccupied with her interpretation of their kiss. What did she mean it was different? Could she sense how he wished to possess her and never let her go? And what did she mean by not arguing with him or discussing it further? Damn it. He should be grateful to have gotten out of that mess with his dignity and pride, but still. There was something about a woman who gave up easily. That just meant Emma was waiting to bring it up later. Aw, hell.

"Finn? Did you hear a word I just said?" Emma asked, after shaking his hand that still clung to hers.

"Of course, Emma. I was just thinking is all."

"Care to share with me? I hate having a one-sided chat."

"About how horses take a lot of time," he said, breathing deeply and enjoying the earthy smell of the rolling green grass now that his libido had calmed down and thoughts formed again in his mind.

"Well, that's an understatement. But I really enjoy them. They keep me company I guess. Can get lonely all the way out here by myself." She said it so matter-of-factly that she probably didn't even realize that she had just admitted to being lonesome.

If he lived here, he guaranteed that she wouldn't

be lonely. He'd never let her out of bed.

"No, I know from experience, darlin', all the work that goes into caring for horses. I love them. Grew up with them on my granddad's ranch in Texas. That's where I was headed after I visited with you. But since you're cuter, I think I'll just spend my leave here." For emphasis, he squeezed her hand gently, keeping her close to him. "If that's okay with you, baby."

"I like that idea." Her usually soft voice was husky as she wrapped her arm around his waist and continued walking. "But won't your grandfather be disappointed if you don't visit? I don't want to keep you from your family."

Squinting against the late morning sun, Finn thought of his grandfather. "Granddad would understand and, if he didn't, then there's not much I can do about that. I'm a grown man with needs."

"Yes, I agree that you are pretty needy, Finn."

He grinned at her. "Well, don't put it that way or you'll make me sound like a pansy or something. Besides it's your fault that I'm needy."

"My fault? How so?" she asked, feigning shock.

"Because, you little tease, you made me so fucking horny with your explicit emails that I'm in dire need of sex now. Lots and lots of dirty, hot sex. And I plan on convincing you to act out all those sexy scenarios with me. I want to fulfill every fantasy you ever wrote about. We'll put that vivid imagination to work and see how you do." He appreciated the way her cheeks pinkened.

"So sure that you can convince me, huh?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She laughed, the sound of soft music floating through the air. "We'll see about that. Now tell me about your granddad."

"What do you want to know?" His heart constricted with the pain of a relationship strained

from years of thick-headedness on both sides. Finn was more like his grandfather than he cared to admit.

“Everything. I want to know everything about him. And you. I feel like I’ve known you forever, but truly how much do I really know about you?”

“You know the important stuff like what I like in bed.” His grin was forced not wanting to expose himself. Emotions always made a person vulnerable. That’s why he liked his locked down deep inside where he could control them and not the other way around. Allowing emotions to rule was a sure way to get hurt physically or emotionally, and he wasn’t about to do either.

“Finn.” Emma’s commanding tone told him he wasn’t about to get out of this conversation as easy as he had the other one.

“Okay. Let’s see. Where to begin? Well, for one thing Granddad is a pain in my ass.”

“Finn!”

“You didn’t let me finish, babe. While he’s that, he’s also a great guy.”

They had slowed to a snail’s pace without Finn even realizing. The casual stroll was so different from his usual speed walking. It was always best not to be a target for any longer than necessary, so he learned quickly to move his ass and forget about stalling.

Pride swelled Finn’s chest as he continued. “You’d like Granddad a lot, Emma. For his age, a young eighty-two, he never slows down. Says he’ll have time to rest when he’s dead. Runs that ranch like a well-oiled machine. Knows everything there is to know about horses and made sure I knew too.”

The wind wreaked havoc on Emma’s hair, blowing it into her eyes as she fought to keep them clear of the pesky strands. “But you joined the military. If you loved horses, why aren’t you on the

ranch instead of living through deployments around the world?”

He shrugged, childhood memories slamming into him like a freight train. “There’s no way me and Granddad could ever work together on the ranch. We’ve both got identical personalities—bull-headed, stubborn, and can’t admit when we’re wrong.”

Her hand circled his forearm as they continued to walk slowly. “Oh, yes, I know the Finn you’re talking about. Your emails were pretty explicit in your opinions. I got the drift early on that you like to be right.”

He laughed. “It’s not that I like it so much, but that I usually am.”

She laughed this time. “Add to that list of personality flaws...major ego.”

“Hey, now, that’s not fair,” he complained, tugging on a long curl hanging over her shoulder. “I’ll have you know my disposition has gotten a lot better since you became my pen pal.”

“Really? Do tell.”

“It just so happens that you gave me a new perspective on life. In my line of work, I’m constantly seeing the bad things people can do. You made me see that there’s still good in the world and that’s why my job is so important. I’m really fighting to keep the good in the world. And that made all the difference in my attitude.”

“Come on, Finn. You’re still a hard ass.”

When was the last time he smiled so damn much? “Yes, but thanks to your influence, I’m a hard ass who cares.”

Her eyes met his. “That’s so sweet. And I thought you’d think I was rambling during those emails that weren’t about sex. I thought you’d see me as an opinionated pain in the ass.”

“Conversing about non-sexual things made me doubt your blond bimbo profile. You actually made

valid points with some decent, thought-out arguments to support your opinions. Let's say, you gave me a different outlook on life, one I hadn't had for a long time."

"So how come you entered the military?"

He sighed. "I'd gotten into some trouble. You know the story...good kid gets mixed up with the wrong crowd. My granddad had raised me since I was six when my parents were killed in an armed robbery at their restaurant. As a teenager, I became rebellious, mostly from boredom. His ranch was a lot like this one, isolated, far from town and friends. Needed a vehicle or strong legs to get anywhere decent."

"I can understand that, Finn. Living here so far from the bustle of town, well the little bustle the town offers, is both trying and wonderful."

"Yeah, after another serious offense that could've gotten me some time in juvenile detention, Granddad literally grabbed me by the collar, threw me in his truck, yelled at me the entire ride to town, and then dragged me into the local recruiting office." Without meaning to, Finn smiled at the memory. That day long ago was when Finn first realized how much his granddad loved him. His trouble-making friends didn't have anyone who cared enough about them to dish out some hard love. Now two of them were dead, one in and out of rehab, and two others were serving serious time in prison. Yeah, Granddad loved him. Too bad the old man had such a hard time showing it. May give Finn incentive to get home more often.

"Sounds like you were as much a handful then as you are now."

"Yes, ma'am. I thought I knew everything about life. But the military quickly taught me I didn't. Basic training woke me up and I mean fast."

"I bet it did."

“Life as I know it disappeared, replaced by the strictest damn rules I’d ever had to live with. The military made me regret not appreciating Granddad’s house rules. At least with Granddad I got some leniency to screw up or at least another chance. Not in the military. You screw up and not only do your commanders take it out of your hide with inventive physical exercises, but then your fellow recruits kick your ass for bringing down the unit. So you learn pretty quickly not to be a fuck-up.”

“I can’t imagine you accepting their rules. If you told me you made your own rules, that I’d believe.”

He laughed. She had him figured out almost precisely. “As much as I hated the first week of basic training, I was determined not to be a failure. And not because I was trying to be a bad-ass, but because of something Granddad said to me. He said the military would be damn lucky to have a boy like me because they’re the only ones who could put my stubborn-ass ways to good use and get me to use my intelligence for something admirable and not criminal. It was the first time I understood, really understood, that Granddad believed I could make something decent out of myself. So I figured, what the hell? Why not at least give it the best damn attempt I could. So I learned to eat when told, sleep when told, shower and exercise when told.”

“And now look at you, Mr. Macho Military Man. I imagine your grandfather is very proud of your success,” Emma said, steering slowly toward the horse pen.

“I guess he is. At least he hasn’t complained about me being a fuck-up, so that has to count for something.” Finn squeezed her hand, enjoying the relaxing walk. “Never regretted joining though or resigning every four years. I found something I was good at and got paid too. Not a bad deal.”

Her head turned to look up at him. "And what was it you discovered you were good at, Finn?"

He cracked a wide grin. "Giving orders. Being a leader. Fighting. Facing danger and surviving."

She removed her hand from his to briefly touch his cheek before grasping his hand again. "The scar on your cheek, how did you get it?"

Absently, he rubbed the scar. "Knife fight with a pissed off assassin. I spoiled his attempt to kill his target, a president of a Third World country."

She paled, the rosy color he so enjoyed in her cheeks fading quickly. "And how'd he do? The assassin that is."

Trying to remember she was a civilian, Finn chose his words carefully. "He took a dirt nap. My men took him out just as the knife cut my cheek. But I wouldn't have let the bastard win. Even if my men didn't have my back, I would've killed the asshole."

"With a job like yours, all the danger and traveling, you can't be rebellious now from boredom."

"Not a chance. Sometimes I'd love to have some boredom."

"I don't know if I really want to know the answer, and maybe it's not something you can talk about, but have you killed many people?"

He studied her grim face before answering. "I never counted," he lied. He knew exactly how many people he'd taken in combat. All deserved it in his mind, except three. "I just did the job I was asked to do. No questions. But, honey, you got to realize that I had to in order to save my life, my men's life, or the life of an innocent victim. There are a lot of assholes in this world and if I helped make the planet a nicer place by removing some unseemly characters, well, then I'm damn proud and wouldn't change a goddamn thing. The fact that I'm standing here is testament to that old saying how the good guys always win."

“I don’t blame you and certainly am not judging you, Finn. As far as I’m concerned, every American citizen should shake a soldier’s hand and thank them each time they see a veteran. I guess I was asking because your life is so much different than the lives of civilians. But you don’t have to explain anything to me. You did your job and, from what I can tell, you do it damn good.”

How was she able to see through his well-honed emotional shield and pick up on these disturbing memories? She was too damned perceptive for *his* own good. He would need to be extra vigilant around her when it came to protecting himself. After spending time with Emma, there was no doubt that it was her intuitive nature that attracted him to her during their emails.

“There were three who didn’t deserve to die and I certainly didn’t aim to kill.”

When he hesitated, she didn’t pry or order him to continue talking. Instead, she remained silent and ready to listen if he was willing to talk. Aw, hell, this wasn’t like him to open up to anyone, but she’d understand the mistake that day wasn’t his fault. Now if only he could convince himself, then maybe he could end the nightmares that snuck into his slumber too often.

“To make a long story short, I led a mission with a team of five guys. Our orders were simple. Take out the bad guys who were known drug runners and responsible for the deaths of thousands in a bloody drug war. I can’t disclose particulars...”

“Totally understood.”

“So, being in underdeveloped nations you have to trust unreliable sources. I’m fluent in three languages, so there wasn’t a barrier there. Our informant gave us the location of where our suspects would be holed up. Would’ve been a very successful mission had the informant not failed to mention that

there was a young family in the same building.”

Emma’s gasp echoed over the fields. “Oh, no!”

“We managed to get our targets, but at the expense of three innocent lives. The drug runners slaughtered the family when they were cornered. It was their bullets not ours that killed the mother and her two children.”

“Oh, Finn. I’m so sorry.”

“The father also died that day. The bastard was one of the drug runners who’d used his own family as a shield and still died. He could’ve let them live. He didn’t have to hide with his innocent family. He and those drug runners gunned the mother and children down as we advanced. It’s a mission I’ve had to re-live in my nightmares so many times I can’t count.”

“I’m the first person you’ve talk to about it.” The simple statement oozed with understanding and sensitivity.

“Yes.”

“Why is that?”

Why ask why? That’s how he really wanted to respond, but she deserved a better answer than his pride standing in the way of his feelings. So he shrugged and sighed. “I guess I just find you very easy to talk with, Emma, baby. In a way, it is a relief to share some of that day with someone who didn’t judge but just listened. Thank you, baby.” He kissed her knuckles on the hand that he still held tightly like a lifeline. Yes, he was feeling more alive every minute he spent with sweet Emma.

“Sometimes you have to keep things to yourself before you know how to talk about them with someone else, Finn. Maybe someday you can share with me all your stories. Good or bad, Finn, I’ll listen just for you.”

Damn! She was the most amazing woman. And since he was too close to repeating his scorching kiss

a few minutes ago, he breathed deeply to calm his raging hormones. Didn't work one damn bit.

"That would be nice, baby. Maybe someday. I'll need to get back to duty soon." And didn't that just suck? For the first time ever, he didn't look forward to rejoining his men and forging forward on the next mission. Adrenaline rush be damned. He'd much rather have the effects from the high he got making love to Emma.

"These are my horses," Emma announced proudly as they stopped.

Finn studied the beasts while he stood outside the pen with Emma. The horses crowded her, all vying for attention by pushing their noses into her hands as she held her hands out to pet them.

"Do you ride, Emma?" He also pet the muscular animals, their coats soft and shiny, an obvious sign they were very well cared for.

"Of course. I was riding before I walked. I inherited these from my dad. Oh, not because he died. No, he wanted to travel with my stepmother, so I took over running the ranch and caring for these guys."

"And you don't mind being stuck on a ranch with no neighbors for miles?"

Her laugh was genuine and light. "Not at all. It's the only life I've ever known and, to be honest, I couldn't imagine living anywhere else. Tell me something, Finn."

"Okay."

"How did you adjust after you left your granddad's ranch and moved all over the world? Isn't it hard always living in a new place?"

He hadn't thought about that before. "It was part of the job so I never gave it a thought. I just go where the military tells me to go, where I'm needed. The focus is always on the mission, so my energies are dedicated to the planning, organization, and

implementation of that mission and nothing else. But I was bored on the ranch, so the military offered me the lifestyle I needed to chase off boredom.”

“Do you see yourself ever returning to the ranch? Like after you retire or something?” Her eyes seemed clouded with emotion.

“I never thought I would but after spending my career traveling the world, I do look forward to returning to the ranch when I’m ready to embrace that slower lifestyle.”

She laughed, the sound contagious as his smile came easily. “Now that is the silliest statement...a ranch needs work every day, no holidays, no sick days.”

“This is true. I told you Granddad like to do everything on his own. Maybe if he’d let me help him more, I wouldn’t have gotten so bored as a teenager. Now tell me what else you do with these horses. Shows? Breeding?”

“Typical guy, always with sex on the brain.” She playfully punched his arm. “I give riding lessons to local kids. The income helps me care for the horses.” She talked while scratching each nose with her short, unpainted fingernails. The horses snorted in approval.

Finn placed his hand on her side and gently squeezed. “Ah, so you can be considered a teacher, huh? Have any sexy teacher outfits you can wear for me later, baby?”

She smiled wide, those damn pretty lips inviting him to lick them, suck them. “No, I don’t unless you consider worn jeans and cotton shirt a sexy outfit.”

“Never would’ve until I saw it on you, babe. Hell, there isn’t anything you wouldn’t look good in.”

“Use all the sweet compliments you want, Finn. Still don’t have any sexy teacher outfits, so you’ll just have to settle for what I put on.”

“I much prefer you don’t wear anything at all,

hun. Walk around butt naked for all I care. Wouldn't get any complaints from me."

"I'm sure. But you'd have to wear your birthday suit too." Her playful teasing sent a bolt of heat to his cock.

"Talk like that will get you fucked right here, sweetheart. Don't care if anyone sees us either." For emphasis, he kissed her lips hard and ground his erection into her belly. When he pulled away, his gaze settled on her wet lips. "Keep talking like that. I promise."

"I'll hold you to that. This guy here is Dash," she said, rubbing the head of the young, black stallion. "He's very fast when he wants to be. He'll take off like a cannon if you let him."

"Sounds like my kind of horse. I love speed."

"Silver here is my oldest male horse. He's usually good tempered, but can be really mean if he doesn't get his way."

Finn laughed. "How the hell does a horse not get his way?"

Her smile lit up her face as she talked to him but looked at Silver. "Well, being an older horse, Silver is kind of set in his ways. If he wants to chill out in the meadow and the other two get too close, he'll let them know it by charging and scaring them off. Dash will tease him sometimes, but even he knows the limit. Silver may be getting on in age, but that doesn't slow him down when he's pissed."

"Good to know," Finn said, admiring Emma's natural ability with the horses. They loved her and had yet to leave her side.

"This is Penny. She's still young but strong." The young sorrel mare snorted as if she recognized her name. "And Sally is the oldest. She looks more like a Dalmatian than a horse with her black, white, and gray coloring but she's still beautiful. Isn't that right, Sally?" The horse acknowledged Emma with a

brush of her nose into Emma's hand.

"Looks like you have good animals here, baby. They're obviously well cared for and groomed properly. That's probably how you keep your sexy ass in shape since I have yet to find one piece of exercise equipment in your house."

"So you've searched my house have you?"

He cracked a grin when her chin came up. "Yes, ma'am. I performed a premise inspection to determine that there were no unseemly characters on site."

"Don't use fancy military jargon with me. I don't care if you do that everywhere else, but you do not inspect my house. Understood?" She didn't give him a chance to answer. "There are no unseemly characters hidden in my house."

"Now that I disagree with." He loved how her eyes squinted when she glared at him. "You do have one unseemly character in your home, well, at least for a little while. And he is very, very horny every minute he's around you."

Her face softened as her lips formed the sexiest smile that only proved to awaken his cock once again as the stiffness filled his jeans. "Ah, I see. I've been infiltrated."

How the woman could turn such an ordinary word into a sexual innuendo, he didn't know. But he'd damn sure never complete another report using that word without thinking of Emma. "Has anyone every told you that you're such a brat?"

"Nope. But I'll be sure to ask the mysterious houseguest you found in your professional assessment of my house."

"Brat."

She stopped petting the horses and faced Finn, much to the dismay of each horse as they inched away slowly from the fence. "But you were right, Finn. I own no exercise equipment so if you were

hoping to workout while here, well, you'll have to settle for running the fields. I don't believe in exercise. Not when I get plenty running this place."

His hands grasped her waist and yanked her to his body, making sure she felt his erection against her belly as it grew harder and longer. The discomfort was worth the fire he witnessed deep within the brown depths staring up at him. "I think I'll just fuck you all day and night as my workout plan. What do you say to that?"

"Told you, I don't work out." Her smile was mischievous.

He responded with a solid smack on her ass, earning him a shriek and satisfaction. "Being a smart-ass is a sure fire way for me to light up your ass with a spanking, baby. Try me."

She laughed, the sound tightening his balls into what he was sure was the darkest color blue they'd ever been. Damn woman. He needed to fuck her soon.

"You don't scare me, tough guy. Maybe later today we can take the horses out for a ride then you can show me your skills."

"To hell with that. I've got better skills to show you, darling." To prove it, he adjusted his massive erection through his jeans. Had his dick ever been so fucking huge and so hard? Not that he could ever remember. Damn woman. She was slowly killing him and he was sure she knew exactly what she was doing to him.

"You can show off those skills later. I'm looking forward to seeing all you have to offer." His low growl didn't interrupt her. "But right now, I want to show you my greenhouse—it's my pride and joy. You see, I may have inherited the horses from my dad, but the roses are my own creation, a business that's taken me years to build and is now flourishing."

"Lead the way." Finn walked uncomfortably

beside her across the pasture to the greenhouse, his jeans scraping over his hard cock. He needed to get control. "Those horses are real beauties, Emma. If you offered a stud service, you could earn some serious money that would build you a nice little nest egg without much additional work."

"Yeah, my dad had done that with the horses before. That's how he saved the money to pay off the farm and fund his travels. It's another one of those things on the Emma-To-Do-List. Now that I can cross off getting laid, my list just got a little shorter."

He laughed hard and long. Wasn't she just the most special woman he'd ever had the pleasure of talking to? And the fact that he was fucking her was a definite bonus. They conversed like they had done it forever. He had to remind himself that he'd technically just met her yesterday and their only history was via emails—hot and steamy emails.

"Now I guess that's one way of looking at it, baby."

The scent of Emma's body cream drifted around him. He'd had the pleasure of watching her slather on the peaches and cream lotion after their shower. His cock remained hard remembering the sight of her slender hands rubbing the cream up and down her legs and arms, over her flat belly, on her round bottom, and finally over her lovely breasts. He'd congratulated himself on allowing her to get dressed without tossing her back onto the bed and fucking her again. But she was so eager to show him her greenhouse that he couldn't resist the beauty's excitement, so he put his own plans, and his cock's, on hold. Although, he was finding it increasingly difficult to walk with a raging hard-on.

Turning toward him, Emma's firm breasts bounced delightfully in her low-cut cotton T-shirt. "How come you needed to join the pen pal program, Finn? I mean, a man as good looking as you, who's

terrific in bed, doesn't need a website to find a girl."

"Thanks for the compliment. And I wasn't looking for a girl. Just a friend. Just a conversation to pass the time."

"Oh."

"But what I got was so much better. Because I got you, baby."

Her smile lit up her face. She was the most adorable thing he'd ever seen in his life. Every time he looked at her, he was infatuated with those wide brown eyes, the innocence deep in them, the pure sincerity in her words. He warned himself to be careful because he was beginning to feel like he was leaning over a cliff and ready to tumble down. He was sure it would be easy to fall in love with Emma. But he wouldn't think of the L word. It had to remain out of his vocabulary.

"Tell me, Emma, without putting yourself down or making yourself out to be some ugly old hen," he warned. "Why'd you join the pen pal program? Was I your only pen pal?"

Jealousy unexpectedly ripped through his gut. Never had he imagined her writing those provocative emails to other men. He wanted those words to only be for him. Sure, it was unfair of him to think that Emma should only converse with him, when he couldn't offer her a future. She was a beautiful woman who could offer the right man a hell of a life. Damn, he didn't want to think of her in another man's arms, or worse, his bed. Admonishing himself for acting like a schoolboy, he gave his attention back to Emma.

Emma shrugged and looked at the ground as they walked toward the large glass house, the size of a small city block, off to the side of her barn. "My friends talked me into it. Well, forced me into it. You were the only pen pal I answered. I got about a dozen inquiries but I declined them. I liked your

emails the best and, since I didn't have a lot of time to write, I thought sticking to one pen pal was a good idea."

Thank God. He breathed a long sigh, careful that she didn't notice his relief. It wouldn't be cool to look like a jealous fool. Especially when he had no right to be.

"My friends created my profile, hence the blond bimbo image you got. They thought I needed some excitement in my life besides my vibrator." She glanced at him, her cheeks flushing.

Damn! Didn't his gut tighten so painfully at her wholesomeness? Something deep inside him melted.

"I already know you have a vibrator, Emma," he teased. "And I've brought you more toys, which I'll share with you later. Starting with the butt plug, so I can properly prepare your very fine ass for my cock. Now go on."

Her slender shoulders lifted in a shrug, the color deepening in her cheeks to crimson.

"Well, like I said, it was my girlfriends' idea. They think my living alone out here on an isolated farm raising horses and roses makes me boring. So why not hook me up with a lonely military man? You know, spice up my life. At least on the Internet."

"Even though I don't think that you're boring, I'm glad they forced you into being a pen pal or I'd never have met you. Unless, of course, you traveled to the jungles of South America and ran into me and my troops. You mean a lot to me, Emma."

"I know," she said, turning away from his gaze, but not before he saw the hint of tears in her eyes. What were the tears for? Forget it. He wasn't asking. If she wanted him to know, she'd tell him. It was a cop-out, but he wasn't good at dealing with female emotion so it was best to avoid it and pray the tears dried quickly.

"And for the record, my friends, well my men,

forced me into the pen pal program, too.” He hoped his admission would be enough to stray away from the emotion swirling through him like it was swimming through her eyes.

She looked at him with dry eyes once again. “Really? Somehow I don’t see anyone forcing Finn Coleman to do anything.”

He laughed. “Yeah, it wasn’t easy for them and when they did it, against my wishes, I made all of them run ten miles in the rain. I’m their commanding officer, you see.”

Her beautiful face frowned. “Ahh. I think I understand. You abused your authority to punish your men for trying to help you out.”

His jaw tightened. “Nope. They had it coming. I gave them an order and they disobeyed. So they got laps. No abuse whatsoever. Had they not been stupid and left the email up on the computer, they wouldn’t have got in trouble.”

“I don’t understand.”

Secretly, he was grateful because the fools got him Emma. “They wrote that first email. Although, it wasn’t supposed to get sent. They left it up on my computer and I didn’t know. So when I went to check my email, I accidentally hit the wrong button, sending you that first email.”

Those pretty pink lips parted with a feline smile. “Wow. You can tell them I really enjoyed that first email. It was, um, very explicit and well written. I got a visual immediately.”

Oh, did she now? “The hell I will. In fact, when I get back, they’ll get ten more miles.”

“Don’t you dare.” She slapped at his arm, her face serious even as her eyes danced with amusement.

Finn smiled, remembering those early days of their fledgling friendship. “I had forgotten about the email until a week later when I was cleaning out my

sent folder.”

The rosy color was back in her cheeks. “I was nervous about writing back to such a sexually charged email. I didn’t know what to say, how to say it. And I wasn’t asking my girlfriends for advice. They’d already done enough damage. It was too late to change my damn profile, so I had to live life in cyberspace as a blond bimbo.”

He gave her little hand a squeeze as they climbed a grassy slope. “Sorry, honey, but as hard as you may have tried to live up to that bimbo persona, you just couldn’t do it. As I said, the email conversations I had with you, the ones I actually wrote, were too intelligent.”

“Well, at least that’s a comfort. Anyway, one night, I had a couple glasses of wine, read an erotic romance novel, and then sat at the computer and wrote to you. Hitting the send button was the hardest thing I ever had to do. I thought you’d either think I was a crazy woman or you’d end up being a serial killer.”

He glanced at her sideways, appreciating the view of her cleavage from his vantage point. “Believe it or not, I was getting mad that you hadn’t replied. My ego was bruised I admit. But when I read your email, I jerked off to it twice that day. It was so fucking hot. Thinking about it now makes me hard.”

“Now I like that visual.”

“I’ve got a better visual for you. After you,” he said, holding the greenhouse door open for her to enter.

Chapter Six

The sweet smell of perfumed air hit Finn as he walked into the glass structure behind Emma. Vibrant roses of all sizes and colors surrounded them, their fragrances mingling. The place was massive, organized, and productive. There wasn't an inch of space Finn could see that wasn't being utilized for rose gardening.

The humid air clung to Finn's body like a second skin. The powerful scent and sight of all the roses a natural aphrodisiac. Suddenly, all Finn could picture was Emma's naked body covered in rose petals while his cock rammed deep inside her tight pussy.

Forcing his concentration back to Emma, Finn followed her through narrow aisles while she explained the different roses and her business responsibilities. Watching her walk ahead of him, talking the entire time, Finn honestly tried to hear her words but all he got was a jumble of sentences he couldn't decipher as he focused on the pert little bottom covered by tight faded jeans. God, she was hotter than any woman he'd ever met and, if he didn't get inside that tight pussy soon, he'd explode in his jeans.

Reaching out his long arm to stop Emma, Finn spun her around, wrapping her in an embrace meant for possession. His lips came down on hers, the soft pinkness opening for his exploration. She tasted so sweet, the remnants of her morning coffee with six sugars evident. But it was the warmth of her mouth and the willingness to let his tongue plunder her that tightened his balls to the point of excruciating

torture. However thrilling it was, it was still torturous. His cock flexed painfully against his jeans, begging for freedom.

Pulling his lips from hers, Finn spoke between gasps for air. "Emma, baby. I need you. I need to fuck you before I go insane."

"Oh, Finn. I need to feel you inside me. Now."

"Come on. I know just where I want you." Without waiting for her approval, he lifted her over his shoulder and walked back to the front of the greenhouse where he'd spotted a small desk when they first entered.

The little wooden desk sat neatly off to the side against a wall. Placing Emma back onto her feet, Finn spoke quickly.

"Ribbons. Do you have any around here?"

"Of course. Why do you want them?" she asked as she retrieved two long ribbons from a desk drawer.

Checking his back pocket to make sure he had his small knife with him, he breathed a sigh of relief when he found it there. No sense tying up a woman and not being able to cut her free. "You'll see, baby."

"What are you up to, Finn?" she asked, her cheeks flushed, her chest rising sharply with each breath. How fucking adorable was she?

"Making sure you come bigger than ever. Strip."

"Here? I'm not stripping here. Let's go back to the house."

He shook his head. "No. I'll never make it. I can hardly walk now with this raging hard-on. Now strip or I'll do it for you. It's up to you, baby, but I guarantee you'll be naked in thirty seconds, one way or another."

"Why do I always have to strip first? Why don't you go first?" She stood before him, arms crossed, tapping her foot, defiantly watching him.

The breath whooshed from his lungs as he

frowned. “God, I’m going to spank you for making me beg. Please, Emma. Get those damn clothes off now. If I undress first, I’ll only have seconds to get into you before exploding. Can’t enter you with your jeans on, can I?”

She thought she had him in the palm of her hand. He could tell by the purely feline smile, how her fingers slowly undid her zipper, how she provocatively shimmied out of her jeans and started on her shirt. Her little ass would pay for that one, too. He’d make sure to color it a nice shade of red. The thought made his cock pulse, pre-cum leaking to wet his skivvies.

“Hurry up, Emma. Christ, you’re fucking killing me here.”

As soon as she was naked, he yanked her hard against his chest and took her mouth in a demanding kiss. His tongue roamed her mouth feverishly, the smooth warmth driving him wild with need. With his lips humming with her taste, Finn broke the kiss to turn her around. Gently he guided her onto her belly onto the desk.

“Finn, hurry. I want to feel you inside me.” Her breathless command only tightened his balls and rendered his fingers useless tools as they fumbled with the ribbons.

He’d never fumbled anything. Control was something he’d never lacked until he met Emma. “Stop distracting me and I’ll get these attached faster.”

Applying the thin ribbon to her wrist, he was careful not to tie it too tightly, then affixed the other end to the leg of the desk. The ribbon was just long enough to reach. There’d be a slight tug on her arms but he had no doubt the small discomfort would only remind her of her bondage and add to her pleasure.

He repeated the process with the other hand. When done, Emma lay across her desk, bound, her

bottom wiggling, trying to move back to him, enticing his cock to claim her.

Her creamy soft skin beckoned him to touch her. Running his fingers down her naked back, he tenderly massaged her shoulders and edged down to her round ass. The globes were the perfect size for his fingers to dig into the flesh, gripping and grinding as she moaned her approval.

“So pretty, Emma,” he whispered, leaning over her to lay kisses in a straight line down her spine stopping just above the crack of her ass.

“Oh, God, Finn. Come on. Just fuck me.”

“I am, baby. I am.”

She moaned and wiggled. “The hell you are. This is torture. Fucking me would involve you ramming your cock into my pussy.”

He laughed because she was now as aroused as he’d been throughout their entire walk. How did it feel? Finally, they were on the same playing field and the odds were even.

“Ah, my dear. Don’t you know the art of fucking involves many techniques?”

Watching her struggle against her binds as her sweet voice cursed him and begged for his cock was more stimulating than any dick-enhancing drug could ever be.

With his tongue, he traced the crack between her ass cheeks not shocked at all when her body froze.

“Finn! Stop! What do you think you’re doing?” Her pleas were a mix of bewilderment and arousal.

“I believe it’s called foreplay, my dear.”

“Don’t be such a smart ass.”

He laughed at her rising tone. Ah, she was like putty in his hands, to mold as he chose. “I thought slowing down a bit would give us both pleasure, draw out the enjoyment to drive us both wild. I want you wild, Emma. I want to drive you crazy, slowly,

so you enjoy every bit of my attention.” With the slowest licks, he trailed his tongue along the tender indentation between her butt cheeks until she squirmed. Then with great attention to detail, he lay soft kisses on both ass cheeks, alternating with small nibbles sharp enough to tingle the skin but not mark it.

“I love your gorgeous ass, Emma, baby. I’m going to fuck it like I fuck your pussy. Hard. Fast. Deep.” Her moan tightened his gut painfully. He couldn’t last much longer without being deep inside her. “But that’ll have to wait until later. I’ve been thinking of that sweet pussy all morning, and I can’t wait any longer to drill my cock into its hot wetness.”

With the speed of a tiger, Finn ripped away his clothes, first retrieving the condoms he’d slipped in his front pocket. With a fine expertise, Finn unrolled the condom over his erection, regretting the latex shield that would keep him from feeling Emma’s pussy on his cock.

Sliding a long finger over her bare pussy, Finn smiled when he found her silky fluid dripping onto her soft lips.

“Nice. You didn’t lie about how soft and bare your pussy is. So smooth. I could just run my fingers over these pretty lips all day and never get bored.”

She moaned and arched back, but the restraints allowed her little freedom of movement. “Please. Oh, Finn.”

“Tell me what you want, Emma. I want to hear it like you wrote it in those emails. Tell me or I won’t touch you.”

She moaned louder. Did she curse? He’d forgive her for that since he understood the feeling. He was out of his mind with lust, the smell of the roses luring him to acts of romance and seduction. He wanted Emma’s complete surrender.

“Tell me, Emma. I’m not a patient man. I don’t

like being disobeyed, so start talking or I stop touching you.”

To demonstrate, he inserted a long finger then another between the delicate folds of her cunt. He moved with steely determination, teasing her, enticing her, encouraging her. Before he took her, he wanted, no needed, her to be wild with lust, so wild that when he entered her she came all over his thick cock. God, this woman was driving him insane. His cock should be well sated by now, not demanding more attention from her delicious pussy.

“Finn,” she cried out, her words barely audible through her breathy gasps. “I want to feel your cock...buried so deep inside me. I want...to have you fuck me hard and fast, then harder and faster. I can’t get enough of you. Please. Please...don’t make me wait. I need your cock now. I...have to...have it. Finn!”

“Oh, baby. I want your pussy around my cock. You’re so fucking hot you’re burning my fingers. Want to taste what I do when I eat your pussy?”

She groaned and bucked against the table. Removing his fingers, he walked to the front of the desk and knelt in front of her. He placed his fingers in his mouth and sucked them clean of her juices. Those gorgeous brown eyes were wide and fixated on his mouth.

He removed his fingers, using the same hand to grab a tight hold of her long hair and bring her mouth up to his. She opened eagerly for him, his mouth sharing the taste of her as he deepened the kiss, the sweetness of her juices rolling off his tongue onto hers.

“Taste yourself, Emma. Now you know why I enjoy eating your pussy. It’s like drinking pure honey.”

“Finn. I need you to take me now.” Emma’s slender arms pulled against her binds, her long

fingers twitching wanting to touch herself.

He slowly walked back to stand behind her again. "Soon, baby. I just want to watch you like this a little while longer. Tied up like this, you look hot and delightful, a breath of fresh air for me." Unable to resist, he slid his cock between the cheeks of her ass, rubbing along the tender parted skin. Squeezing her butt cheeks so they cradled his cock, he slowly stroked, just enough to caress the length of him but not enough to cause him to come. He cursed the need to wear a condom.

"Oh, God, Finn." Her head tossed side to side, those lovely brown strands swishing over her shoulders and back.

The sweet smell of roses surrounded them to mix with the musky scent of their intimacy. Closing his eyes, Finn took a deep breath as slowly as he could, hoping to never forget this moment—the fragrant humid air, Emma's breathy moans, the pure relaxation even as his body hummed like a freight train bearing down on its destination.

"I've never known a woman who exudes sexuality like you do. I bet you have no idea how strong you are, Emma. Bullets have never taken me down, and I assure you I've been hit with them over a dozen times through the years. But you, baby. Damn it if you don't bring me to my knees with just a look from those brown eyes, or a smile from those pretty pink lips, or your angelic voice making a plea for your pleasure. You drop me to the ground, Emma, baby, when men three times your size haven't."

Her lips curled into a grin, wicked and tempting. "Then you should just fuck me. I'm burning up for you, Finn. I swear if you make me wait any longer I'll—"

He couldn't hold back any more. The bite of her temper was too much of a turn on. Shoving his cock

deep into her pussy, it pleased him to hear her cry out with pleasure.

“Finn. Yes. Oh yes. Don’t stop. Fuck me harder.”

“My pleasure.”

With his hands grasping her hips, Finn drew back and drilled his cock deep into the warmth of her cunt. The sucking sound of her drenched hole encasing his dick in a tight wetness, coupled with her husky moans, was one of the most erotic sounds he’d ever heard. Quickly, he got into a rhythm, three fast strokes, two slower strokes. Over and over he repeated this pummeling, her cries echoing her pleasure. When her vaginal muscles flexed around him, Finn knew she was close. Reaching under her, he found her clit and rubbed the hard nub in small circles, allowing her to help as she ground her hips into his palm.

With his cock sheathed in her tight channel, every muscle of her pussy pulsed. Emma screamed out, her voice shrill and desperate. “Finn. I’m coming. Oh, my God. I can’t stop coming. Oh, yes.”

Her body trembled under his as he pumped his final strokes deep inside her, releasing his seed into the condom. How he wished he could feel her pussy against his cock.

Not allowing her to compose herself was important for him to keep her on the edge. One orgasm wouldn’t be enough for her to know just how fucking much she meant to him, how much she turned him on. Emma was on her way to stealing his heart. But that was a thought for later. Right now, he needed to concentrate on her pleasure. And pleasure her he would. This was the most important mission he’d been on in years.

Untying the ribbons, Finn freed Emma’s wrists, massaging them gently while softly kissing her parted lips with feathery kisses. With a scoop of his arm he lifted her and sat her on top of the desk. Finn

positioned Emma's arms behind her back and tied her hands together, making them loose enough to be comfortable but tight enough to render her hands useless.

"Finn? I don't think I can possibly come again. My body feels like a cooked spaghetti noodle."

Ignoring her, knowing she was already heating up again, watching as her pussy swelled, he placed her in a cross-legged position and quickly tied her ankles together, enough so she could move her knees up and down but not spread her legs far apart. Gently, he leaned her back over the desk until she was comfortable and staring up at him.

Grabbing a rose, he stripped the flower of its red petals and laid them across Emma's belly and on her thighs. Her creamy white skin illuminated the silky flower.

Taking a few petals, Finn trailed them over Emma's breasts, circling her nipples. The feather-light touch serving to torment her body into greater arousal.

"Feel your pretty roses over your beautiful skin, Emma? I'm going to make you come with these."

She whimpered and squirmed, the restraints holding her in place. "I'm sorry, I lied again, Finn."

He cocked an eyebrow, very much interested in her declaration. "Oh? How so?"

"I can definitely come again."

He laughed, not feeling this relaxed in years. "That's my plan. Now concentrate on where the petals will go next, how long they'll linger."

A small squeal stole from her throat. "How can something so soft make me so hot? You're driving me wild, Finn. Every inch of my body feels on fire."

"Is your pussy on fire?" He slid a finger inside to emphasize the question.

Her slender body shuddered and her nipples cinched into hard peaks. "God, yes. It's blazing. I

want to come so badly.”

“That’s my goal, baby. Your pleasure is my only goal.”

She sighed long, harshly. “But I don’t want to lose this feeling. Oh, I never knew my pussy had so many wonderful muscles. When I explode, it’s so intense. It’s like riding a Ferris wheel, going round and round, up then down only to go up again. And always slowly. The slower it is, oh God, the harder I come.”

He studied her face, the small nose, full lips, wide eyes. Looking like a picture in the best art museums, she appeared determined and focused. The tension flowed off her body in waves, increasing by the minute. Gone was her shyness, replaced by an awareness of her own sexuality. Emma now knew what she wanted and didn’t mind telling him exactly what that was. There was no mistaking she was definitely the author of all those erotic emails. She just needed a little support and guidance to allow herself to experience her own fantasies and brilliant, vivid imagination. And Finn was the man to help her.

“So are you telling me to slow down, baby? That way you can enjoy the slow build of the orgasm. I don’t mind taking all the time you need. My finger likes fucking this sweet pussy.”

Her bottom rose up to meet his hand. “Oh, Finn. It’s building again. I can feel it so deep inside of me, in places I never knew existed before your touch.”

He picked up a new batch of the flowers and stroked them over her clit, folding three petals together to form a stronger tool. His finger slid very slowly in and out of her vagina, no matter how much she begged or how much her body bucked to quicken his pace, he kept it even and steady. Her eyes fluttered open and closed, her breathing sped up. Finn watched as Emma floated between the rough

edges of pleasure and fulfillment.

“Don’t fight it, Emma. Let yourself come.”

Her breasts heaved with her gasps for air, her head arching back allowing for a sensual view of her long, slender neck. “I can’t. It’s too intense. You have to stop.”

His hands stilled in their exploration. “Do you really want me to? I will, but you have to tell me you really want me to.”

She swallowed hard, her throat convulsing sporadically. “No. Don’t stop. Oh, this is too much. I’m so close.”

“I know. I feel you tightening around my finger. Come for me, baby.”

He brushed the silky petals over her clit again and again while he steadily finger fucked her hot channel. She wiggled against her binds but couldn’t free herself. Without much warning, she came hard, her cunt lips quivering over his finger, wave after wave of pleasure enveloping her body. He watched as she rode it out, screaming his name, panting for air, her body squirming all over the small desk so that he had to hold her waist to keep her from falling off. Finally spent, she stopped moving, her body completely lethargic.

Without delay, he undid the ribbon on her ankles, massaging the skin before straightening her legs. Slowly, he helped her into a sitting position and moved behind her. Kissing the side of her neck, his fingers worked the stubborn knot of the ribbon. Thanks to all her flopping around she had managed to tighten the ribbon into an impossible knot. Finding his jeans on the floor, Finn quickly retrieved his pocketknife and with the flick of his wrist had Emma freed.

“You’re so beautiful, Emma. Just like your roses. You should be very proud of your success here.” Pulling her into his arms, he rocked her, her body

trembling in the aftermath of the orgasm.

"I'll never look at a rose the same way again," she stated.

"Me either. But I do plan to keep you tied up and fucked as much as that sweet pussy of yours can handle."

Emma rested her head against his shoulder, staring at him with sleepy eyes. "You know, Finn, there's no need to tie me up. I'm more than willing to fuck you."

He became serious. "I don't tie you up to make you willing, baby. I do it to make you come hard. I want to see your sweet cream drip from your lovely cunt. I love to see you struggle against your binds as I pound my cock deep into you, knowing you're struggling to touch me. But you know the fight is useless and you won't get free. That makes me feel wanted. Needed. Desired. And I feel so fucking defenseless because you hold that power over me."

Her voice was so sleepy. "What power?"

Struggling to keep the emotion out of his voice, he paused a moment before answering. "The power to make me want you, want you like I've never wanted anything or anyone before and that scares the hell out of me."

"You scared?" she asked, a hint of giggle to her words. "That's impossible. You're the big, strong, military man who saves small countries from bad guys."

He laughed, her honest assessment a genuine compliment. "True. And you, Emma, scare me. Scare me so much. I'm afraid of walking away from you and never feeling again what I feel for you."

Her face became serious, her eyes wide. "And what is that?"

Staring at her, he answered softly. "I don't know. I can't put it into words, but I can tell you that you're very important to me. And right now, I need

to show you how important.”

After dressing his cock in the hated condom, Finn tied her hands in front of her then wrapped them over his head so that her arms circled his neck. “Now I got you where I want you, Emma. With me.”

And Emma was right where she wanted to be. In Finn’s arms.

Lifting her by the hips, he held her as her legs entwined around his lean waist and his cock nestled its head into her pussy. With one long thrust, his steel length shoved into her humming center. Two orgasms and she still couldn’t get enough of him. With a resurgence of energy, she matched his need, her lust as strong and voracious as his.

Never in her life had time stood still as it did now. How Emma wished it would continue, but the clock was ticking. Her time with Finn would come to an end soon. But she wouldn’t allow herself to dwell on that right now. Not when his thickness was hammering her into a frenzied, needy state signaling the beginning of her orgasm. That wonderful space where she hovered during the moments she rose to her release. With each deep breath, she inhaled the perfumed scent of her beautiful roses.

Burying her face into the side of his neck allowed her the escape she needed to pull herself together and get control of the emotions swirling through her. These feelings were as unfamiliar to her as sex, but like sex they were quickly growing on her. It proved impossible to sort anything out now, not when the thickness of Finn’s cock caressed her vaginal walls in exhilarating, continuous strokes. Closing her eyes, she envisioned what they must look like, standing naked in her greenhouse, her body pasted to his and her legs wrapped tightly around him as his hips pumped into hers.

When Emma lifted her head an inch to kiss the

crook of his neck she tasted the saltiness of his smooth skin. The binds around her wrists kept her glued to his neck as her arms rested on his shoulders. His hips pumped faster, that wonderful cock delivering constant tension to her swollen pussy muscles. Deep within her womb began the slow climb to the ultimate pleasure, the true orgasm that escaped her all these years.

“Oh, Finn. You feel so good. Don’t ever stop,” she whispered against his neck, her teeth nibbling the tender lobe.

With one hand around her waist to keep her anchored to his body, his other hand fisted in her hair to draw her head back. Gazing into eyes the color of blue flame, Emma never imagined feeling as desired as she did at that second. When his lips covered hers, his kisses were gentle, a sharp contrast from the fierce flexing of his hips, pushing his thickness up into her pussy, and lighting nerve endings like an electric shock. His length deliciously massaged every muscle they touched, already over-sensitive from their previous explosions.

She was helpless to control his movements. Depending totally on him for her satisfaction enhanced her pleasure, wanting to come before he could stop her. The binds on her wrists reminded her how kinky she’d become, how much fun it was to give herself over completely to Finn’s attentions, to trust him beyond a doubt, to know how much he enjoyed this particular aspect of their loving.

When Finn stopped fucking her and pulled out, his kisses trailing down her neck, there was nothing she could do except keep her legs locked around his waist and wait for him to re-enter her. His large hand landed a sharp spank on her surprised bottom, a shriek of delight escaping her lips. Who knew a spanking could be so damn erotic? Who knew the sharp sting on her behind could make her pussy

throb so hard?

Another spank landed on the other cheek. “I love the feel of your skin under my palm as I heat it up with a spanking.”

“Mmmm.” She couldn’t form words this close to exploding.

With teeth nibbling her earlobe, he provided her with the same teasing attention she’d given him moments earlier. The swine! He was slowly driving her insane.

His voice filtered into her ear in a whisper—his southern drawl so damn sexy—ungluing her with every word. “And I must admit you have one very fine, spankable ass, nice and firm. Turns pink quickly. Love that.”

When his cock rammed back into her wet cunt, the explosion startled her, stealing her breath from her lungs. Her pussy lips vibrated with wave after wave of her release, the tightening of her vaginal muscles so exquisitely noticeable. His intense fucking only prolonged her pleasure as she arched back, anchoring her legs around his waist to keep him inside her. He growled, grasping her hips, his fingers digging into her skin as he shot his cum in long jerks of his cock. How she wished she could feel the warm fluid spill freely into her, its thick creaminess coating her pussy in a glistening sheen. But not being on birth control pills prevented that fantasy from coming true for the immediate future.

Spent, he wrapped those strong arms around her back, holding her possessively against him, his sheer strength comforting as she melted into his embrace. Burying his face in the side of her neck, they stood like that until his cock slid from her pussy.

He seated her on top of the desk and lifted her bound arms over his head. Quickly he untied her wrists, laying a kiss to each one before he motioned

for her to remain still.

He got no argument from her since every muscle in her body like Jell-O. A glance back showed Finn dressing. When done, he passed her the clothes she'd left on the floor and helped her stand, remaining close by as her unsteady feet gave away her exhaustion.

When she turned to catch Finn staring at her, she didn't know what to think. Was he already bored? Was this it? Just a few fucks and he'd gotten bored? She'd kill him. "What?" she asked, afraid to hear his answer. She didn't want anything to mess up the glorious lovemaking they'd just shared.

"You're amazing, Emma. Amazing."

She smiled, her heart swelling. "Ditto."

Yeah, she was totally screwed for falling in love with Finn Coleman, who'd be leaving in a few days. But for now, she planned on enjoying him and his body while she could. She'd cry over her loss once he left.

"This girl must be a special lady. You've never mentioned a woman before," Granddad said over the phone.

"Yes, sir. She's very special. You'll like her."

"I'll be the judge of that," the old man grumbled. "So when you bringing her to the ranch?"

Finn would love to have all the answers, but some things would just have to wait. "Not during this leave but maybe next time. If she hasn't kicked me to the curb that is."

Finn froze when he heard something he hadn't in many years. His grandfather was laughing. An honest to goodness, deep-from-the-belly laugh. Could he be drunk? Did he hit his head or something? Where was the sarcastic, short-tempered man who was his grandfather?

"Care to share what's so funny, Granddad?"

Finn asked, his smile coming easily, reacting to the chuckles on the other end.

“Oh, I mean no disrespect, Finn. Just that I think you have yourself a hell of a woman if she’s put up with you this long.” More laughter.

“Well, it’s only been two days.”

“Exactly. That’s a record for you to keep a lady by your side this long. No?”

Not really, since the women Finn fucked had never been mistaken for ladies. But he really didn’t want to share that with him. “Emma’s in a class by herself. That’s why I’d really like to spend my leave here, unless you need me to come home for a bit to help out any.”

“Nonsense. Ain’t nothing here I can’t take of.” Fierce pride licked each word. Good ol’ Granddad never changed. The man wouldn’t ask for help even if he were taking his last damn breath. Finn flinched, recognizing the personality trait he’d inherited from the old man.

“Of course I know that, Granddad. Just offering is all.” Damn did the man have more pride than was good for him? If there weren’t enough hands at the ranch to make sure the old man didn’t over do it, then Finn would never consider skipping a visit until his next leave. The cowboys had been with him long enough to know how to handle the bristly old man.

“Just enjoy your vacation with your lady friend. I ain’t going nowhere. You know where to find me next leave you get.”

“Absolutely, sir. I’ll call before I depart the States.”

“You do that. Be safe. Remember your roots, boy.” His granddad had ended every conversation with the same advice each time he phoned or visited. Not bad words to live by Finn had discovered over the years.

Toned female arms wrapped around Finn's waist as he shut his cell phone. "There you are. Thought you had second thoughts about staying."

"You're so spanked for thinking that, babe," he teased, turning into her embrace and kissing the tip of her nose.

"Mmmm. Good." She let out a peel of laughter when he growled. "So did your grandfather need you to come home?"

"Nope. I told him I was having hot, kinky sex with you and couldn't leave." Now it was his turn to burst out laughing when her eyes widened and her pretty mouth formed an O.

"You better not have or you'll be sleeping with the horses."

"I'm kidding. I'd never get away with saying something like that to him. He'd box my ears the next time I walked through his door."

"And you'd deserve it," she said simply, slapping his arm playfully.

"Yes, ma'am." He didn't release her from his grip. "But I only have less than two weeks for you to use my body in every sexually deviant way your pretty mind can think of, baby. You better get to work."

"I think you've had enough sex until we can at least re-fuel with lunch."

"Okay, but I'm only agreeing because I can hear your belly rumbling. Let's go get lunch in town. You can show me off to the town folks so that they believe the book club ladies. Show everyone I'm real."

Her frown was amusing. "Are you insane? We're not going to town. I won't feed the gossip mills any more than I do."

"Embarrassed by me, Emma?" His combat training didn't help him read her thoughts. Where did she learn to disguise her feelings so well?

“No. I have nothing to be embarrassed about. Just don’t need everyone’s prying eyes on us, whispering behind our backs and trying to guess what you’re doing with me.”

His jaw tightened. “Then I’d tell them I’m enjoying some fantastic times with a beautiful, sexy woman. Emma, I don’t care for you putting yourself down.”

Her soft sigh tugged at his gut. When the hell did he start caring about a lover’s feelings? Aw, hell. Emma was truly quicksand and he was sinking fast.

Cool eyes locked on his. “I’m not, but you have no idea what it’s like to be a single female living in a small town where available men are practically nonexistent and every well-meaning citizen plays matchmaker to find me a nice gentleman. Like I couldn’t find one on my own. I avoid town as much as possible to fend off the matchmakers, okay?” Her tone grew strong, serious. Yes, she meant what she said.

It just so happened that Finn didn’t give a damn. “We’re going to lunch in town, Emma. Even if I have to drag you kicking and screaming. Then you’ll really give the gossipers something to talk about. Your choice, but you won’t hide while I’m here, baby. You should never have to avoid anything. Did you ever think that maybe they play matchmaker because you’re too damn stubborn to give a man a chance?”

“What the hell would you know about me? We just met and now you think you know what makes me tick?” Please Finn, don’t try to figure me out in just a few days, because I’m still trying to figure me out. Her cheeks flamed. He enjoyed every bit of it.

“I know enough to know that even I wouldn’t have a chance to infiltrate your private world if I were sticking around.”

“What the hell is that suppose to mean? So now

you think I avoid men or something? What are you a psychologist?" She laughed but it was only for show because her mood hadn't lightened up. Yup, temper was certainly getting the best of her. Just when he thought she couldn't look any more adorable, she showed him this very feisty side of her. And very sexy side, his dick agreed, as it awakened to strain against his jeans.

Well, he happened to have a fiery side too. "It means I'm temporary. I'm not sticking around so you won't have to commit to me."

"Maybe I want a commitment. Ever think of that? Could be that I just haven't found someone suitable yet." She stood her ground without a hesitation. Something else to admire in her.

"Do you want a relationship?"

That silenced her instantly. It was rude to smirk, but he had called her bluff. "How can you say you want a commitment when your life is so wrapped up in the ranch that you don't realize life is passing you by? There's a whole world out there, Emma. A lonely ranch is no place for a beautiful woman to live by herself when she should be having the time of her life. When was the last time you had a night out on the town with your friends?"

"Maybe I like my world right here. Nothing wrong with that."

"No nothing wrong with it except are you doing it of a sense of duty to your father. Ask yourself if he really wants you to sacrifice your life for this place?"

"You have no idea what you're talking about, Finn. This discussion is over." When she would've pulled away, he held her elbows keeping her in front of him.

"The hell it is." He forced his voice softer, reminding himself that this was Emma he was talking to and not one of his men. "Emma, I'm not trying to insult you. I just know what a sense of duty

to family can do to someone. I stayed on Granddad's ranch longer than I should have, passing up college, because I felt I owed it to him. And if the old man didn't force me to do something with my life then I'd still be there. Does that make any sense?"

She shrugged free and he let her because she didn't look like a flight risk. No, she had dug her heels in to fight even if that was sadness he read in her eyes. Finally, he could see through her barriers, if just a little.

"You're one to talk about hiding from commitment. It's very convenient for you isn't it, Finn?"

Crossing his arms, he dug his heels in too. "Don't talk in riddles, Emma. I have no patience for them."

"Screw you. Don't you dare tell me how I should talk. You use the convenience of the military and its nomadic lifestyle as an excuse to keep from taking on a serious relationship."

"Bullshit," he bellowed, not even getting her to wince.

"Bullshit is right, tough guy." She emphasized her last words by poking his chest. Hard.

When the fuck did he lose control of this conversation? As he went to speak again, she did something no other person, except his granddad, had the balls to do. She silenced him.

"Shut the hell up, Finn Coleman, and you listen carefully. When you've had a committed relationship then you can offer me advice. Until then, shut your trap and take me to lunch. I'm fucking famished."

She turned on her heel, slung a pocketbook over her shoulder, and stomped out the front door. Goddamn woman was full of surprises. He'd yet to find one that he didn't like. Smiling, he walked after her cute little ass, swaying as she walked to her truck.

Inside the truck, he studied her profile as she peeled out of the driveway. It was smarter to weigh his options for getting the last word even if he lost the battle. "You know, Emma. That argument was unnecessary. All I was trying to say was that by going to lunch with me, wouldn't that get the matchmakers off your back, at least for a while?"

Silence with an irate female was never a good sign of things to come. And since silence filled the cab of the truck, Finn guessed she was plotting his murder. He wanted to laugh so badly, loving her temper. But since he didn't believe in suicide, he locked down his emotions. Still, it'd be so tempting to see just how bad her temper could get.

The second she slammed on the brakes, he cursed for allowing curiosity to rule his brain. A smart man didn't wave a steak in front of a hungry lion. Finn just happened to wave his balls in front of a steaming Emma. Aw, hell. When would he learn how to talk to women without pissing them off?

His body slammed forward, stopped from kissing the windshield by the grace of his seatbelt. "Now what did I say?"

"You couldn't say that simple statement back there? What the hell was that lecture all about?"

When he went to speak, she put her hand up and silenced him once again. He didn't know if he was more shocked or amused.

"Don't answer that. Let's just eat."

"Agreed," he said, as she peeled back onto the road kicking up a cloud of dust. The woman handled a vehicle very well too. She was full of surprises.

Chapter Seven

Once in town, it was as bad as she had predicted. Emma and Finn were not only the center of attention, but had caused a small fender bender when Mrs. Galway rear-ended Mrs. Finbar, another book club member, outside the coffee shop. Neither woman cared about the dents. They just stood in awe, watching as Finn strolled through town holding Emma's hand and smiling like a man who had won the damn lottery. The swine! She'd have to deal with the aftermath of this little jaunt into town for months.

They stopped outside the Gin Mill Restaurant. The warm sun warmed Emma, her light blue coat not really necessary. "I think it'd be a good idea just to get take-out, Finn. We're already a damn spectacle."

Finn looked around the sidewalk. "Could make it interesting for them you know."

The look in his eyes was all the warning she got—he was up to no good. His mischievous grin gave her too few seconds to react. When his hands enclosed over her elbows to haul her up crushing her breasts against his muscular chest, she gasped. It was too late to voice her distress, although she was positive it was etched all over her face, which was probably as pale as a ghost right now.

Finn's lips scorched hers as he kiss the air from her lungs, leaving her lightheaded and needing his continued touch to not fall face first and humiliate herself. Her mouth betrayed her as it opened eagerly, willingly becoming an accomplice to this

public display of affection. The heat that sizzled through her body went straight to her pussy, and small tremors rocked her most private place. Damn his kisses were lethal.

When he ended the kiss, her lips tingled and begged for his to return, the smug look he shot her was enough to make her want to smack him if it wouldn't add to the gossip.

"Oh, Finn, you are in so much trouble, for that," she whispered between clenched teeth.

He opened the door to the Gin Mill Restaurant and motioned for her to enter first. The arrogance written on his face made her want to kick him. Hard and often!

"So what are you telling me, Emma, baby? That you no longer want my kisses?" he asked, sounding shocked and shattered once they were inside the restaurant's foyer. A quick survey inside showed it was bustling with customers.

Mrs. Cloughton, her other book club friend, who was having lunch with her husband, almost choked on her coffee as her hearing aid caught Finn's deep voice and every word he spoke. "Why hello there, Mr. Coleman," the old woman said, remaining seated.

Finn walked the few feet to their table. "It's Finn, please. It's so lovely to see you again, Mrs. Cloughton." Finn turned to her husband, extending his hand. "Sir. Finn Coleman."

The older man stood to accept the handshake and sat again. "Douglas Cloughton."

Ah, so he remembered names well, did he? Probably remembered every name of every woman he'd ever bedded. Where the jealousy or that thought came from Emma didn't have time to wonder. If she didn't pay attention to what Finn said then she wouldn't know when to clobber him for saying the wrong thing. Looks like she needed to give him a crash course in how to survive small town gossips.

“If you’ll excuse us. We didn’t mean to interrupt your lunch,” Finn said in a silly attempt to politely leave them. Didn’t the big tough military guy know that once these old ladies got their hooks in you it was guaranteed to take an act of God to save you from their clutches?

“Nonsense, Finn. It’s always pleasant to meet new people,” Mrs. Cloughton confirmed, scooting over to allow them room. “Please, won’t you join us? I was just telling Douglas about Emma’s new beau.”

“He’s not—” Emma began, but Finn cut her off, his deep voice drowning hers out. Didn’t matter, the Cloughtons were only interested in Finn, keeping their eagle eyes tuned to his every move and word.

“We would love to, but I’m afraid I need some private time with Emma. I hope you understand. Emma and I have a lot of catching up to do and, well, what better way to do that than over a nice lunch to refuel our bodies?”

Oh, no he didn’t just say that. Refuel? Was he insane? One look at Mrs. Cloughton’s red cheeks and Emma needed to count to ten. Of course the old woman would understand exactly what Finn implied. He might as well have just announced that they’d had hot, wild sex and sapped their energy. The swine!

“We were young once, too. Of course we understand, now scoot and enjoy yourselves. We’ll see you soon,” Mrs. Cloughton said with the biggest shit-eating grin Emma had ever seen.

Finn and Emma chose seats at the bar. The wide oak counter gleamed. Behind the bar sat a massive mirrored panel where Charlie, the owner and bartender, proudly displayed the town’s history—pictures, news articles, and antique beer mugs.

“Emma, how are you?” Charlie asked, sizing up Finn as bartenders do with a quick, steady perusal.

“Very well. Charlie, this is my friend, Finn Coleman.”

“Good to meet you,” Charlie said after a quick handshake. He filled a glass mug with a draft beer and left it in front of Finn, the foamy top spilling over the rim. “Haven’t had a new person move to White Cap Creek in too long for me to remember.”

Finn lifted the beer for a deep drink and swiped the foam off his lips with his tongue. Emma’s pussy responded swiftly, a slow heartbeat throbbed within her pussy lips as they swelled wishing his talented tongue were licking them.

“Good beer. Just what I wanted.”

“A good bartender senses what his customers need. Now young lady, wine or Sex-On-The-Beach?”

Emma laughed hard when Finn coughed on his suds. “Take the second choice,” Finn teased.

“Why, Charlie, you are very good at guessing your customer’s needs,” Emma commented as the man moved around behind the bar to prepare her drink.

Finn’s thick thigh rubbed against her leg when he leaned over to whisper in her ear. “Just tell me how to get to the beach, baby, and I’ll take care of all your needs. Promise.”

His simple words warmed her body and she willed her cheeks not to flush, but that was a losing battle. Instantly, her cheeks were on fire. Where the hell was her drink? Her throat was suddenly so parched it hurt.

When Charlie returned with her drink, Finn moved out of her personal space and read the menu.

“So folks, what you want for lunch?” He took their order in his no non-sense sort of way. He never had to write anything down. He always remembered, never made a mistake.

Left to their privacy, Emma stirred in her seat feeling the awkwardness of being on public display

settle in. While the restaurant seats were practically filled to capacity, there was only two other men at the bar with Emma and Finn, and they were seated at the other end of the bar embroiled in a heated discussion of the upcoming baseball season.

“Relax, Emma,” Finn’s hard voice sang into her ear. “I’m not going to fuck you on top of the bar so chill out, babe. Well, unless, that is, you want me to.”

“And if I said yes, then would you? Huh, Finn? Would you toss me up on top of the bar, rip my clothes off, and fuck me in front of half the town?”

“Touché for calling my bluff.” Finn swallowed the remainder of his beer. Charlie appeared silently, quickly refilling and disappearing again.

“That’s right. Even you wouldn’t do that.”

“Even me? What the hell does that mean?”

“You’re not the wine and dine type of guy. You probably don’t give a damn where you fuck as long as you fuck.”

His jaw clenched. It should’ve made him look mean but it only added to his sexiness. “Never said I wasn’t the wine and dine type of guy, Emma. Just said I didn’t have time for it now with such a short leave. And you’re right, when I have the urge to fuck, I don’t really give a damn where it is or who sees. Care to find out? I’m suddenly very horny.”

When the laugh escaped her throat, it surprised Emma as much as it did him. He just stared at her, his brows knitted, hand on his beer. “I’m sorry, but you are so cute when you try to be a hard ass with me.”

His smile formed slowly, a bit shy for him. Now this was a new side of him. Interesting.

“You are so spanked. And, be warned, that’s something I definitely don’t mind doing anywhere, in front of anyone.”

Emma sipped her drink, hoping the sweet

coldness would cool her heated face. “Ah, but you’d have to end the spanking by fucking me because you’ll be so hard.”

His eyes flamed with desire, the blue depths turning dark and menacing. “I’ve reconsidered. We’re getting our food to go. I want dessert first.” His hand trailed slowly up the outside of her thigh to rest at her lower back. Those long fingers danced slowly on her spine. To go wasn’t a bad idea but she was starving.

“We’ll eat fast.”

Halfway through their meal, a large hand slapped on Finn’s shoulder. When he swung around swiftly, prepared to battle, the old man jumped back. “Sorry, Mr. Cloughton. I’m military. Natural for me to react first, think second.”

“Understood. I should know better than to startle a man. Was just going to invite you to a poker game tomorrow night. I won’t take no for an answer either. We gather here tomorrow at seven. Emma, do you mind?”

“Um, it’s really up to Finn.” She hoped Finn caught the warning in her eyes. “I mean he’s still recuperating from his trip. Needs his rest.” No way did she want Finn alone with the town’s gamblers.

“Nah, I’m rested enough. Thank you, sir. I’ll be there. Seven sharp.” They shook hands to seal the deal.

“You know, they only want to dig for more gossip about us for their wives.”

“Good thing I like to brag then,” Finn said, showing off that mischievous grin that meant he was up to no good.

“Don’t you dare.”

He leaned over and smacked her lips loudly. “It’s also a good thing that I don’t kiss and tell, baby. They can pry all they want. All they’re going to end up doing is losing their hard-earned money and then

face their wives with empty pockets and no additional information to whet their nosiness.”

Emma breathed a silent sigh of relief and smiled wide. “I do like how you think Lieutenant Coleman.”

“Do you? Then I believe I should be rewarded nicely.” Finn threw some bills on the counter to pay their bill and stood.

“I was thinking you needed to be rewarded with hot, dirty, sweaty sex, but if you want nice well—”

Emma shrieked when Finn lifted her out of the chair and into his arms. “Hell no. You’re ideas are fine. Just fine. Hot and dirty here we come. Sweaty...hell yeah.”

She was laughing too much to care about the shocked mouths wagging as Finn’s long legs ate up the ground back to her truck. When he plopped her into the passenger seat and took over driving, she felt like a princess being driven through town as everyone watched them drive by.

Except her prince looked more like a racecar driver as he sped back to her ranch, every muscle in his body taut. She did that to him. Emma never understood what the power of the pussy meant until Finn’s only focus became her.

“What’s that pretty mind thinking, baby?” Finn said, his eyes hidden behind dark sunglasses. The wind whipped through the open windows not moving one strand of his short hair but blowing her long hair all around so that she had to keep wrestling it away from her face. But the warm air felt so good after so many months of cold winter weather.

“Just enjoying the moment, Finn. You have a good memory when it comes to directions. I haven’t had to tell you once how to get back to my house.”

“I damn well better be able to figure out my surroundings, baby, or I’d never find my way out of the jungles I trek through chasing bad guys.” His smile was one of pure pride as he leisurely steered

them closer to the ranch and the sexual escapades their conversation had promised.

"I don't like to think about you trenching through foreign lands chasing anyone. I don't like thinking of how you can be hurt, or worse."

His laugh unnerved her. How dare he take such a topic so lightly? "I've survived all this time. No need to worry about me, baby. I'm always okay."

"Yeah, well, still. I'm not used to manhunts and assassins and would much rather not have to think of you in battle with them, okay."

"Okay." His hand gently carried hers to his lips to plant soft kisses on her knuckles. As reassuring as he attempted to be, the thought of his dangerous job didn't sit well with her. Her gut tumbled in an uneasy wariness.

"You must think I'm neurotic to worry about something that's second nature to you." Staring out the window as she spoke, Emma watched the countryside pass by in a blur of emerging spring colors.

"Not at all. Just shows that you care."

They fell silent until they parked in front of her house. "You, my dear, are about to be ravaged like you deserve."

"Then what's taking you so long?"

His growl was the first warning of his sexual appetite. The next minute was a blur as he pulled her from the truck, lifted her to wrap her legs around his waist, and ground his lips onto her mouth. The possession heated every surface of her body. Her world was moving, but she couldn't feel any safer knowing Finn held her tight. With his arms around her like a steel cage, a tornado couldn't rip her from his grip.

His tongue whipped inside of her mouth like a live wire. Everywhere it touched, bolts of fire unleashed throughout her body, traveling straight to

her pussy. Their lip lock muffled their groans. Walking with her clinging to him, Finn's strides were long and determined.

Breaking the kiss, Emma cried out. "Oh, God, Finn. Fuck me now. I can't wait."

"I plan to," he said, tossing her onto the couch.

With the quickest motion she'd ever seen, Finn's fingers adeptly unbuttoned her jeans and dragged them from her wiggling body. Her hips bucked to meet his, but he'd yet to undress. Yanking his jeans to his ankles, he hastily donned a condom and mounted her. In one strong thrust, his cock buried deep inside her pulsing pussy.

"Yes!" she cried out, wishing for his hair to be just a little longer for her to grab hold. She settled on his thick shoulders as his hips bucked into hers with lightening speed.

"God, Emma. So fucking hot." His words came out in breathless spurts.

Her vaginal walls were stretched by the thickness of his cock. Every muscle of her cunt flamed with greedy need. The burning sensation proved how tight her pussy was, grateful to have a hard cock possessing it and ending her long sexual dry spell. How she would ever live without this sex again was beyond her. Her mind found it increasingly difficult to develop thoughts as the smell of sex filled the room, her arousal mixing with his to form a stirring musky scent invigorating her senses like the best aphrodisiac.

"Finn. Don't...stop. Please. I'm so...close," she said forcing the words from her bedazzled mind.

"Come with me. Now," he demanded, the roughness of his voice turning her on more than the sweetest words could. Damn, she craved his bad-ass attitude in every shape and form. Who knew a simple command, given in a deep, male voice, could make her pussy respond with eager pulses.

The room filled with the sound of wet skin slapping against wet skin as their sweaty bodies raced to the finish line together. His muscular hips drove deep into her softness with every thrust, pummeling her into the cushions of the couch. The weight of his body pinned her. Unable to flex her hips up to meet his and drive his cock deeper, Emma could only lie there relying on Finn to maneuver his hard cock. His sexual experience was obvious when he tuned into her body's responses, adjusting his cock deep within her sheath until he found the spot that she guessed was her G-spot for the fiery sparks it shot off with each touch from the thick head of his cock.

Never had she come without manual stimulation on her clit.

Until now.

Nothing could have prepared Emma for this orgasm. No books. No movies. No stories. Nothing.

The pleasure overwhelmed her. "I can't. I can't finish. Too. Intense," she whimpered, her short nails digging into the hard skin on his shoulders and upper back.

"You can, baby. You have to finish. I won't let you give up."

"Finn!"

"Come for me, Emma. Come!"

The explosion caught her off guard, stealing her breath to the point that her lungs would burst from lack of air. Deep within her, in a place she never knew existed, came one intense shudder after another, traveling from the depths of her womb to her swollen pussy lips.

"Finn! Finn! Finn! Finn!" She didn't even recognize the strangled sound coming from her throat. If that was her voice then she had hit an all time high decibel level.

Never once did Finn break stride. That

magnificent cock expertly stroked over her G-spot inside her flexing vaginal core. Over and over, one wave after another slammed into her pussy, fanning the flames along her tight walls. Never would any sex toy compete with the attention she received from his cock.

When he held his body over hers, rigid and shaking, his release shot toward her spasming womb, caught by latex before it could search out every dark crevice, branding her with his seed.

There were no words to describe what just happened. No strength to form those words. So when his sweaty body lay on top of hers, Emma took advantage of being trapped under such awesome muscles to regain her breathing and energy. He should've been suffocating her smaller body with his, but they fit perfectly together. It was moments later when she finally felt his spent cock slid out of her well-fucked pussy.

When he stood to discard the condom, she protested, the words barely audible, and her complaints not even making sense. Before she knew what to expect, he had lifted her into his arms and walked the stairs to her bedroom where he settled them to an afternoon nap.

Finn woke to a heavy weight on his chest. He opened his sleepy eyes to look into tiny bright green eyes. But Emma had brown eyes and she wasn't furry, although her purr was similar.

When sharp claws scraped his bare chest, Finn yelled. "What the fuck?"

"What's wrong?" Emma asked sleepily. When she noticed the black cat with brown spots perched lazily on Finn's chest, she laughed.

"There's a friggin' beast sitting on me," Finn complained, afraid to move for fear of the sharp daggers currently kneading his skin.

Emma laughed harder, sitting up to pet the furry thing. "Finn, this is Freckles. Now don't scare him."

His head whipped sideways to stare at her. "He started it."

"Don't be a big baby. Freckles is harmless. Ain't that right, sweetie." Emma leaned down to rub her nose over the feline's. Finn could still smell the scent of their lovemaking and it only made his dick grow again. No way did he want this furry guy's claws near his family jewels.

"Yeah, that's nice. Now get him off me."

She ignored his request and continued petting the cat. "Sorry. With all the commotion of your arrival, I forgot to mention Freckles. I hope he likes you."

"I really don't give a fuck if he does or doesn't." God, how sharp were his friggin' claws?

"Be nice," she scolded, totally oblivious to his dire predicament.

"No."

"Really now. You're a big man, Finn. Freckles is a little kitty."

"Nothing little about him. He's fat. Not get him off of me."

"Don't hurt his feelings."

"What?" Had she lost her ever-loving mind?

Finally, Emma removed the animal from his chest, relief flooding him as he rubbed his skin.

"I think he likes you, Finn. He's never approached anyone else. He usually stays hidden. That's why you haven't seen him until now."

"Yeah, what a pity," he complained and sat on the edge of the bed. "Do you know how to cook?"

"Mac and cheese from the box is my specialty." She looked completely serious too, didn't she? Little witch.

"Fine. You go feed the horses and I'll make

dinner.”

“Ohhh. I lucked out meeting you, Finn,” she teased as she stood and dressed. “I mean not only are you great in bed but you can feed me real food too. You hear that Freckles? We’re going to dine well tonight.”

“If you think that fluff ball is getting any food I cook, think again.”

As if the stupid animal understood, he hissed and spit at Finn.

“Shut up, Freckles. You don’t scare me,” Finn complained, not understanding why he was arguing with a damn cat. But, truth be told, the fur ball did scare him a little with the way he glared through those evil green eyes. Okay, maybe he’d share some food with the thing if it meant that cat didn’t mistake his balls for toys. A shudder ran through Finn at the very thought and his balls twitched with uneasiness.

Emma dropped the cat to the floor and it shot out of the room like a black blur. She walked over to Finn, stood on her toes and kissed his cheek.

“I’ll be about an hour. Contrary to what you may think, I do have real food in the fridge and cabinets. Just never get around to cooking much since it’s just me. Well, Freckles too, but he’ll eat anything I give him. He’s not fussy at all.”

“Ever think about de-clawing him?” Finn asked, following Emma down the stairs. When she turned to face him, her eyes were wide and her face pale, you’d think he asked her to put the cat to sleep.

“That’s so cruel. I’m going to forget you even asked that.” She put on a jacket and fixed her hair into a ponytail. “I hope this time alone with Freckles will make you two bond. Just don’t kill each other while I’m gone,” she ordered, before walking out the door.

He was a fucking lieutenant in the military. He

fought terrorists who thrived on bloodshed. Chased mass murderers through the most unforgiving terrain in the world. Did she honestly think a fat cat scared him? Finn got busy preparing dinner, keeping an eye out for that damn cat. He wasn't in the mood to be ambushed by a fur ball fleabag called Freckles.

"Finn Coleman, you put me down this instant. Do you hear me?" Emma yelled from her position over Finn's shoulder, his strong arm across the back of her thighs held her firmly in place as he walked through the dark house.

"No and yes."

She huffed a breath. Why was he acting like a damn Neanderthal in the middle of the night? "I said I was tired. Now take me back to bed."

"I want to look at the stars first," he said simply, hauling her out the back door to the deck.

"Then you go look. I want to sleep. If you've seen one freaking star, you've seen them all," she complained, pounding his back for emphasis.

A sharp spank landed on her rear-end. Oh, here we go again. She bit off another curse before her bottom paid for her sarcasm. She ignored the flash of excitement that careened through the depth of her womb as she contemplated a possible playful spanking. Finn's spankings kept her hovering on that fine line between pleasure and pain. How he did it without hurting her with his powerful strength, she didn't know. But now that she had experienced the thrill of erotic spankings, she wasn't ashamed to want more and think of ways to entice him to give her one.

When finally placed on her feet, Emma raised her chin to give Finn a serious tongue lashing but his attention was already on the stars above in the pitch-black sky. Only a sliver of the moon hung in the blackness, giving the stars their own stage.

“Finn?”

He looked back down at her. “Yeah, baby.”

“You’re acting like you’ve never seen a star before. What gives?”

He pulled her onto his lap as he sat on a lounge chair, the muscles in his arms flexing as they closed around her in a wall of protection. Unable to resist, Emma eased against his chest and snuggled. This was worth being hauled from the comfort of her bed. Having a man like Finn hold her like she was the most special woman on Earth pushed the sleepiness from her body.

Funny how she hadn’t heard him get out of the bed. Usually she was a light sleeper, especially since she lived out here alone. It was different when her dad lived here. Then her father would investigate any noise. Now, it was up to her, so her senses were very in tune to her house. She should’ve heard him wake up and move around, but the creaky floors hadn’t even given him away. These last few days she’d witnessed firsthand how silent he could be even when walking into a room. His training had obviously done him good.

“It’s not too chilly out tonight. Not like it’s been,” Emma said, rubbing her arms covered only by the long sleeves of her T-shirt. At least Finn was smart enough to dress her in the flimsy shirt before hauling her out into the chilly night air. Her legs were exposed, but the heat radiating from Finn’s massive body warmed her like she was sitting in front of a roaring fireplace.

“Fresh air does a body good. Keeps the senses alert,” Finn said, rubbing her thigh, the simple caress waking her pussy. The wetness slowly creeping onto her pussy lips from an arousal that was so automatic now that Finn was around. The soft breeze swept over her heated mound, no panties to defend against the cool night air.

Nature was putting on a fantastic show tonight as a multitude of stars twinkled brilliantly above. Watching them was like listening to an orchestra, each instrument had its own time to shine, its own chance to show its beauty and power. Emma's gaze slowly wandered the dark sky, identifying constellations she hadn't really paid attention to since she was a little girl and sitting on the back porch with her dad.

"When I'm on a mission, I see these stars all the time, Emma, baby. There were times when I'd be stuck for hours and hours on patrols, just sitting there waiting for someone to attack, praying nobody did. Darkness was my friend. It made it harder for the enemy to find me, giving me the chance to find him first."

"Yes, I remember." She didn't want to think about the danger he faced or the horrors he had already seen.

Finn was quiet for a long moment before continuing. When he did speak, Emma heard something for the second time in his voice. Vulnerability. Most times he succeeded in hiding it. But now wasn't one of those times. "I used to look up at those bright stars, Emma, and I knew, somewhere out there you were sleeping under the same stars. It made me feel so close to you. So fucking close. I just wanted to feel you. To touch you, baby."

"Oh, Finn," she whispered, her fingers trailing circles over his T-shirt covered chest, the muscles hidden beneath the material hard and defined.

"When I saw a shooting star, I'd pretend it was one that had just been near you and was coming to let me know you were out there." He laughed without humor. "Pretty sappy for a big, tough military man, huh?"

She turned her head up as he looked down at her. Moving her fingers over his scarred cheek, she

blinked back tears, not wanting to burden him with any more emotion than he was obviously struggling with. "Yeah, but I happen to adore sappy."

He smiled, a wide, relieved smile. "Thanks for understanding me so well, Emma."

"Finn?"

"Mmmmm."

"I knew you were out there, too. Somewhere under the same sky that had passed over me. Maybe not in the same time zone. But sometimes, just knowing is all someone really needs."

His arms tightened around her. "It's what I needed that's for sure. And you know what I need right now, baby?"

"Tell me."

"To make love to you until the stars disappear."

She smiled, keeping her voice calm, even as the emotion churned in her belly and tied it into knots. "Then I expect you'll carry me back to bed. You know, to conserve my energy for our loving." What was it about this man that intrigued her like no one before?

"Oh please," he teased, rising and lifting her into his arms without any effort. "You just like to be toted around."

"Can't blame me for that. It's not every day I have big, strong arms carrying me off into the stars and beyond. Now make love to me, Finn Coleman. All night long. Just the way you like. The way I like. Tie me to that bed and fuck me until I scream your name."

"Not a problem," Finn confirmed, kicking the bedroom door shut behind them.

What she expected was to have the T-shirt ripped from her body. So when he stood her in front of him, looked deeply into her soul, and those clever hands slowly pushed the cotton material up her sides to tug over her head, she couldn't help but

tremble. Finn may not know it, but he was romancing her. Gone were the wild passions they had shared up until now. Seduction took its place as every touch enticed her body into submission.

“You are the most beautiful woman, Emma,” he whispered against her cheek, his large hands barely touching her back in the close embrace.

The slowness of their loving was killing her. But she understood why he needed this. At least she hoped she did. It was the closeness he needed more than anything right now. To know he was safe, to know he was cared for. She could do this for him.

It was her turn to lead their lovemaking. Her hands found his face, lifting it from her shoulder to kiss his lips. Slow and precise, she traced her tongue along the outline of his stern lips. The softness such a contrast to his otherwise hard body. His fingers dug into her ribs, the pinch of pain nothing to complain about when it meant she was really there with him.

Her hands removed his T-shirt before he kicked out of his jeans. Totally naked, their silhouettes covered the wall, bathed in the light of the two candles on the dresser.

Already wet, her pussy was ready and willing to accept his thick cock. No foreplay was needed tonight. Just closeness.

“Before we go any further, let me get something from my bag.”

“Okay.”

Finn returned holding a small plastic form. “This is a butt plug, Emma. I want to use it to prepare your ass for my cock. Baby, I can’t wait to have you that way.”

Emma swallowed hard. She’d read about plugs but had never seen one much less used one. “Okay, Finn. If that’s what you want.”

“I want to make all our loving great for you,

baby. This will help. When I fuck your ass, it won't be uncomfortable. The plug will get you ready for me. Are you ready? Turn around and bend over the bed for me."

She did as instructed, nerves making her jumpy. As exciting as it was to try these new sex toys and positions, nervousness still managed to consume her.

The first thing she felt was his fingertip prodding her hole with a cool liquid. Slowly, he inserted his finger. "This is just some lube. Try to relax."

She breathed deeply and exhaled. She trusted him.

Finn had removed his finger and lubed the butt plug as she watched over her shoulder. His eyes caught hers briefly before prodding the entrance of her ass with the slender plug.

"Oh. That feels a bit odd."

He laid a soft, lingering kiss to the middle of her back. The simple gesture provided as much comfort as the most sensitive words could have. Her nerves soothed, she relaxed more.

"I'm inserting the butt plug now, Emma. You may feel pressure and a pinch, but I promise it'll let up as fast as it happens. Okay?"

"Yes."

The cool plastic worked into her anus slowly, stretching her muscles. Amazingly, the slight pinch aroused her. Juices wet her pussy lips as tiny spasms danced along her vaginal walls. With a final push, the plug was buried deep into her ass. A fullness she never expected increased her desire.

"Oh, Finn."

"All done, baby. The butt plug is in. Are you okay?"

She stood and faced him. "Yes. It's not bad at all. Tight. But not bad."

"Give me a moment," Finn said as he

disappeared into the bathroom where the sound of running water could be heard. As promised, he returned promptly. "Sorry. Just had to wash my hands. Now, where were we?" he asked, shuffling to her side.

"I believe I was just about to seduce you," she teased. Retrieving a condom from the nightstand, Emma knelt in front of Finn to dress his cock in the latex shield. Once done, she took his offered hand to help stand.

Keeping his hand in hers, she walked them to the bed and crawled on her hands and knees, her rear-end on display. When the bed sagged behind her, she knew he was in position. With her fingers, she reached under her body, opening her pussy lips and spreading her wetness.

When Finn's thick cock head nudged against the entrance to her pussy, she spoke softly. "No, Finn. Let me guide your cock into my pussy."

His hands immediately abandoned his erection and grasped her bottom tightly. With his thick cock in her hands, she angled it toward her pussy, easing back to take the length of him deep in one stroke. The feeling of the butt plug seated in her ass reminded her of the more erotic sex to come. His fingers dug into her flesh as she cried out, the sheer force of his erection stretching her, lighting her vaginal walls on fire. The intrusion of the butt plug in her ass just made her pussy all the more tighter, adding to her enjoyment.

"Oh, Emma, baby. You're so tight. Feel so damn good." Finn leaned over her back, his body weight supported by his hands resting on the bed.

"Slow, Finn. I want it slow."

"God, you're fucking killing me. I can't do slow."

When his hips bucked faster into her, she spoke louder. "Slow. Or we stop."

With a muffled curse, Finn complied with her

wishes and slowed his pace. Each stroke awakened sensitive nerve-endings in her pussy walls, the hot sensations bursting throughout her cunt as the edges of her building orgasm grew wider to spread throughout her vagina. Sensations rocked her as spasms erupted throughout her pussy to her womb. Her orgasm ripped a cry from her throat.

“Finn! Yes! Oh, Finn!” Her words were insane cries to demand more of his cock’s rapid drive deep into her pussy.

With a strong final thrust, Finn held his cock deep inside her tightening pussy pressing against the butt plug in her ass, his body shaking as he emptied his cum into the hated condom. Emma fantasized about what it would feel like to have Finn’s hot cum shooting into her womb, the salty pearly-white liquid mixing with her thick juices to create their scent...the scent of their lovemaking. Something only their bodies together could ever formulate.

When his cock slid from her body, she turned to finish her loving. Before he could remove the condom, she did so. After tossing it in the trash can by her bed, she leaned down and ran her tongue over his sated cock, licking the remaining cum from his cock. She licked up then down, each side got her attention. She had never tasted a man before. Finn tasted exactly like she had imagined—strong, powerful, and addictive. With a few swipes of her tongue, his cock glistened.

When she sat up, the look on Finn’s face shocked her. He looked lost, confused, and so damn tired, like he’d aged twenty years in the last hour.

“Did I do something wrong?” she asked cautiously.

“What? Never, baby.” Even his voice gave away his tiredness. “Why would you think something like that?” he demanded.

“You just...don’t look like yourself right now.”

He laughed half-heartedly, the effort obvious taking his last bit of strength as he yawned. “Never had a woman take charge in bed. Guess I’m a little shell-shocked about how much I enjoyed it. Let me remove the butt plug.” He did so quickly and painlessly, using a washcloth to remove the extra lube from the crack of her ass and then walked to the bathroom to clean the toy.

When he returned, he tossed the plug back into his duffel bag and crawled under the covers before pulling her onto his chest, his arm tight around her. “Sweet dreams, baby.”

Damn right she’d have sweet dreams. So he’d enjoyed himself, did he? Smiling, Emma dozed off.

Chapter Eight

“So you have to leave in a little more than a week, Finn?” Emma asked, walking into her bedroom, towel drying her long hair. If she didn’t blow dry it soon, it’d turn into an unruly mess.

The sun was already high in the sky. She wasn’t used to sleeping until late morning, but since they’d spent the night making love, it was necessary to recoup her energy.

Finn sat on the edge of her bed, fresh from his shower, dressed only in a pair of jeans. His muscular chest was covered in a dark mat of hair that disappeared into the waist of the denim. His blue eyes caught hers, the seriousness in them scared her.

“Yes. But that’s not what I want to talk about right now, baby.” He stood and reached for her, tearing away the towel wrapped around her body. “In fact, conversation’s not what I have in mind.”

Standing naked in front of him, her skin soft and flushed from her hot shower, she felt more beautiful and sexy than she ever thought she could. This man had a way of making her believe in herself. And right now, he was purposely avoiding talking about his departure. Okay, she’d let it slide for now. But soon, whether he liked it or not, she’d get him to talk. She had to know where they stood after this time together was over.

His lips found the sensitive curve of her neck, leaving wet kisses down her throat until he found her breast. Taking the nipple into his mouth, he sucked hard, the simple attention striking a line of

fire right to her womb. Her mind ceased to think of anything except Finn's magnificent exploitation of her body. How she could need him so badly again after the night of passion they'd shared, after making love over and over these past few days, she couldn't guess. But she sure as hell was glad her body could keep up with his insatiable needs.

"You smell so fucking sexy," he said, against the side of her breast, the warmth of his breath like a blowtorch against her skin. "Like a warm summer day in a meadow, fresh and pretty."

Lifting her, he placed her in the middle of the bed, leaning his body over hers, his chest hair tickling her nipples. When he held his body weight off of her, she automatically raised her arms above her head, knowing the next step in their loving would be to apply the restraints and prepare her to be at his mercy.

In the short time they'd spent together over the weekend, Finn had taught her to let go of the tight control she had over every part of her life. She was shocked to discover just how in charge of everything she always needed to be. Never had she felt so relaxed or allowed herself to enjoy the moment. Just enjoy it. Taking away the movement of her limbs gave her a different kind of freedom even as it restricted her motion. It gave her the chance to find herself and embrace the type of woman she truly was, a sensual, vibrant, beautiful woman. Discovering that she liked being bound while being fucked made her feel like a naughty girl, one who could wrap a man around her finger with just a look.

If her conversations with Finn were any indication, she'd guess that she had him wrapped. The way he spoke about her, his compliments, the way he practically placed her on a pedestal. Never before had anyone made her feel like a princess, and then he showed up on her doorstep. Closing her eyes,

Emma relished the feel of Finn's strong hand clamping gently over her wrists as he fastened her binds. Opening her eyes, she studied his face, again his total concentration fixed on her, on her pleasure. He was the most magnificent man she'd ever known; his physical appearance taking second place only to his enormous heart. It seemed the big, tough military man was indeed a big teddy bear at heart. Maybe she'd keep that observation to herself, to save his male pride and ego from any bruising.

Tied spread-eagle to the bed, Emma watched as Finn stripped off his jeans and boxers. His erection sprang forward, the tip already glistening with precum.

"I love looking at you, Emma. The curve of your waist, the swell of your breasts, the bare skin of your sweet pussy. I need to taste you."

Burying his head between her legs, Finn's warm breath covered her mound. His finger stroked her pink lips open, the slick folds parting eagerly under his touch. Emma closed her eyes and resigned herself to the sensation of his attentions. The binds were snug at her wrists, reminding her of her vulnerability and heightening her pleasure.

Her body heated quickly, her hips moving up to meet his mouth. Spreading her cunt open wide with his thumbs, he maneuvered his mouth in and out of her folds, fucking her hole with long thrusts of his frisky tongue. Knowing what to expect from him, her womb clenched, her cream filled her channel. Oh God, this was too much, the need to come already overwhelming. She wished for the sensation to last, but the intensity was so much to bear.

Wriggling against her restraints, Emma wanted to hold Finn's head between her legs and force him to concentrate on her clit, compelling her to come. Her ankles strained against the binds as she tried, without success, to lift her legs to wrap them around

his neck to hold his head to her pussy. Looking down at him, she saw the most erotic picture. His eyes were closed, stern concentration etched on his face as his head bobbed over her mound, licking her bare skin feverishly. He looked like a starved man, hungry for her, taking his fill as if she were the last meal of his life.

“Finn, you’re so good at this. Your mouth should win a prize.”

The soft slurping noises ceased. “I’m looking at my prize, baby. And it tastes divine, so sweet and hot. My tongue can’t lick you fast enough.”

Oh, he was too damn good at foreplay. He could make her come with just his sexy words teasing her ears. His thumbs pressed harder against her pussy lips, widening her for his attentions. When his mouth moved over her clit and his teeth nibbled and sucked deeply on the hard nub, she cried out with inaudible words. The sensation tearing through her pussy lit a fiery path to her womb.

“Finn. Oh, I’m coming. Don’t stop. Yes, Finn, yes.”

With his tongue sweeping wildly over her clit, he inserted two fingers into her channel, the sucking noise of her wetness proof of how aroused she was. He never stopped his loving as she bucked and screamed out. That fascinating mouth was able to hold on to her clit as she bucked like a bronco.

“Mmmm,” he moaned.

Her pussy walls clenched so tightly the throbbing ached all the way to the depths of her womb. Gasping for breath, Emma threw herself into the waves of pleasure enveloping her, allowing herself to feel every spasm, to feel her juices flow from her body to be lapped up by his greedy tongue. Pulling at her binds, she was desperate to free herself, needing to touch him.

“I can’t get enough of your sweet pussy, Emma. I

never want to forget the taste of you.”

Finn’s mouth moved from her pussy to her inner thighs, placing soft, wet kisses to her pale skin. With every muscle in her body taut, she was suddenly aware at how sensitive her cunt was, the tongue action from Finn had stroked every nerve ending until it simmered even after her explosion.

“I want to insert the butt plug again,” he said casually, like it was something they had done a hundred times before. “The more we use it, the better prepared you’ll be to take my cock in your ass. It’s all I can think about, baby, how tight your fine ass is going to be.”

He had obviously been prepared to use the plug as he held the lube and smeared it generously on her hole. With a quick movement, his hand had positioned the plug at the entrance of her ass. With slow determination, he gently pushed the plug inside, stretching her. God, how she loved to be naughty in bed.

The plug entered her ass faster than the night before. It was more comfortable, too. So Finn was right that this did help prep her for his cock.

Finn wiped his hands on a washcloth before returning his attention back to Emma.

With her weeping pussy begging to be fucked, Emma could barely find her voice to beg Finn to take her. But first she needed the taste of his cock to remember him by. Last night’s few licks were nothing compared to what she desired.

“Finn, let me suck your cock. I want to taste you.”

His eyes watched her, his expression unreadable. Would he deny her request? After all the private areas of her body that his mouth had been, he’d actually think of denying her? Oh, she thought not.

“Finn, now. I want that magnificent cock in my

mouth.”

He slowly crawled up her, leaning over her body. “Have you ever done this, Emma? I mean, last night you stopped after only a few licks.”

It was foolish to blush after all they’d already done together, but it was out of her control as her cheeks flamed. “No, but that doesn’t mean I wouldn’t be good at it.”

His lips curved into a crooked smile. “No, it doesn’t. And I didn’t say you wouldn’t be.”

“Oh. Then what’s it matter? I’ve seen movies. I think I get the idea of how to give a blowjob. Anything I do wrong, you can instruct me.”

“Sounds good to me. And just so you know, I only asked because I was hoping no other man’s cock had touched these pretty lips, this sensuous mouth.” His fingers brushed over her lips, skimming her jaw before he raised his body to straddle her, keeping his weight off her body by kneeling up to position his cock at her mouth. Finn reached behind her, placing pillows under her head to help elevate her for better access.

Unable to move her hands thanks to her restraints, she depended on Finn to guide his cock to her mouth. This close she could see the purple veins covering the erection and appreciated the thickness even more from this angle. Taking the head of his penis into her mouth, her lips slowly slid up and down his shaft, taking him deeper. Her jaw stretched as far as it would go and she just barely fit him inside. Never could she have imagined taking a man’s cock into her mouth like this and enjoying the power of having his pleasure solely in her possession.

Edged on by his soft moans and the pumping of his hips, Emma craned her head up, twisting and moving to suck his hardness. Pre-cum slid onto her tongue, leaving its salty taste in its wake. Wanting

to feel him explode in her mouth, Emma concentrated on sucking him with long, determined strokes. When his hand fisted in her hair, she ignored the slight pain, knowing she was driving him beyond control.

“Christ, Emma. This is too fucking good. I can’t believe you’ve never done this before. Fuck.”

She continued sucking; stroking her tongue along the tender underside of his cock after she discovered that pleased him most.

He released her hair and pushed at her shoulders. “Baby, pull back now if you don’t want me to come in your mouth. Oh God. Decide right now or it’s too late.”

Too late. His cock stiffened, his body shook, as his hot seed shot down her throat in salty, thick jets. Her mouth filled with his entire length should’ve gagged her but she did herself proud, moving her head to accommodate him, taking him to the back of her throat, while greedily swallowing every drop of his cum.

Feeling him shudder, she slowed down her sucking, her tongue licking the last of the cum from his shaft as it relaxed in her mouth. When he pulled free, she licked her lips clean and looked up at him, proud of his satisfied look.

“I take it by the look on your face that I did good.”

“Fucking A you did good.” His voice was hoarse, but he emphasized each word.

Frowning, she stared at him, her chin raised. “And I didn’t lie, Finn. I’ve never done that before. I will not deceive you again. I have no reason to lie now.”

“I know, baby.” His knuckles skimmed her cheek. “Come here.” Quickly he released her arms and legs from the binds, pulling her onto his chest as he lay back on the bed, his arms wrapped tightly

around her.

Taking a deep breath, she sighed. "Finn, as much as I'd prefer to lay in bed all day making love to you, especially since our time together is limited, I do have some things to do around the house and in the greenhouse. Not to mention that I have to go feed the horses and muck the stalls."

"I'll take care of the horses for you, baby."

She looked up at him, moving to lie across his chest, her sensitive nipples rubbing against his soft black mat of chest hair to awaken her desires again. "Really? But you should rest. It's your vacation."

His smile softened his face. "Believe me, I've gotten all the rest I need. I won't lie around while you tackle all the chores yourself. No way."

"It's okay. They're my chores. It's what I do."

Twirling a long curl around his finger, his serious blue eyes met hers. "Not while I'm here and able to lend a hand. Don't argue with me, Emma. I'm helping out."

"You are so bossy. Do you know that?" Her words were soft, but she did tweak his nipple just for the effect.

His hand snatched hers into his larger one before she had the chance to torture the hard peak. "Ouch. That'll get you a spanking, darling." For emphasis, his other hand landed with a whack on her bottom, causing her to shriek in delight. "Enough. Let's get our chores done so I can get you back into bed." His authoritative tone only heightened her arousal but he was right. Better to get the responsibilities out of the way so they could play.

Finn pulled her up with him and released her to stand in front of him. He turned her around, grasped the butt plug and removed it quickly. The slight pinch caused her to yelp as she faced him again.

With her hands on her hips, she smiled up at

him. "You know, threatening to spank me doesn't scare me. I like it too much." Feeling brave, her fingers latched onto his nipple again and pinched quickly before releasing it just as fast.

He growled and reached for her but she was too fast. Screeching, she jumped out of his way and ran into the bathroom, slamming the door.

"If you think a flimsy piece of door is gonna keep me from paddling that pretty little ass of yours, you'd better think twice." Entering the unlocked bathroom, Finn smiled at Emma and shut the door. He dropped the butt plug into the sink before approaching her.

Sitting on the edge of the tub, Finn took Emma over his knee.

"Finn! Don't you dare. We have work to do."

"Work can be done after I spank you."

His hand wasted no time connecting with her wiggling bottom. She had started the spanking out laughing but as her tender flesh heated up under his spans, the fight quickly escaped her. Her ass cheeks winced with each new slap of his hand as he alternated from one cheek to the next in a steady rhythm that soon had her pussy pulsing in the same throbbing way.

"I love the way your pale ass turns pink so fast when I spank you, baby. Does it hurt?"

"Yes, a little." She couldn't lie. This spanking was different than the spanking he gave her when he'd first arrived.

"That's because I want it to."

"What?" Instinctively, she squirmed.

He laughed. The spans had slowed down. "I want you pretty little ass to remain hot for me throughout the day while you tackle your chores. Then you'll think of me."

The spanking was over, her heated bottom very aware of the sting he'd left behind. Her cream coated

her pussy lips confirming her arousal over such punishment. Except she couldn't think of Finn's spankings as punishment, not when she derived so much pleasure from them.

When he stood her up and rested her hands on the bathroom sink, she didn't know what he was about. But the smug look on his face warned that his torment wasn't quite over.

"Ever watch yourself come, Emma," he asked, watching her in the mirror.

"No, how could I do that?"

"Like this," he whispered, keeping his eyes locked on hers through the mirror.

Finn's hand skimmed over her fiery backside, down the crack of her ass to her wet pussy lips. She moaned and flung her head back when his fingers parted the saturated flesh.

"Uh-uh, baby, or I'll stop. You keep looking at yourself in the mirror. Watch how your eyes fill with passion. How your pretty skin flushes with your arousal. Do you know how exciting it is for me when you get so damn hot when I spank you? God, my cock throbs during the spanking, knowing each slap of my hand on your sexy ass gets your pussy wetter and wetter."

Oh God, he was slowly killing her. How could she watch herself be stroked and petted? It was the most erotic sight she'd ever seen, though as it took all her willpower to keep her eyes locked on the mirror as Finn's very talented fingers worked themselves slowly and deeply into her cunt. Those long fingers stretched slightly sore muscles deep within her vagina, muscles unfamiliar with the kind of loving her pussy had received these past few days.

"Feel my fingers, feel them move inside this hot, tight pussy."

When his thumb flicked over her clit, she bit her lip to keep from crying out.

“Don’t do that, Emma,” he scolded. “Don’t you dare hold back. There’s nothing to be embarrassed about with your pleasure. I want to watch you witness your pleasure, baby.”

For emphasis, his fingers fucked her pussy faster and harder, his thumb pressing onto her throbbing clit.

“Finn! Yes!” she yelled out, amazed by the increasing heat in her cheeks.

“That’s it, baby girl. Now come hard for me. Come hard so your juices spill over these fingers fucking your tight pussy.”

And she did as he ordered, coming hard, watching herself in the mirror, attempting to keep eyes on herself as her body shook with her orgasm, her pussy walls clamping over Finn’s fingers, claiming them for itself and holding them hostage with its strong spasms. Locking down on his fingers, she rode out the waves of pleasure until the release was complete and her body sated and limp.

His lips suckled her neck before he stepped back and smacked her ass lightly. She yelped, her body still humming from both the spanking and the orgasm.

“Get your stuff done. I’m headed to the stables,” Finn said, as if he hadn’t just made her come over his fingers.

When he walked to the door, turned to face her with his fingers in his mouth, licking her juices clean, her cunt throbbed in so many places it was impossible to breathe. Damn!

It took a considerable part of the afternoon to complete the chores and have dinner, and now Finn was on his way back to town for the card game with the men who’d been sent by their wives to pry information from him about his relationship with Emma. Little did the nosy women know that Finn

was well trained in the art of interrogation—how to perform it as well as how to survive it. The only thing their men would receive from Finn tonight was the hijacking of their money. Finn was determined to play cards and not answer questions.

So after the second hand was played and none of the men had made an attempt to extort any juicy information or even mention Emma, Finn wondered what this was all about. He didn't have to wait long for his answer as he'd obviously worn his thoughts across his face, something he usually didn't falter at.

"Boy, why exactly do you think we hold these card games?" Mr. Cloughton asked.

"Sure the hell ain't to do our wives' bidding," Mr. Harrison confirmed. "It's to get some peace and quiet for a few hours."

"So relax, Finn, and have fun. Ain't no one here interested in what you have going on with Emma," Charlie the bartender admitted, winning the hand. "We mind our own."

"Good to know, gentlemen. I appreciate you facing the wrath of your wives for not recovering the requested juicy information."

The men laughed. Charlie replenished their beers and they got down to playing cards. Over the next hour, it was Finn who squirmed in his seat, dying to ask questions about Emma from folks who had known her forever.

Against his better judgment, spoke up as casually as he could. "Tell me gentlemen, I know we agreed no discussions of Emma, but I'd love to meet her father. Does he come home often?"

The lively group of men fell silent, Finn's instincts on high alert. Looks like he'd managed to open a sore wound.

"Maybe twice a year. Emma lives to take care of her dad," Mr. Galway said.

"But he's not here. How can she take care of

someone who's not here?" Finn asked, folding and tossing his cards into the pile.

"Emma is here in White Cap Creek so Henry can travel with his new wife," Mr. Galway added. "Too much of that ranch reminded poor Henry of Emma's mama. So once Emma was old enough and offered to take over the operations, he let her and took off traveling."

"Comes home for holidays," Charlie said.

"Many folks think Emma believes she'll let her dad down if she doesn't stay to run the ranch. When so many people are leaving this area and have a choice to do so, well, Emma really doesn't."

"Yeah, she'd never leave, but that should be her decision not one made out of duty," Mr. Harrison said.

It appeared the men also kept up on the local gossip but just had a different way of showing it. They only shared info when it was necessary and not to build rumors.

"Henry can't stay because of the memories and Emma can't leave because of them," Mr. Cloughton admitted.

"Woman's as strong as an ox, taking care of that place all by herself and never accepting help from anyone. But she's not so strong inside, Finn. You don't mess with her heart or we'll have a say then," Charlie said with the nods of the other men.

"Of course." Finn respected them all for that declaration. He'd expect no different from men raised with honor and integrity.

"She holds it together so Henry wouldn't worry about her," Mr. Galway concluded. "Even though a dad worries about his children no matter what—good or bad. It's what parents do."

Finn threw his new cards onto the table, the urge to hold Emma in his arms too strong to fight. "Gentlemen, if you'll excuse me. I have a lovely lady

to get back to. I appreciate being included in tonight's game." He stood, pocketing the little money he had left. The old men sure knew how to play poker.

"Any time. Just keep what we told you to yourself or Emma will have our heads. That little spitfire sure has one hell of a temper," Charlie said. The others agreed and went back to their game as Finn left the Gin Mill and headed back to his Emma.

Yes, she was his. Now what the hell was he supposed to do about her when he lived around the world?

Letting himself into Emma's unlocked front door, Finn fought his training and refused to do a surveillance of each room. The bad guys were far from White Cap Creek. Or at least he hoped so. Still, his training was instilled so deeply that it was automatic to scan the room, looking for anything out of the ordinary, misplaced objects, signs of robbery or intrusion.

Nothing was unusual except the strange light across the room. Instinctively, his hand reached for a gun that was safely tucked away in a lock box in his truck. He wouldn't dare bring a firearm into Emma's house without her permission. Now, he cursed himself for forgetting to ask her. The gun was useless sitting in his truck. The light moved across the floor, two eerie spots. What the hell was it? Finn's eyes were still adjusting to the minimal light in the parlor when the lights moved toward him.

He didn't need a damn gun. He was a black belt in karate and an expert in martial arts. His body ready to leap into action, he stood stunned when he recognized the source of the mysterious lights.

"Fucking Freckles," Finn said through clenched teeth. "Don't you have anything better to do than to prowl around at night?"

Okay, either the two shots of whiskey and two beers Charlie had plied him with were finally kicking in or he was losing his ever-loving mind talking to a friggin' cat.

The only pussy he was interested in wasn't in sight. Freckles jumped up on the couch, plopped his fat ass on the overstuffed cushion, and stared at Finn. "Oh, get fucked cat, okay?"

Finn walked quietly up the stairs, something else so instilled in him from years of torturous training that it was second nature. The second floor was as quiet as the first. The bathroom light had been left on, no doubt for Finn to see his way around the unfamiliar house. But what Emma didn't realize was that Finn had memorized the layout the instant he walked through a place, inside or outside. If he wasn't able to do it so well, his life would be at risk on every mission.

But sweet Emma had thought of him. That was something he wasn't used to. The only people who thought of his safety were his men and, of course, Granddad. And now Emma. That meant she cared for him. Aw hell, he didn't need a friggin' nightlight to know she cared.

Carefully opening the bedroom door, he stepped in without a sound. Emma lay sprawled on her bed fast asleep, an erotic romance book over her chest. The naked couple on the cover was intricately intertwined. Damn that position looked hot. He'd have to try that with Emma.

She didn't stir when he moved her onto her side and stripped before crawling in beside her. Afraid to wake her, Finn just lay back and stared at the ceiling. If he woke her, they'd make love. If they made love, then he'd be forced to confront the unfamiliar emotions swirling through his heart, and right now the timing for that just sucked. So he concentrated on burying those feelings. There'd be

plenty of time to address them another day. Right now, he was beat, still suffering from jet lag, and begged sleep to come quickly.

“Oommph!” Finn gasped when Freckles pounced onto his chest and planted his fat ass down on Finn’s abs. “Oh, fuck. You’ve got to be kidding me.”

Emma stirred. “Mmmm.”

Finn froze, raising his finger to his lips praying the cat understood sign language as he silently hushed the fleabag. Emma’s soft snoring resumed and Finn returned his attention to Freckles. “Get off me, fur ball.”

The cat purred. Friggin’ purred. Was Finn losing his touch? First Emma wasn’t afraid of him and now the cat could care less about his commands. Aw hell. His hand pushed at the fat cat who responded with a devious growl.

Finn frowned. “Scratch me and you’ll regret it.” Finn pointed a finger at Freckles. The cat’s head bobbed up looking to be petted. “Christ! You’re not the damn pussy I had envisioned rubbing tonight,” Finn whispered.

To Finn’s gratitude, Freckles settled on Finn’s chest, tucking his paws under him. If the cat thought to use his chest to knead again he was stupid.

Finn woke to soft giggles. Opening his eyes slowly, he couldn’t believe the sun was already up. The other thing he couldn’t believe was the fat cat still slept on his chest, and the cat’s owner was practically doubled-over laughing so hard.

“Emma,” Finn warned.

“Am I interrupting something?” she teased.

“Like hell. Get the fuck up, Freckles. Don’t you have mouse hunting to do or something?” When Finn managed to push the feline off, Freckles only settled himself on the pillow Emma had abandoned.

“Cat sleeps at the wrong times,” Finn growled,

walking to the bathroom.

“What’s that supposed to mean, Freckles?” Emma asked as she made the bed.

“Have I told you how sexy you are?” Finn asked from atop the horse called Dash.

“Only ten times since we left the house,” Emma said, before hauling herself onto Silver. “You promised to go riding with me and I’m holding you to it, Finn.”

“Yes, but I recall you promising me lots of wild, kinky sex while I was here. You haven’t lived up to your promises, my dear. I’m very disappointed.” His teasing was going to get him hurt.

“You’ve got to be kidding.” She shouldn’t allow him to drag her into a silly debate when he was just busting her balls, but the stubborn woman in her wouldn’t sit back and not offer an argument. “We’ve had sex almost twenty-four hours a day. How can you possibly be disappointed?” She formed a pout.

“Awww, come here, baby. I was just playing.” That serious expression he usually wore came back.

Oh my God, these silly female tactics her friends raved about really did work on big, tough men. Holy shit, who would’ve guessed? She was up for a little fun.

“I know I’m not very experienced, but I didn’t think I was disappointing you,” she said and quickly turned her face down to hide the smile forming on her lips.

Finn maneuvered his horse close to hers. “Baby, I’m a shit. I’m sorry. I was only joking with you. I have never had this much fun with a woman.”

“Yeah, right.” The muffled sound was due to her holding in a laugh.

“I swear to you, Emma,” he said, his voice serious and commanding. “You’re the only woman I’ve ever taken the time to learn something about,

let alone spent the night with.”

Now that got her attention. “What the hell does that mean?”

He blew out an aggravated breath. “It means I’ve never slept in a woman’s bed before or her in mine. Before you, it was always only about getting off. Nothing more. Ever.”

Why his confession unnerved her, she didn’t know. And why he was pissed off explaining this to her made no sense. But there was no mistaking the tension in his arms as he held the horse’s reins even when Dash itched to live up to his name, prancing in place, ready to go.

“Are you serious?” There was no hiding her shock or confusion.

“Very. Now let’s ride.” He didn’t wait for a response, but turned the horse and trotted off.

She didn’t rush to catch up, wanting to give him a little space to chill out. Whatever it was that crawled up his ass, Emma was in no mood to deal with when the day was bright, warm, and sunny. It was difficult to believe the weathermen had forecast serious thunderstorms for the evening.

When Finn finally slowed down so she could catch up, she guessed he’d calmed down and was ready to be civil. One look at his stormy eyes told her that he’d just buried his emotions like he was so good at. Oh well, she planned to enjoy the beautiful day.

“Ready to show me what you got, tough guy?” she asked playfully, offering the sweetest smile she could muster up.

“What do you mean?”

Before he finished the question, she tore off. Silver couldn’t go too fast, but speed wasn’t what she was looking for. Fun. She just wanted to ride for fun. All the times she was on a horse lately were for exercising the horses or giving lessons. With Finn

here, she could finally enjoy riding for fun.

Racing Finn on Dash was asking for defeat. But racing up the hillside and around her open fields, feeling the wind in her hair was refreshing and relaxing. When she heard Finn's laughter beside her, she glanced over to see that he was enjoying the ride as much as she was.

They rode until Silver tired then slowed the pace for the horses to walk back to the stables.

"You ride very well, Emma. Have I told you how sexy you are?" The simple question was a peace offering and she accepted it.

"I think you should show me," she teased, not needing any female tactics this time.

"Plan to."

"You handle Dash very well, Finn. He likes you. You're a natural horseman."

He laughed and patted the horse's head, while holding the reins tightly. "If I didn't know how to ride a horse, my granddad would kick my ass. I was riding before I was walking, he always tells me."

Dash still wanted to run, but Silver would try to keep up and hurt himself. He was too old and stubborn to call it quits.

"My mom loved riding. Dad did it when necessary. He was a bit lazy."

"Can't be lazy when you own a ranch," Finn said. "I learned that the hard way. I decided not to go to college and Granddad worked me to the bone every day on the ranch. When I finally went to college, while in the military, I realized what a bonehead I was for passing up that education. Got my BA in political science and another in business administration. Figured the first helps my military career. The second will come in handy when I retire and take over the ranch."

She squinted in the mid-afternoon sun when she faced him. "When do you get to retire?"

His large shoulders shrugged. "Haven't given it much thought since the military is the only life I've known for almost twenty years. Every time my contract is over I just automatically re-up."

Emma laughed, although she didn't feel humor. "I guess I signed on here for life too."

"Sell it." His words sounded so simple and easy, but were neither.

"Why would I sell? The ranch is paid off. I love my horses and could never give them up. I live rent-free and run my rose business. I like being my own boss."

"And you like keeping your mom's memory alive."

Her heart pounded. When did this relaxing conversation change into an exploration of her past? "What would you know about that? Oh, wait. Let me guess. Your little card game last night turned into a tell-all about Emma, did it? Christ, I should've known those men were up to no good, inviting a perfect stranger to their weekly card game."

She didn't care about the sarcasm dripping from every word. How dare people continue to think they could interfere in her damn life? She was a grown woman last time she looked in the mirror. A reminder of watching herself come as Finn pleased her floated into her mind, but she quickly pushed it aside, wanting to remain upset with Finn for talking with her neighbors about her.

"Christ, Emma. They weren't talking about you, not in a bad way. They all respect the hell out of you."

"Nice way of showing it," she said, jumping off the horse and opening the pen. "If they respected me, they would stay out of my business."

He rode Dash through the pen and demounted to shut the gate. Once inside the barn, Emma hung up her saddle and Finn did the same.

“What was your mom like?”

Emma bit back tears. “I don’t care to talk about the past. It hurts too much. Okay?”

The horses drank long from their troughs. Finn stood in front of Emma, lifting her chin. The smell of hay and grass surrounded them, but she could still smell the remnants of his soap from this morning’s shower. She really just wanted to crawl into those strong arms and take a nap, forgetting all the bad things that happen in the world.

“No, it’s not okay. Tell me if you got your mother’s beauty, or her smile, or her brains, or her stubbornness. Tell me.”

Emma smiled, not able to resist answering him. “I got all of that. At least that’s what people always told me. They say I am identical to her. Mom was great. Understanding, caring, very sociable. I miss her.”

When those arms wrapped around her, the comfort was unbelievable, exactly what she craved. She leaned her weight into him, his kisses on her hair so soft. “I miss my parents a lot too. But I know they wouldn’t want me to waste my life crying over them, so I move on and be the best person I can be. You’re doing that too, Emma. You just have to allow yourself to have some fun. If you want the ranch, keep it. If you don’t, sell it and live your life. But you decide for you not out of a sense of duty. Promise?”

She looked up into his eyes, tenderness replacing his earlier hostility. “Yes. Promise.” Her lips brushed lightly across his. “Make love to me, Finn.”

“I’ll race you back to the house, baby.”

“No. Here. Make love to me on the hay, with the wind blowing around us, the sounds of spring outside.”

Without a word, he took her mouth in a possessive kiss. His tongue danced with hers. The

coolness from the water they drank at the barn had no impact on the heat of his mouth. If she didn't know better, she'd swear his lips scalded hers in their demand for attention. With little finesse, Finn yanked at her jeans until he had her bare from the waist down. Her shirt was scrunched above her breasts, freeing the mounds for his rough hands.

"Yes, Finn. Oh, how I need you. Fuck me now, please."

The telltale ripping noise of the condom wrapper proved he was just as ready as she was to fuck hard and fast. His breathing was quick and deep. When his hands spun her around, she held on to the top of the wooden stall as he entered her soaked pussy from behind. His hips flexed into hers as hard as he ever had. She loved every thrust, every moment her body was joined with his. The wooden stall squeaked loudly with every thrust of Finn's cock into her heat. At this angle, he was touching that oh-so-wonderful G-spot.

The pressure built deep in her womb, faster and stronger than it ever had. Maybe it was the bouncing in the saddle that had stimulated her clit and prepped her for his cock, or maybe it was studying his body as he rode Dash. His muscles hard and defined, his solid profile, his resilient posture as he rode like he'd never been off a horse for years. All of these things could have been the reason. But it was the closeness, the strength of Finn's hold on her that put Emma over the edge. Never had a man showed her such awareness.

"I'm coming. Oh. My. God." Her screams echoed throughout the barn and beyond. It was the first time in a long time she didn't mind not having any close neighbors.

"Damn. Emma. God, I'm blowing...already," Finn exclaimed through what sounded like tightly clenched teeth.

Perspiration covered both of them as his cock slid from the comforts of her well-fucked pussy. A hard fuck like that should have rendered her unable to walk but she only wanted more. Lots more.

But a shower first.

"I'd love to hold you, babe, and talk cute shit, but if we don't get our asses back to the house, we're gonna get soaked," Finn said as he dressed quickly.

"What?" Emma looked outside at the darkening sky and ominous thunderheads. The storm was either hitting earlier than expected or they had spent entirely too much time fucking. "Oh, shit. Let's go."

Emma took off at a jog with Finn right beside her. Halfway between the stables and the house, the skies open up.

"Shit. The windows are open," Emma yelled over the torrential downpour. When Finn's hand locked on her arm and brought her to an abrupt stop, she yelled, "What are you doing?"

"Kiss me, Emma."

That's it. Finn had officially lost his mind. But she needed to deal with her windows first. "You want a kiss in the middle of a thunderstorm?" As if on cue, a bright flash of lightening lit up the sky followed by a loud crash of thunder.

"I've always thought rain was romantic. Now kiss me," he said, the warmest smile covering his handsome rain-slicked face. The scar on his cheek looked like it had been painful; automatically she caressed it before his lips touched hers.

The ferocity of the storm echoed Finn's kiss as his hands held her tightly to his body, his fingers dancing up and down her back over her soaked shirt. Suddenly, windows didn't matter, the storm didn't matter, only Finn's kiss mattered. Her head slanted to provide him the access he demanded to deepen the kiss. As the rain sluiced over them, she shivered,

not sure if it was from the coldness of her storm-drenched body or from the butterflies dancing in her belly as Finn's magical fingers stroked her body.

When he removed his lips, his eyes searched hers, the blue depths as calm as she had yet to see them. "Come on, you're soaked," he said smiling.

Freckles met them at the front door.

"I can't believe he likes you."

"Yeah, lucky me." Freckles rubbed against his leg. "Fucking cat. Come on, now I'm furry *and* wet."

"I happen to like furry," Emma teased, walking back into the kitchen after shutting the windows.

"This next week is going to be hell with flea bag trying to be my friend," Finn complained, standing gloriously naked in the kitchen after quickly peeling off his wet clothes.

"You can always go to Texas," Emma said, after taking a long sip of water.

"Throwing me out now are you? Freckles, can you believe that?"

Freckles responded with another rub against Finn's legs. Finn rolled his eyes as Emma laughed.

"Come on, Freckles," Emma said as she walked from the room and held up her chin. "Come upstairs while mama showers." The cat obeyed and followed.

"Fuck that. Freckles, you get your fat ass back down here while *we* take a shower," Finn said, climbing the stairs two at a time to catch up to Emma.

Chapter Nine

“Finn, I can have someone repair the barn. It’s your vacation. You’re not supposed to work on your vacation, silly,” Emma said, standing at the bottom of the ladder Finn stood on to reach the top of the barn door.

“Babe, you need to know that I’m not the kind of guy that can just lay around.” He came down the ladder and tweaked her nose. “Now, while I don’t mind relaxing with you in my arms, I do mind sitting around being useless while you work your ass off.”

“It’s my ranch. My responsibility. I’m used to doing these things.”

“Yeah, well, for the next week while I’m here you better expect me to lend a hand.” He moved the ladder to the next door and steadied it.

Emma crossed her arms, tapping her foot and shooting daggers from her stormy brown eyes. Finn didn’t care if she fell to the ground in a full fledged tantrum. He wasn’t budging about helping out during his stay. He smirked, hoping she’d throw the temper tantrum, since visions of him hauling her over his lap and pulling those sexy jeans down to bare her ass for a good paddling crossed his mind. He may just get the chance to do that since she was obviously in a good temper already.

“And if I don’t allow you to lend a hand, Finn, then what? Are you going to tie me up and do all the work yourself?”

Sarcasm suited her well. “Now, I hadn’t thought of that, baby, but I like how you think. I was just

going to withhold sex,” he teased, enjoying the view as she bit her bottom lip like she was attempting not to curse a blue streak.

What she did next surprised the hell out of him because he expected a war. “Great. Then we have an agreement. I’m not allowing you to work while you should be relaxing, and you can withhold the sex. I’ve got a trusty vibrator if I get the urge. Just make sure you don’t injure your hand, Finn. After all, you’re going to need it to jerk off to get to sleep at night.”

When she turned and sauntered back to the house, his cock wanted to break free of the constraints of the jeans and salute. Son of a bitch, didn’t the little witch turn him on with that sexy, stubborn attitude.

“Aw, hell. Friggin’ barn can wait,” Finn said, throwing down the T-shirt he’d been using to wipe his face. Spring days were definitely pleasant in Vermont.

Catching up to Emma, he lifted her by the waist and slung her over his shoulder.

Through shrieks, she spoke. “Finn, just what the hell do you think you’re doing?”

“Me Finn, you Emma,” he said, doing his best Tarzan impression and hoping to calm her down because he really wanted to fuck her bad. “Finn want to fuck Emma. Emma better fuck Finn or Emma get spanked.”

By the time his silly speech was over, he’d made it back to the house and had Emma laughing.

“Finn, this isn’t funny. I have work to do.”

“Nope,” he said, swatting her up-turned bottom as he took the stairs to her bedroom, landing a solid smack to her stubborn, sexy ass. “I can’t work, you can’t work.”

“Like hell.”

He spanked her ass again. “No swear. Finn don’t

like.”

He tossed her onto the bed, glad to see her smiling. “You are in so much trouble, Finn. I’m talking deep shit, buddy.”

“I’m still going to fuck you right now, baby. Strip.”

Her mouth hung open and she stared up at him. “Strip? My...aren’t you the romantic today? What happened to sensual foreplay?”

He smiled as he removed the rest of his clothes. “If I take those clothes off, I can’t promise they won’t get shredded.” He stood by the bed staring down at her while his hand stroked his cock in long, languid strokes. “I’m horny as hell watching you strut that fine ass in front of me all day. Only so much a man can be expected to take. Now strip.”

Emma’s smile was borderline evil, knowing the pain his arousal was causing him, knowing he needed release soon. To his gratitude, she stood and stripped, but not before taking her sweet time to shimmy out of each article of clothing.

“Aren’t you forgetting a condom?” she asked, her eyes fixated on his thick cock. It throbbed in his grip with the thought of where he planned to bury it deep inside her.

“Don’t need a condom for where I’m going to fuck you.”

Her little tongue peeked out between her lips like she was ready for a feast. Damn, she had no idea how fucking badly she aroused him. His cock had never been this hard before and now he swore it could drill nails.

“While I do love your blowjobs, Emma, baby, that’s not where I plan to fuck you. I think it’s about time to see if that butt plug prepared you for me.” Keeping his cock in his hand, he stepped closer to her, his free hand reaching behind her neck to maneuver her lips to his. With barely a touch

against her mouth, he spoke. "You've been flaunting that fine ass of yours all day. I want it. It's about time I take the last hole you have to offer me."

Her gasp signaled her understanding. "Wh-what?"

Adorable. Sexy. Adorable and sexy as all hell. How the hell was he ever going to leave her? That thought was for another time. His cock needed her.

"Let me fuck your ass, Emma. I promised to make it enjoyable for you. I've dreamt of how tight it will be."

"I don't know." While her words may have seemed hesitant, her body said differently. Her wide eyes filled with lust, her face pinkened with her arousal, and her breathing deepened. He had enjoyed becoming skilled at detecting how Emma's body would react to his touch as much as he enjoyed memorizing every inch of her curves.

His lips trailed up the curve of her neck to whisper in her ear. "I'm going to bury my cock deep into your tight ass, baby. The way the butt plug slid in that last time. Oh, hell yeah. Your pretty ass is ready to feel my cock buried deep inside its tightness."

With his arms wrapped around her slender frame, she relaxed, allowing her weight to lean onto him. "Finn...I've never..." she spoke into his chest as her nose burrowed into his shirt.

He kissed the top of her head, laying a soft, lingering kiss to the soft mass of brown hair. "I know, honey. That's why I want it so bad, crave it. No man has touched that sweet ass. I want to be the one to take it the first time, to show you how hot you are. I want to do this with you, Emma. Trust me. I need you to trust me."

She looked up at him, her underlying innocence battling with her curiosity and her sense of erotic adventure. Damn she was adorable.

“Okay, but if I don’t like it, we stop.”

He smiled, relieved she trusted him so much. “Of course. But if you relax, you will enjoy the hell out of anal sex baby. I need to get some lube from my bag.”

When he returned with a small bottle, he crawled onto the bed with her. He didn’t know how to explain it but he needed to feel her skin against his, wanted to feel the ultimate in intimacy. Since she wasn’t on the pill, they’d have to always use a condom. Fucking her anally would be the next best thing to feeling that tight pussy sheath his cock in the warmth of its juices.

“Emma, kneel in front of me.” When she did, he took the time to soothe her, running his hands over her slender back and curvy ass cheeks. “This is just lube and my finger. That’s all, baby. Relax and let me prep you like I did before we used the butt plug.”

At the puckered entrance of her asshole, he hesitated before pushing one finger inside, not wanting to rush her. The tight ring of muscles clamped firmly.

“Oh, that’s different than before. It’s a little easier,” Emma said to his relief. She didn’t complain and listened to his directions as he prepared her for his cock.

He re-lubed his finger before entering her asshole again, the resistance less this time, her inner muscles relaxing quicker than he expected. Hell yeah!

“Mmmm, Finn. This feels so wicked.”

He smiled at the purr in her voice. Damn, she was always full of surprises. He was one lucky son of a bitch to be in her bed.

“Now, baby, take two fingers.” He slowly slid the two fingers in and stopped, allowing her body to adjust and stretch.

“Oh. Wow, that’s tight,” she acknowledged,

wiggling her bottom.

His cock begged to fuck her now, but she needed a little more time. If he couldn't be patient and calm his dick then he risked rushing her and ruining the experience for both of them. Without proper preparation, her tight channel would never take his thickness. Even with the use of the butt plug, she was still so very tight, and only taking his time would make this an enjoyable experience for her. He planned to take all the time needed to prep her, arouse her, heighten the thrill for her. The tightness within her ass adjusted nicely to his fingers as he added more and more lube, holding his fingers as deep in her channel as he could go. She was almost ready for him. And he was about ready to come from just finger fucking her ass. Christ! What the hell would his cock feel like deep inside this beautiful ass? He was ready to find out.

"Finn, how long until you can put your cock in?" The huskiness in her voice revealed her comfort with the situation. Desire laced each of her words so he didn't even think twice. Removing his fingers from her ass, he expertly smothered his erection with the clear slippery liquid then positioned himself behind her beautiful, round ass.

"Listen to my voice, Emma. I'll tell you exactly what to do," he said, positioning his cock at the puckered hole. Never had he wanted a sexual act as bad as he did this one. The complete intimacy rocked him to his core, stealing his breath and forcing him to take a deep breath before continuing.

"Finn?"

He stilled. "Yes, baby."

"I love it when you tell me what to do. Now fuck my ass. All you're doing is teasing me," she said in a voice so seductive he couldn't think of anything else but Emma.

"You are so fucking wonderful, baby. I don't

know what I did to deserve finding you, but hot damn, I'm glad I did it."

His cock pushed past the first tight ring of muscles and allowed her to adjust to his girth. She certainly surprised him with her eagerness to have anal sex. Now it was up to him to make it as special as her fantasy.

"Oh, God. That's tight. It's hurting a little."

His body froze even as his cock begged to drill ahead. "Want me to stop? Need me to pull out, baby?"

"Hell, no. The pain is heating up my pussy. I bet if you felt my lips they'd be soaked."

There is a God in Heaven to have sent him this one-in-a-million woman. "Your ass is so friggin' tight. It's amazing. I'm almost in." He willed himself to stay in control as he stopped thrusting to allow her anal muscles to loosen and ease any discomfort she felt. But hell didn't he want to plunge right into her decadent hole.

"More, Finn. Come on. I can take it."

Yeah, but the question was...could he? Never had a sexual act had his balls aching as bad as his cock. God, if she were to just reach around and grab his nuts he'd explode instantly. Good thing she was in no position to do that. Finn wanted to enjoy her ass a little longer than just getting a few strokes in.

With a final stroke, his cock surged deep into her ass, seated to the base of his cock in the tightest hole he'd ever felt. "I'm all the way in, baby." He spoke as he mentally counted to ten to keep from spilling his load. His balls twitched mercilessly. How he was going to get her to come before him, he didn't know.

Emma's breathing was heavy. "I'm close, Finn. How can I be so close to coming?"

"That makes two of us. Fucking your ass will give us both a super fast orgasm."

Finn stopped thrusting for a minute, depending on years of strict military training. Never had he ever wanted to come so fast than when he was buried deep inside Emma.

“Finn?”

“It’s okay, baby. Just needed a minute to cool my cock so I can enjoy this tight ass before blowing my load.” He looked down to where his cock was seated in her ass, the sight spurring him to come on the spot. An inch of his cock was visible, the rest of it disappearing into an ass that was as hot inside as it was sexy outside, creating a deep need to fuck her like mad.

“It feels so good. Mmmm. Fuck me. Now.” Her butt shimmied backward to encourage his cock to move.

Her sexy words unglued his control as he jerked his cock back while gripping her hips. Without hesitation, he pushed deep into her ass then slowly pulled back, trembling at the firmness of her muscles. He was careful not to remove his cock from her ass when he increased his momentum. Closing his eyes, he relished the feeling of his dick buried in such a tight hole. Her body accepted his intrusion without a fight, so he didn’t have to worry about hurting her with his thickness. She took him deeper and deeper with each new thrust. Hell, she encouraged him to fuck her harder.

They rocked together as the pleasure built between their bodies.

“Fuck! Emma!”

“Mmmm. Don’t. Stop.” Her voice sang over his grunts.

Stop? He was lucky to have any control over his mind or body at this point. His cock took control and rammed into her ass, the slapping of his thighs against the back of hers a sound so erotic it tightened his gut until he thought his body would

burst into flames.

“I’m too close to hold off any longer. Come with me.” His command echoed in the room.

Grasping her tight hips with a death grip, he fucked her ass hard and deep with his eager cock, his explosion building furiously. When his body trembled, he couldn’t stop it and spilled his load, shot after shot of his seed emptying into Emma’s body for the first time.

Being seated firmly in Emma’s ass, her inner muscles milked his cock clean of cum as her orgasm shot through her. Screaming, she bucked under his weight, his cock feeling her pussy explode in waves of fire through the thin muscular wall that separated her ass and pussy as her juices left a hot trail to their joined thighs. Her limp body slid onto the bed sheets when he gently pulled his cock free. His balls still ached but reveled in the glorious aftermath of fulfillment.

After retrieving a warm washcloth, he gently cleansed her pussy and ass, tucked her in, and kissed her goodnight. It was now early evening and they could both use the rest. She snuggled into her pillow, her eyelashes struggling to remain open.

“Finn, I can’t possibly go to bed this early. I need to feed the horses and—” Her words were interrupted by a long yawn. “And we need to eat. You must be starving.”

He smiled. Sweet, Emma. Always thinking of what needs to be done instead of basking in the moment, a moment of bliss that was no doubt sucking all her energy from her.

“I’ll make sure the horses are fed.”

“But—”

He laid his fingers across her lips to quiet her. “I’ll feed them and then come right back to bed. I promise.”

“But aren’t you hungry?” she asked, half asleep.

He grinned wide, unable to help himself, the feeling of satisfaction so intense it threatened to steal his breath away. Not acceptable for a man of his background to allow an emotion to rule his body so fiercely. But, he had to admit, he was as content as he'd ever been, just standing in Emma's bedroom.

"Baby, you've more than quenched my appetite. Now rest. I'll join you very soon." Tucking her under the sheets, he kissed the top of her head before heading into the bathroom.

In the shower, he kept the water cold. Even with an explosive orgasm that left his cock tender and sated, he still heated up for Emma. Except this was a different kind of heat. Maybe it was a heart attack, since the pressure was smack in the middle of his chest. But then, why would his stomach be doing summersaults?

Aw, hell, he didn't want to decipher what these ailments meant. He was damn sure it wasn't his health in jeopardy but his heart and soul.

After long hours sitting on the front porch, relaxing and talking, Finn now stared at the wall in Emma's kitchen, listening attentively to the voice on the other end of the phone. "Yes, sir. I understand my orders completely. See you tomorrow at 0800 hours," Finn said before disconnecting from the call.

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

So he had to leave a few days earlier than expected. Shouldn't matter. He was used to the military calling the shots. Wasn't the first time he'd been told to end his leave earlier than planned. He'd spent plenty of time over the past ten days getting to know Emma and every inch of her body. So why the hell was he so pissed about having to leave her four days early?

Finn certainly didn't want to talk about the why of it or even think about it.

He stared out the kitchen window overlooking her pastures. He could look out this window for the rest of his life and be content. Damn! Where the hell had that come from?

Slender arms wrapped around his waist. "How about we take the horses out for a ride?"

"That'd be nice," he said, turning to her, accidentally stepping on a soft lump. Freckles squealed. "Well, fat cat, don't get under my feet and I won't step on you."

Emma laughed. "I told you he liked you."

Yeah, well, Finn needed to talk to Emma without the feline rubbing against him. "Yeah, well he can like me from outside so we can talk about something important." Finn opened the kitchen door and Freckles ran out.

"Finn! No!" Emma yelled and leapt for the door.

What the fuck?

"He's not allowed outside," Emma yelled, chasing after the cat as it ran through the grass one way then the other.

"What? Cats should go outside," Finn yelled after her, shaking his head and cursing before joining in the chase. "In fact, it'd do this spoiled little fuck some good to live outside."

"Finn, catch him." The panic in Emma's voice had Finn in all out pursuit of the fleeing fleabag.

"I will, don't worry. Sooner or later he'll need to rub against my leg or piss me off some other way."

"Finn!" Emma chastised.

"All right. All right." Finn closed in on the fat cat whose pace had slowed considerably. "Not used to a morning jog are you dumb ass?" This should have been an easy chase for a man used to hunting armed men. But why would anything concerning Freckles be easy? Finn growled and increased his pursuit. What a way to start his morning. First, a call he didn't expect or want. Then a jog with a

dumbass cat.

When Finn cornered the ornery cat, Freckles glared at him and took off running. Finn followed closely. Emma screeched in the background. Finn swore that if he didn't know better, he'd just saw the cat smile at him. Little fucker!

"For a fat cat, he can move," Finn complained. Christ, he'd chased terrorists easier than this fur ball that seemed intent on zigzagging across the lawn. Finn finally gave up and walked back to the porch.

Emma ran to him wide-eyed. "What are you doing sitting down? We've got to get him. He can't survive out here. He's a housecat."

Finn pulled Emma down to sit next to him on the wooden stair. "Exactly. He'll realize soon enough that it was a big mistake to run away and come back with his tail between his legs, no pun intended."

Her wide eyes glanced between his and the fields. "You better hope so."

Grown men with fists the size of bowling balls didn't frighten him like this slender female in a temper. So he shut up and waited for the pesky cat. Ten minutes later, Freckles appeared, obviously declaring victory as he strutted his fat ass up the stairs to Emma, who whooshed him inside and rewarded him with cat food. Spoiled rotten cat.

Inside the kitchen, Emma looked relieved. "So what was so important that you had to risk my cat's life to talk to me?" Yup, her temper was still riled.

"Come on. I didn't mean to harm the cat, though after that little jog through the yard the thought has crossed my mind." Finn sighed and leaned against the counter. "My leave got shortened, Emma. I have to head out tomorrow at 0600 hours."

"Tomorrow?" There was no missing the sadness in her voice or in the brown depths of her beautiful eyes.

“Yes, I’m sorry to cut my visit short, but that’s life in the military.” Maybe if he sounded upbeat then she would. Doubtful. But maybe.

“Well, that really stinks.”

He smiled, her choice of words were simply funny. It helped cut the tension of the moment. “Yes, it does, but we both knew I was leaving in four days anyway. We’ve just got to make the most of the rest of today and tonight, baby.”

“Agreed.” She was taking it much better than he expected. Visions of tears and sniffles had worried him. She walked to him and hugged him. Her voice whispered in his ear. “Finn, make love to me without tying me up. I want to touch you while we love.”

His fingers brushed her hair from her face, needing to look at her all he could in the next twenty-four hours. “You’ve read my mind, baby. I need your touch, Emma. I need you.” God, he needed her more than he cared to admit.

Finn leaned down, his lips possessing hers in a gentle kiss. Suddenly fiercely protective of her, Finn wanted to keep her there in his arms, just the way she was, forever. Lifting her into his arms carefully, he cradled her to his chest and leisurely walked upstairs to her bedroom.

There would be no rushing their time together this afternoon. Finn needed to lose himself in the moment and stay in it with Emma just so he could always remember her. Not that he would ever forget her. Never.

The late afternoon sun shone brightly through the open windows, basking the bedroom in a warm yellow glow. The smell of spring was in the air, new flowers, new grass, new life. When Finn set Emma back on her feet, he kept her in his grasp, his hands massaging up and down her arms.

She watched as if she were memorizing his face like he was hers. Her smile softened the seriousness

of the moment, his pending departure, to remain light-hearted. It warmed him completely.

“Emma, you’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever met,” he whispered.

She giggled, the sound tightening his gut. “Now, Finn. Do I look stupid enough to believe that? You don’t have to say things like that. I know you had a life before me. And I’m sure you’ve had many women more beautiful than me.”

His expression remained serious. “Not a one, Emma. There’s more to beauty than what’s on the surface.” He kissed her forehead before looking into her wide eyes. “And you, my darling, are beautiful inside and out. I’ve never met someone with such qualities. I feel so very lucky.”

“I can make you feel much luckier,” she teased, her angelic look transforming with the lust and desires written all over her face as her fingers danced over his chest. Her little tongue peaked out to trace the outline of her lips slowly, and he was a goner.

Finn bent down until his lips sank onto hers. Unwilling to rush the moment, Finn took Emma’s mouth with the slowest deliberateness, not wanting to miss one taste of her. With her mouth opening to him, he sipped at her like she was the finest wine. Indeed, he was getting drunk on the sweet taste of her, his head swimming as if he had consumed a bottle of the hardest whiskey. When her tongue looped into his mouth, he groaned. Was she going to leave any of his pride in place or was she determined to see him on his knees begging for her touch?

The warmth of her mouth was so inviting, he could kiss her all day and never get bored. Lost in his thoughts, he hadn’t realized when she’d unzipped his jeans but as soon as her soft hand grabbed his cock, he knew exactly when he began losing the battle with his self-control. Her grip was

gentle, yet firm, like she was claiming him as hers.

Well, two could play that game and make claims. He knew what he wanted to claim.

All of her.

His hands roamed up her belly until both rested on a breast. Slowly, he tweaked the nipples through her thin shirt and bra, his fingers kneading the supple mounds that fit perfectly in his hands. Her moan against his lips only encouraged him.

“Finn, I want you. So. Bad.”

“And you’ll have me. Soon.”

Her whimpered protests would have made him laugh if he wasn’t as desperate to be inside her.

After pulling her T-shirt over her head, he maneuvered his lips to the delicate curve of her shoulder. Applying wet kisses from the skin under her ear to her upper arm, it was all he could do not to fuck her right then. Her fingers were gripping his cock, while her other hand attempted to pull down his pants with only marginal success.

“Finn. Make love to me.”

“I am, baby girl. I am. My kisses are to show you how beautiful you are. I can’t keep my lips off of you.” His heart pounded too loud for him to think clearly.

He broke his touch long enough to remove his pants and briefs. Never had his dick been more grateful to be free of its constraints as now when Emma’s palm wrapped around the length of him and stroked gently, slowly, torturing his very soul.

His mouth found hers again, danced with her tongue a moment, before he could no longer resist the perky breasts staring at him through her sheer lace bra. Tugging the straps over her shoulders, it was only seconds before her breasts were bared and his mouth covering the pink areola. He sucked like he was starved. Teeth scraped over the stiff nipple, biting and nibbling along the gentle swell of each

breast.

“Finn!” Emma yelled, her voice filled with command and need.

Emma was as potent as any drug. He craved her so deeply that he didn’t know how he could survive without her touch. What the hell had he gotten himself into? All these emotions and feelings were too damned unfamiliar for him to properly deal with. Never had there been a problem he couldn’t solve. Until now. Until he got the call to leave Emma.

For now, he banished those thoughts from his mind as best he could. His body begged to fuck Emma, so he welcomed the temporary reprieve from his thoughts.

Even as he wanted to kiss every inch of her body, his cock throbbed so intensely he could hardly stand. Lifting Emma around the waist with one arm, he used his free arm to remove her jeans and panties. Once naked, she stood before him, a gorgeous woman with a sexual appetite to match his own. Hot damn this was like hitting the lottery. Only better. Because he got to hold Emma while he slept.

Unable to wait any longer to feel her slippery pussy, Finn sheathed his cock in a condom before he laid her on the bed on her back and completely covered her slender body with his massive one. She fit perfect in his arms. Like she belonged there. Damn it! She did belong there. Oh hell.

“Emma.” He waited for her eyes to open. “Look at me. I want to see your eyes as I enter you.”

Using his knees to push her legs apart, he positioned the head of his cock at the hot entrance between her legs. With one long thrust, he easily entered her tightness thanks to the wetness from her arousal. Her eyes widened at his invasion then relaxed dreamily, her mouth parted as soft breaths escaped. She felt so fucking good, her pussy still so

new. His balls ached for release but he took it slow, wanting to stay within her warmth for as long possible, never wanting this moment to end. Never wanting this night to end. When it did, he'd have to leave his Emma. His lovely, sweet Emma.

His heart broke, the pain almost unbearable. All the training he'd ever had in his twenty years in the military had not prepared him for this kind of heartache, being torn from a lover's arms to uphold vows taken in his youth and renewed in adulthood. Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

"Finn? Something wrong?" Emma asked, her voice filled with concern, her caramel eyes wide and searching, her gorgeous long brown hair spread out around her head. He buried his face into the mass of curls and inhaled deeply, the fragrance of her shampoo reminding him of the heady scent of a garden of wildflowers.

He didn't answer. He couldn't. If he spoke right now, he'd spill his heart to her and that would do neither of them any good. So instead, he leaned up and forced a smile before he kissed her lips hard and possessively, his cock fucking her channel in long, languid strokes.

Emma's hands grasped his shoulders, her slim fingers digging into his muscles and pulling him closer. He gathered her in his arms, holding her tightly to his body, needing to feel her heartbeat against his. He pulsed over her like a wave of passion, hips pistoning long and deep. Deepening the kiss, his tongue overpowered hers, searching her mouth to kiss her breathless. Feeling her pussy muscles tighten around him, he urged his cock deeper with each new stroke. With his release imminent, Finn pulled away from her lips as he ground his hips harder into hers, her soft cries cheering him on until he emptied his seed into her heat as he rode out her orgasm with her.

Heart racing and blood rushing, Finn looked into Emma's eyes, now sleepy with satisfaction. What a sight she was. A true, natural beauty who hadn't a clue as to what a woman she was.

He pressed his lips to hers as she started to speak. Did she just tell him she loved him?

Startled, he eased back and stared at her. "What'd you say?"

"I said I love you, Finn. I love you," she whispered, her eyes dancing.

A lump formed instantly in his throat. He forced back emotion for both their sakes. "Stop that, Emma." He stood to clean himself, unable to face her as he prepared to break her heart for he couldn't give her his. Not while the military owned him. "You don't love me. You've just had one helluva couple of weeks, baby. That's all."

Finn never heard her approach, but when her little hand grabbed his arm, he faced her. Gone was the demure, sweet Emma. In her place was a very pissed off hellcat.

"Don't you tell me what I feel, Finn Coleman. I said I love you and I do."

"Well, I don't want your love." Shit, that was too mean. "I'm sorry. Emma. Listen to me, please."

"Go to hell." She pushed past him, a blur of brown curls and temper.

"Fine. Be stubborn." Yeah, he was handling this fucking great.

Emma stomped into the bathroom and slammed the door. A minute later Finn heard the shower. He imagined her naked body all soapy and wet, then he lost all his senses and went to join her. Finding the door locked was no challenge, he simply picked the lock—his training had some advantages. But entering uninvited into the bathroom of an angry woman was definitely a suicide mission. For he knew, even with a full artillery of weapons at his

disposal, nothing could defend him against the furious side of Emma. He liked the fact that she had backbone, but the daggers she shot him from those angry brown eyes were enough to scare any grown man. And he was smart enough to admit that right now, with the rage of her temper, the odds were in her favor for kicking his ass. Not wanting to be dropped by a woman half his size, he protected his most vulnerable assets. His balls.

“Just what the hell do you think you’re doing?” Emma screamed as he stepped into the shower with her, the long tendrils of hair wet and plastered to her head, exposing her lovely face.

“Thought it was obvious. I’m taking a shower.” He reached for her as she balled up her little fists. Appreciating her temper, he pulled her up against his chest and looked down into her eyes. “And apologizing for being the biggest jackass around. Please, Emma. I don’t want our last night together to be spent fighting.”

His lips brushed over hers, hovering just enough to touch.

Her muscles relaxed, her body melted into his. Taking the bath scrunchie from her, he soaped her body and rinsed her clean, repeating the process on himself. Minutes later, he had them towel dried and back in bed under the covers. Priding himself on his ability not to roll over and fuck her again, Finn contented himself with just holding her in his arms as she drifted off to sleep in silence.

So Emma loved him. That wasn’t the worst thing to ever happen to him. No, the worst thing would happen tomorrow morning when he had to say goodbye to Emma.

With thoughts of his upcoming mission keeping him from sleep, he thought about two things he’d never considered before—falling in love and retiring from the military. He had his twenty years in and

could retire with full benefits. It's not like he hadn't built one helluva a career. But his thirty-eight-year-old body sometimes felt much older, especially after a mission when immense physical and psychological exertion was constant. He could live without ever taking another bullet, without going days with no sleep, without constantly being on guard. He had paid his service to his country, so why not retire and let the next generation take over? Before shipping out for this next mission, he'd be sure to speak with his commander. He had other options available to him now, precisely the slender woman fast asleep in his arms. Kissing the top of her head and squeezing her just enough to press her closer to him, he rested his cheek against her soft hair.

Finn didn't like his gut feeling about this mission, something he planned to speak to his commander about as well. His gut never failed to warn him of danger, and this mission reeked of danger. It was his most dangerous mission yet, going deep into the South American jungles in search of the fourth most wanted terrorist in the world.

Word had it that the terrorist would be at a family member's house to celebrate a wedding. Not only was the terrorist expected to attend the wedding but also to stay with his family in the days before and after the wedding. So there was time to plan, getting the necessary plans and resources in place. It had been a year since any word had surfaced about this terrorist, and now it appeared the fool was letting his guard down and exposing himself in a most vulnerable way. It was Finn's team's job to locate and capture him, dead or alive. It was too easy and something didn't feel right. Finn would obey his orders, but damn it if he wouldn't voice his goddamn opinion based on experience.

Emma stirred in his arms, her soft breaths proving she was deep in sleep. Christ, he hated

thinking of leaving her out here by herself. It didn't matter that she'd been living here like that forever. He now felt responsible for her. If anything ever happened while he was gone, he'd never forgive himself.

Waking up to his duffle bag being thrown onto his chest probably wasn't the way Finn had planned on rising that morning. But Emma's temper hadn't cooled down from the night before. So when the bag landed and Finn jumped up angry as a bear, she felt a warped sense of satisfaction.

Facing him, her hands on her hips, she glared at him. "If you don't want my love, Finn, well, too bad because you have it. And you better keep your ass safe on this fucking mission or I'll kill you myself."

"Looks like someone woke up in a great fucking mood," he said, but with no heat to the words.

Pointing a finger at him, she raised her voice. "I love you, Finn, and, damn it, don't you dare tell me you love me."

"Now that just makes all the sense in the world, Emma." His voice was getting an edge to it, the way it did when he readied for a fight. But he didn't want to fight with Emma.

Emma inhaled sharply. "Just shut up. When you bring your ass back to me in one piece, then you can tell me you love me, because I know you do. But don't you dare say it until then. If you think for one minute I'm going to let you lay your heart out for me while you go play GI Joe in the forest—"

He interrupted her, moving quickly to stand in front of her. "It's not GI Joe, damn it. I'm a Navy SEAL and I'm not going on a camping trip to the woods. It's the fucking jungle." His voice thundered in the room.

She let out her own roar, her entire body shaking with misery. "So you can wait until you

return from that damn jungle to tell me you love me.” She’d never cursed so much in her life but it felt good to do so now. Silent tears ran down her cheeks but she quickly swatted them away.

Finn moved closer to her but Emma pulled away. “I don’t like to hear you curse, Emma.”

“Then you return home to me in one piece or I’ll be cursing a blue streak.”

Sobs wracked her body uncontrollably as she buried her face in her hands, giving in to her emotions. He pulled her into an embrace so strong she thought her ribs would bruise. Her nails dug into his back as she wrapped her arms around his waist, her tear stained cheek resting on the soft black hair of his chest.

“Finn, please don’t tell me you love me until you come back home.”

“Home?” he asked quietly, pulling back to look into her eyes.

“Yes. Home.”

“Okay,” he agreed, smiling.

He held her until her sobs stopped. This was the moment she’d dreaded since he arrived. Finn was leaving and it was breaking her heart. She wasn’t strong enough to watch him leave. She couldn’t do that. She just couldn’t. She didn’t understand the world he lived in and never would. She didn’t understand why he would want to travel half way around the world to fight bad guys when there were plenty to fight right here in the U.S., where he could at least be safer. She couldn’t understand how he could look at her with love in his eyes and still walk away. Walk away and go fight.

“When will I hear from you?”

“I can’t answer that.”

“Why the hell not?” Her heart pounded so hard it was hard to breathe.

“Because I just can’t. The mission is in a remote

area. That's all I'm allowed to say. Believe me, Emma, if I'm able to email, IM, or call I will in a heartbeat. I promise."

"Just do what I said and come home to me, Finn. Please."

"I promise."

She wiped her face clear of stray tears and cleared her throat. "I can't watch you leave, so I'm going to feed the horses. When I come back, you'll be gone."

"Yeah."

Wiping her eyes, she leaned up on her toes and kissed his lips long and hard, savoring every touch. "Okay. I love you, Finn Coleman."

"I know, baby." His knuckles skimmed her cheek, the simple touch reaching her soul.

Emma quickly turned to leave and got only to the bedroom door before Finn called her name. She slowly faced him. He stood before her naked, proud, and arrogant. Just the way she loved him.

"I'll be home soon. I promise." His eyes serious, they kept hers in their grasp.

She smiled, her heart doing somersaults, knowing that was his way, for now, of telling her that he loved her. It would do until he came back to her.

"You damn well better be," she warned, before quickly walking away and running to the stables.

Chapter Ten

“Any word from Finn, Emma?” Charlie asked as she placed her take-out order. If she didn’t eat better, she’d lose more weight and the good people of White Cap Creek would resort to force-feeding her.

“None. These three months have dragged by. But I didn’t expect to hear from him. He warned me that he’d have no access to email or phones.” The thought of living without modern amenities amazed her.

“Must be tough not to hear from him, but remember you have lots of friends around here willing to help you pass the time until he comes home.” Home. Even her friends now thought of this town as Finn’s home.

She swallowed the knot in the back of her throat that formed whenever she spoke of Finn. “Thank you, Charlie. Everyone has been wonderful.”

“I’ll be right back with your sandwich.”

Mr. Galway sat beside Emma. “Afternoon, Emma. How’s Finn?”

“Still no word yet. He couldn’t give me a timeframe for the operation, so I have no idea when to expect him back.” But she’d be ready for him, thinking of the sexy lingerie she had ordered for his welcome home gift. Not that it’d stay on her body long. Knowing Finn, he’d chew through the material to get to her.

Charlie returned with her sandwich and she left without any more questions. She missed the days of coming to town and fending off the matchmakers. They were much easier to deal with than the well-

meaning people who constantly barraged her with questions about Finn. Funny how he had made such an impression on the entire town in only ten days.

Driving back home, Emma's body sagged behind the steering wheel. Lately, her energy had been sapped. Life as she knew it before Finn had ceased to exist. He'd shown her a new life, one of fun and excitement and filled with companionship. God, how she missed that and him.

Once back in her house, she walked past the TV, which she refused to turn on. She'd given up on watching television, not wanting to see news footage on any wars or military missions. She just wanted Finn to come home and soon. Not only did she miss him like hell, but her vibrator couldn't compare to the loving he'd provided. Not only had he ruined her for every other man but also for her favorite sex toy. What was a horny girl to do waiting for her man to return?

In the kitchen, Emma ate only half her sandwich, her appetite absent. Even Freckles missed Finn, using the T-shirt Finn had left behind as a nap blanket. As much as Emma wanted to wrap herself in the shirt, she let Freckles enjoy it since Emma had Finn's pillow to hold onto. If she inhaled deeply, she could still smell his aftershave, the clean woodsy scent blending well here in Vermont.

At least she kept herself busy with her roses. She was proud last week to finally win a national award. Mrs. Galway had convinced her to enter as a way to keep her mind off of Finn. Now the special orders for her roses were coming in so fast that she'd have to look into hiring part time help and possibly building another greenhouse. And it would be so beneficial to have help on hand when Finn returned home. Then Emma could spend time with Finn, while an employee managed her rose business.

When the doorbell rang, her heart stopped.

Slowly, she turned from the counter and stared toward the parlor, willing her legs to walk to the front door. No one came to visit Emma all the way out here without calling.

No one but Finn.

Emma ran for the door, expecting him to be standing there all smug and handsome. He should know that he didn't have to ring the bell. When she opened it, she only had seconds to stop before launching herself into the arms of two strange men. Two strange military men.

Oh no, Finn!

She craned her neck to look behind them as if they were hiding Finn behind their backs. But there was no Finn.

A military chaplain, dressed in a black shirt and pants holding a bible, and a taller man, dressed in a spotless military uniform, faced her with grim expressions. Her heart stopped.

"Ms. Emma Shields?" the tall man asked.

She couldn't speak, only shook her head.

"Ma'am, I am Commander Stone from the Navy. May we please come in?"

"No, not if you have bad news." She bit her lip to stop it from quivering.

"Ma'am. I really do need to talk to you. Please."

Emma stepped aside and let them enter, but she didn't leave the entrance. It was as if her feet were stuck in cement.

"Ms. Shields, I'm sorry to inform you, as next of kin, Lt. Finn Coleman has been killed in action."

Killed in action. Finn killed in action. Finn dead. "No!" she screamed, her body shaking, her hand had a death grip on the doorknob.

"Maybe you should sit down while I explain the rest, ma'am," Commander Stone suggested, taking her elbow and walking her to the couch. It was *deja vu* all over again, except this wasn't Finn.

“No,” she said again, determined to prove him wrong. She sat on her couch and stared at the man who sat across from her, while the chaplain sat beside her and held her hand. She was so numb, so cold. Her world spun upside down.

Commander Stone spoke quietly and professionally. “Lt. Coleman was on an important mission that ran into some problems. He managed to save his troops but, unfortunately in doing so, became the mission’s only victim when he jumped off a hijacked yacht with a terrorist bomber. Lt. Coleman’s body was lost to the sea and recovery impossible due to the dangerous currents in the area. I’m very sorry for your loss, ma’am. Lt. Coleman was a great officer and a better friend.”

Emma’s eyes blurred with tears. “Oh no. His poor grandfather. Has he been told?” Her heart broke for the old man Finn had obviously idolized and stubbornly refused to admit it to himself or anyone else.

“Yes, ma’am. I just came from visiting him. I wanted to speak to Mr. Finn and you, Ms. Shields, in person. It’s what Finn would have wanted and what he deserved.”

Oh, God. *Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!* Why the fuck couldn’t she wake up from this nightmare?

“His grandfather decided not to hold any kind of a memorial service in Texas. He refuses to believe Finn is gone. But I assure you every effort was made to recover his body. Absolutely every effort.”

Recover his body. This can’t be happening. She squeezed the bridge of her nose to halt the pounding headache, but it was a useless effort. Pain was all she could feel.

Granddad wasn’t the only who refused to believe Finn was dead, Emma thought as she tried to comprehend everything she had just been told.

“Ms. Shields,” Commander Stone spoke

solemnly. “Finn came to me before the mission and asked that I personally see to you in the event of his death. Here’s my card. If you need anything, please don’t hesitate to call me. I know you meant a lot to Finn. I’ve never heard him speak of a woman before you, ma’am. I hope I’m not out of line for saying that, but it’s the truth. I wish we could’ve met under better circumstances. I’m told you are a fantastic lady. One of a kind. I’ll help you in any way I can. I promise.”

What good was a promise? Finn had promised to come home to her.

The commander’s use of Finn’s first name unglued her. “Bring him back to me,” Emma’s broken voice begged.

Commander Stone stared at her with bleak eyes. “I wish more than anything that I could do that, ma’am. I wish.”

Emma shook uncontrollably, tears streaming down her face. “Please leave.”

“Is there someone we could call, perhaps to stay with you a while?” the chaplain asked, his soft hand rubbing hers gently.

“Please leave.” Sobs ripped from her chest, the pain unbearable. Nothing in her life could’ve prepared her for this pain. Nothing. Would it have been better to not know Finn at all than to endure the unbearable pain wracking every inch of her body, the exact same places where Finn had given her so much pleasure? No, she’d be eternally grateful for the short time she’d had Finn in her life. There would always be wonderful memories. She could never wish them away.

Commander Stone and the chaplain honored Emma’s directive and left her sitting alone on her couch, her heart shattered in a million pieces. The man she loved, the only man she would ever love, was dead. She couldn’t fathom it. Cold crept deep

into her bones, despite the weather being a balmy eighty degrees.

Freckles jumped onto the couch and sat beside her. Even the cat sensed something wasn't right. He wasn't purring or rubbing his head against her hand. He just sat and watched her as if to say he understood her loss.

Her loss. Oh God. She lost Finn. *Why? Why? Why?*

Hugging herself, she rocked back and forth violently. "Oh, Finn. You bastard! You were supposed to come back. Come back and tell me you loved me. You promised to come home. You fucking promised!" she screamed, her sad words echoing through the empty, lonely house.

Shock consumed her until she curled up on her couch, Freckles never more than a foot away from her, and cried until she fell asleep.

Exhaustion settled deep into Emma's bones over the coming days as she faced life without Finn. Completely devastated and not knowing how to cope, Emma sank onto her couch, copies of Finn's emails spread out around her.

Emma, sorry I missed you online tonight. Had the best dream about you, baby. Remind me to tell you all about it. Better yet, remind me to SHOW you it.

LOL, Finn

Some of the ink had smudged from where her tears had fallen all the times she had read and re-read these emails.

Hey you sexy thing, where have you been hiding? Think you can get away with sending me that erotic email last night—about how you will suck my cock and swallow my load? You are definitely getting an

ass-warming for that one, baby. My hand aches to spank your naughty ass.

Sweet dreams, baby, Finn

Emma remembered reading each email for the first time. The words soothed her and excited her no matter how often she re-read them.

Hey sexy, know what I'm gonna do to you when I have you tied to my bed? Everything! Lol. Mmmm, can't wait either. You have me so fucking hot for you. I think of you and my cock gets hard instantly. I stroke it at least four times a day and come as I read your emails. God, I've never come so hard. Can't wait to bury my cock deep inside your hot pussy. I bet I'll come even harder then. Send me that pic of you or you'll just give me another reason to spank that pretty ass, night, baby,

Finn.

She read until her eyes throbbed. She read until her eyes could shed no more tears. She read until her eyes could no longer stay open and sleep was forced upon her.

Emma had left the restraints tied to her bedposts, unable to remove that simple connection to Finn. There were many times she'd just lay on the bed, holding a restraint in her hand, closing her eyes to remember what it felt like to be tied and fucked by Finn, to remember all the loving they shared in such a short time.

Emma walked the fields remembering the exact spot where Finn kissed her in the rain. She remembered the smell of his soap as it mixed with the scent of the rain. With shaking fingers, she touched her lips where Finn's lips had covered hers. Refusing to cry again, she bit back the tears and walked to her greenhouse.

She hadn't been to the greenhouse in the week since Commander Stone had broken the news to her about Finn. Looking around the glass house now was more devastation than her fragile heart could take. Roses had wilted, the smell of rot filled the once fragrant air. Stepping out and closing the door behind her, fresh tears sprang to Emma's swollen eyes. She didn't have the strength to keep up with her roses now. Some day she'd get back to them. Maybe. Hopefully. Right now, she just didn't give a damn.

Mrs. Galway was nice enough to offer to come over and help her with the roses, but Emma had politely refused. Just like she'd politely refused the book club ladies offering to take turns sleeping over so Emma wouldn't be alone. But Emma was alone. Again, she was left alone in her life. As a little girl, her dad had been consumed by his own grief over the loss of her mother, so Emma was left alone to her sorrow. Without Finn, Emma was alone forever and that hurt more than the past. Now Emma understood her father's devastation at the loss of his young wife and why he had never again been himself. A piece of him had died with her mother like a piece of her had died with Finn. Her heart.

No matter Emma's anguish, the horses were living, breathing creatures who needed her, depended on her for life, so Emma trekked faithfully to their pen three times a day, swearing that only the responsibility for their lives kept her from dying of a broken heart. Slowly, with every passing minute, she was forced to face the reality that Finn was never coming back. It wasn't a horrible dream. It was a living nightmare. She was never waking up from this dark period of her life.

The horses greeted her with a weariness of their own. They knew something was wrong. But if she couldn't make herself feel any better, there was no

hope for her to make them feel better. *Maybe in time.*

Walking back in her house after each trip to the stables got harder and harder when she half expected Finn to walk out of the kitchen announcing dinner or coming down the stairs with his hair wet from his shower. Crossing her arms, she closed her eyes and stood in the middle of the parlor and inhaled. She wanted desperately to smell Finn's scent.

Freckles brushed her legs before jumping up onto the couch. The cat remained her constant companion, staying by her side everywhere she went in the house. If Emma didn't know better, the fur ball was looking for Finn and was confused that he couldn't find him. Use of one of Finn's many names for Freckles brought a small smile to her lips. She scratched the cat's ears. "No matter what Mr. Macho Military Man said, Freckles, he was very fond of you," Emma said, her voice broken.

Freckles lay down on the cushion of the sofa, still not purring.

"You know, Freckles, that old saying that time heals all wounds is a fucking lie. Time heals shit. It just makes it all too real, makes you finally face reality. Finn's gone. He's never coming back to me."

Emma sat and rested her head on the back of the couch, her usually tight jeans feeling loose. Staring at the ceiling, Emma wanted to kick herself. God, how she wished she had let Finn tell her he loved her. She knew he did. But now she'd never hear the words. For once in her life, a man had truly loved her and she didn't let him say the words. No amount of imagination could bring those words to life. The moment was gone forever, just like Finn.

Emma's friends and family tried to be a steady stream of comfort once they found out about her loss, about her broken heart. But she'd had enough of

their coddling and well wishes, so she prohibited anyone from coming to her house for at least the next month. She just wanted to be alone to deal with her grief and pull together her shattered life.

When the doorbell woke Emma at seven in the evening, she was pissed to have to explain to another well-meaning friend that she wanted to be alone, especially after she'd finally been able to fall asleep for the first time in days. Alone meant no damn visitors.

Walking to the door, she glanced out the window and saw a military truck in her front yard. Not knowing why the military would have to come see her again, and sure it was Commander Stone performing some duty out of loyalty to Finn, Emma opened the door wearily to find Finn standing in her doorway surrounded by five other men, all dressed in fatigues.

Her heart pounded and her eyes widened. Was she dreaming? She had to be. Finn was dead. Wasn't he?

Unable to say a word, Emma just stared in shock at a battered and bruised Finn, his arm in a sling, his face swollen, his lip stitched. He was pale, weak, tired, but...breathing.

Good thing for her, Finn could speak because she sure as hell couldn't find her voice. Finn looked her right in the eye and said, "I love you, Emma." His voice was hoarse and weak, but it was definitely Finn's.

Shaking, trembling, she didn't know how she continued to stand. "Finn? Is it really you?" she asked cautiously, her shaking hand reaching out to touch his face. She felt warm flesh under her fingers. The scar on his cheek that had saddened her before was now all the proof she needed. Her fingertips gently traced over the scar. This was Finn. Her Finn.

Serious blue eyes stared back at her. "Yes, Emma, baby. I'm so sorry you suffered over me." His fingers rubbed her cheek without his usual strength, but that didn't make the sensation any less great.

"Oh, Finn," she said, choking on sobs. "They said you were dead." God, she wanted to stomp her foot. How dare they make a mistake like that? Weren't the fucking military supposed to be top-notch? She didn't care the reason, Finn was home.

Another man supported Finn's weight, holding him up under his good arm. "I know, baby. Thank God you were stubborn enough to make me tell you I love you in person. God, I love you."

Emma rushed into his arms, ignoring the sling and the other man. She wrapped her arms around his neck and squeezed as tightly as she could, never planning to let him go. If the Navy thought they could have Finn back, well they had better be ready for the mother of all battles. She wasn't letting him go anywhere. She had restraints and she'd damn well use them.

His heart pounded under her ear as she rested her head on his chest. This was her Finn, she'd recognize that heartbeat anywhere.

Still clinging to him, his free hand brushed back her hair. "I couldn't die without you knowing how much I love you."

"Boss, you need to get to bed," a burly man said from behind Finn.

"Oh, I think I can take care of that, gentlemen," Emma said, looking back up at Finn, her knees frighteningly close to collapsing. God, she must look a wreck. It wouldn't do him any good to worry about her when he had a difficult recovery ahead of him. If he thought he was ever going half way around the world again without her, she'd make sure he was bedridden until she could knock some sense into him. It was time for her to be a little selfish. Finn

had served his country well throughout his life, so it was now someone else's turn to take over. Finn was needed here. With her. And Freckles, of course.

Looking around him, Finn spoke proudly. "Emma, these are my men."

She looked at the group of very large, muscular men, all standing close to Finn, their loyalty obvious. "What are his injuries?" Her sharp questions brooked no argument. She wanted the truth with no sugar coating. After what she'd just been through, there was nothing she couldn't handle now.

"I can tell you what my own damn injuries are, Emma. You don't need to ask them like I'm a child." Finn's arrogance was a blessing in disguise. At least whatever trauma he'd suffered didn't affect his personality.

Her hands roamed over his body, needing to feel his warmth to believe he was alive and really standing in front of her. There's no way this was a dream. She would know the feel of Finn's body if she were blindfolded. "You'll only tell me you have a few bumps and bruises, when I can tell it's a lot worse," she responded, her voice still shaking with emotion that she couldn't hide if her life depended on it.

A man with blondish red hair and arms the size of cannons spoke up first. "Ma'am, he's been checked over and needs bed rest for at least a week, and plenty of fluids." The man ignored Finn's warning glare.

"How the fuck am I suppose to get bed rest if you ply me with fluids and I have to piss every damn hour?"

"Got to warn you, Emma, he doesn't make a very nice patient. He's a bit cranky right now," the man with a giant tattoo of a mermaid on his arm teased. Now, Emma wasn't a gambler, but she'd bet any amount of money that not many people dared tease that man about his tattoo. If it weren't for the

situation at hand, Emma would love to hear the story behind that tattoo.

As if he read her mind, the man leaned past Finn and whispered in her ear. "Quite a tat, huh? This tattoo represents the woman I dream about nightly but have never met. One day I'll find her."

"Awww," Emma said, her voice softening. "How romantic."

"Name's Miller, ma'am."

Before Emma could finish shaking Miller's hand, Finn spoke. "Yeah, well, my name's Finn, if anyone gives a shit. Now get the fuck away from my woman, Miller."

Miller cracked a killer smile for Emma. "Funny how a certain finger of hers is missing a ring saying that's so, boss. Better get working on that."

Finn's pale complexion gained some color. "Miller, I swear your ass is the first one I'm gonna kick when I get this stupid sling off."

Miller grinned. "Best words I've heard all fucking day, sir. Pardon my language, ma'am. Told you he was cranky."

"Cranky, my ass. Just wait until I talk to your new commander. You'll be running twenty miles a day."

Boss? New commander? Emma just couldn't keep up. Her mind was spinning.

"Enough, Finn," Emma said, her voice brooked no room for argument and instantly got the attention of all the men who towered over her by at least eight inches. "Your men better get you up to bed and then leave us alone so you can get some rest. You look like hell."

"See. Told you she was a bossy one, fellas," Finn teased, his face swollen even as he attempted a smile.

"She saved your ass out there, sir. She can be anything she wants. Ma'am, take good care of him

for us. We owe him our lives.”

After helping Finn up the stairs and into the bedroom, the men left with promises to check in daily, much to the dismay of a stubborn Finn.

Finn couldn't stop touching Emma. He sat on the edge of the bed kicking off his unlaced boots. She knelt before him, taking his hand in hers and kissed his scraped and swollen knuckles. White gauze was taped to many parts of his arm, face, and hands.

Tugging on her hair got her attention. “Marry me, Emma? Don't have the strength for lots of pretty words. And I don't have a ring. Yet. I will as soon as I can. Marry me.”

Her eyes welled with fresh tears. “No.”

Even with the swelling, she could see his frown. “No? What the hell do you mean, no? You love me, you said so.”

Her hand brushed softly over his bruised cheek. “I do love you, but I won't marry a man I have to send off for months at a time, never knowing if he's alive or dead. I just can't do that. I can't go through something like this again, Finn. I'm not strong enough. I'm not cut out for military life.”

His lips formed a crooked grin. “Remind me to spank you for putting yourself down.”

Oh, he was still the same old Finn. She smiled, brushing away the stubborn tears. “I'm looking forward to it.”

He grinned, then winced but never complained. “You're marrying me. I won't take no for an answer.”

Standing up, she faced him with arms crossed. “What are you going to do? Tie me up and haul me to the altar?”

Looking up at her from where he still sat on the bed, his deep voice echoed with his southern drawl as he glanced at the restraints still fastened to the bed. “Don't give me any ideas. I'm good with restraints, remember?”

“Yes, I remember, but I won’t marry you, Finn.”

“Yes, you will.”

She moved to the head of the bed to pull down the sheets. “Come on. Get some sleep.” No matter how many times she blinked, he was still here. She was afraid to go to sleep for fear of waking up to discover this homecoming had been some kind of cruel dream.

Finn stood and faced her on shaky legs. “No.”

Staring back at him, she tried to hide her emotions, needing him to rest, needing to believe he was truly back here with her. Alive. “Don’t tell me no, Finn.”

“You told me no.”

Huffing her breath, she stood next to him. “Really now. For someone who didn’t have the energy for a decent marriage proposal, you seem to be all a chatter now.”

He reached for her and sat with her on the bed. “I love you. I’m gonna marry you. You’re gonna marry me. We’ll live here. Raise horses and lots of kids. And plant roses and any other fucking flower. I’m retiring. I have my twenty years in. It’s someone else’s turn to make a difference. I want to be here with you, Emma, baby.”

She stared at him. “Don’t play with my heart, Finn. I’ve been through hell. Are you serious?”

“More serious than I’ve ever been. You’re marrying me.”

She laughed, relief swarming through her. “Don’t you think for one second that when we get married you can boss me around.” She lay on top of him when he pulled her back onto the bed.

A loud purring noise grew closer until Freckles jumped on the bed by Finn’s head. The cat rubbed his head against Finn’s forehead and the bruises covering it.

Finn winced. “Oh Christ. Of course it wouldn’t

be the same without hairball here to greet me,” Finn said playfully, offering the cat a smile and rubbing his head.

“He missed you too, Finn. God, we both did so much.”

His smile softened his bruised face. “So is that a yes?”

Her heart exploding, she sucked in a deep breath. “Yes!”

He pushed back her long hair, his hand resting on the side of her neck. “Seal it with a kiss.”

She raised her brow in surprise. “What? Don’t trust me?”

“You have a tendency to fib. Remember the blond bimbo persona?”

“Oh shut up.” She kissed his lips, lingering for a long, sweet moment. “Sealed with a kiss. I love you.”

He pulled her into his arms and buried his face in her hair. “Oh, Emma, baby, I love you. So very much. But I’m the one who lied this time.”

Confused, she studied his battered face. “Oh? How so?”

“I said before that nothing turns me on like a feisty woman. Well, you turn me on no matter what mood you’re in, baby. Whether you’re pissed, happy, sad, silly. Everything about you turns me on.”

Her words came out muffled against his shoulder as she buried her face into the side of his neck. “They came by and told me you were dead. I fell apart. I didn’t want to believe it.”

Pulling her up to face him, he stared at her. “I know, baby. I left you as my contact, my next of kin, in case something happened. Shit, nothing ever happens to a man until he has someone who he cares about. Sorry I scared you, baby.”

Even though he looked in quite a bit of pain, she slapped his shoulder, the sheer magnitude of the events of the last hour finally hitting her. “You

didn't just scare me. I thought you were dead. Damn it! It took every effort I had just to breathe every day. I killed my roses. I didn't have it in me to take care of them. I couldn't function. I could barely take care of the horses. Oh, Finn." She choked up. "What the hell happened? How'd you come back from the dead? And don't you dare say you can't tell me. You owe me that much."

His hand rubbed her back, the other arm useless in the sling. "I know I do, baby. I floated in that damn sea for two days once the currents got hold of me. With it being nighttime, I didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of being found. All I thought about was your emails and your beautiful face, Emma, baby. I looked up at the stars and knew you were under one of them, waiting for me to come back. Then a fishing boat found me. Thank God the water wasn't freezing. They got me to the hospital. I came here as fast as I could once Commander Stone told me he had told you I was killed."

"Oh my God. Finn."

"I've called my grandfather, too. He's relieved. Heard he wouldn't even hold a memorial service." Finn's attempt at a laugh was met with a wince.

"I wish I'd had his faith. I thought I'd lost you forever. It sounded so damn final." She kissed his lips again. "But here you are." Her eyes couldn't stop studying him to make sure it was real.

"Yeah, I had a message to give someone special. I couldn't let her down."

"Really?"

His hand rubbed her hair. "You're the best thing that's ever happened to me, Emma. I'm not the easiest man to get along with, but I'm quite sure you're capable of handling me, baby."

"I agree."

"And you *are* getting spanked. When my arm is better, I'm tying you to this bed, spanking that

pretty little bottom until you come and then I'm gonna fuck you until we both can't remember our names."

"Promise?"

"I do!"

"Finn, would you wear a wedding ring once we're married?"

"Why?"

"Just answer the question."

"Yes, of course. But I get to put your ring on first."

"Mmm. I think I might just let you."

"You'll let me?" He laughed. "Oh, honey, you are so spanked."

About the Author

Christina James writes hot, sensual romances with a little sarcastic wit and some humor, in a contemporary setting. Her heroes are Alpha males with that hidden tender side that the heroines oh so enjoy unwrapping! Her heroines are always smart and self-sufficient with a good dose of sarcastic wit and temper to keep any man on his toes. Christina enjoys enhancing her plots with a high dose of sexual tension that can bring even the strongest man to his knees. And what heroine wouldn't enjoy that?

For naughty and wicked romance with no strings attached, enjoy a book by Christina James.

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Christina James

Also Available

Make A Wish And Blow

by

Christina James

Birthday wishes really can come true—just make a wish and blow.

Daren Hughes has been tortured by his desire to have hot, kinky, wild sex with his best friend, Cassandra. So when he turns her across his knee for a bare-handed birthday spanking, she squirms but doesn't demand that he stop, awakening his darkest desires. Daren hopes that by introducing Cassandra to bondage and spanking, she will embrace her submissive side and satisfy his Dominant hunger. But Daren never expects Cassandra's sexual appetite to match his own.

Cassandra Wright has been in love with Daren forever. So when he proposes they be "friends with benefits" and plans a weekend to explore their sexual attraction, how can Cassandra refuse? Even if he can't give her the happily-ever-after-love she craves. But will Cassandra and Daren's weekend of sexual bliss destroy the one thing that means the most to them...their friendship?

Chapter One

Turning another year older wasn't the highlight of Cassandra Wright's day. Being a horny single woman just added to her misery. She sat at her kitchen table sipping the glass of wine she'd poured as soon as she arrived home from work. She ignored the four voice mail messages from various friends wanting to get together to celebrate her birthday. Oh sure, she enjoyed partying, dancing, and having a great time as much as the next person, but none of that mattered as she held a private pity party in her tiny kitchen. The man she desperately loved had apparently forgotten her birthday.

When her doorbell rang, she cringed, knowing one of her friends had decided to come by and haul her out on the town. If she believed they'd go away, she'd ignore the ding-dong sound. But she knew better. With her car in the driveway during a humid Connecticut summer evening, it was obvious she was home and, unless she wanted to continue to listen to the shrill ringing, she'd better answer the door. She prayed they wouldn't sing a pathetic rendition of Happy Birthday. She gently placed the wine glass on her counter before walking to the front door.

When she peeked through the view hole, she immediately perked up, recognizing Daren Hughes, her best friend since sixth grade. So he hadn't forgotten her birthday after all! Daren was also, to her utter disappointment and constant torture, her *platonic* friend.

Cassandra opened the door and quickly ran her gaze over the hard male body leaning against the

doorframe. At twenty-nine, Daren was six-feet-two with chocolate brown eyes and thick wavy hair the color of caramel. His body was toned and lean, without an ounce of fat anywhere, thanks to his relentless daily workout regimen. The solid muscles of his thighs strained against the light blue material of his jeans. Broad arms and flat abs were covered by a tight short sleeve black T-shirt. Daren made her mouth water and her pussy clench every time she set eyes on him. What she wouldn't give to nibble on him for one damn night. She could easily picture her teeth nibbling along that hard skin inch by inch, tasting the saltiness of flesh that was firm and muscular. She'd start her feasting along the curve of his thick neck and head down to...well...anywhere on his body would be fine with her.

Cassandra spoke softly, squashing the urge to fan herself. "If you start singing to me, I'll slam the door and not talk to you for a week."

"You'd break my heart, babe," Daren replied easily, his deep voice lulling her into a hornier state. He held a lovely bouquet of red roses and a small ice cream cake. "Besides, the only singing I do is in the shower. You'd have to join me, if you're interested in how well I carry a tune. I promise you won't be disappointed."

His smile was devastating as it widened to show perfect teeth, the kind also made for nibbling heated skin. Her body heated a few degrees at the thought of his teeth grazing lazily over her hot flesh. God, how she wanted to take that shower. If only he was serious and not teasing her like he usually enjoyed doing, she'd strip now and haul him into the bathroom. Just the thought made her panties dampen with arousal. Her legs shifted in response and her pussy heated up. If she could only clench her thighs together hard enough, then maybe her cunt wouldn't be so aware of Daren's body inches from

hers. She hated how easily he could arouse her with just one look, one word, one touch.

She leaned her shoulder on the open door for support. "Tell me, Daren, did you stop by to flirt or did you have something else on your mind?"

Shrugging, he kept his eyes on her. "Wanted to wish you a happy birthday."

She sighed. "It's just another day."

"No, it's your special day. You should be celebrating, especially since it's Friday."

She leaned her head against the door. "Only kids celebrate birthdays. Adults really have no right. It only signifies another year of leaving youth behind."

He frowned. "Ah, I can see the Cynical Cass is here tonight. Pity, since I much prefer the Playful Cass."

If only she could tell him about all the games she'd like to play with him between her 1200-thread count soft-as-heaven bed sheets. Oh, the hell with that. She'd play games with him on the cold hard floor if it meant that magnificent body was pressing hers into the gleaming wood planks. But his friendship was more important than a few orgasms—no matter how glorious they'd be.

"Not cynical. Just worn out. That's all." *I'm exhausted from facing the fact I can't have you.*

"Uh-huh." He sounded doubtful. Of course he wouldn't believe her. She'd never been able to lie to him.

She prayed he wouldn't interrogate her now. If he did, there was a good chance she'd jump into his arms and spill her heart.

"You gonna invite me in?"

"Oh God, yes. I'm sorry. Told you I was tired." She stepped aside and let him move past before shutting the door.

He placed the cake on the foyer table in her

front hall and faced her. His massive body hovered over her, making her feel shorter than her five-foot-four stature, and then pinned her against the closed door.

“No problem,” he said, leaning on his elbow and pushing into her personal space. Now he looked straight down into her eyes as she tilted her head back to keep eye contact.

“In answer to your question, I came over to spend the night with my favorite girl. Well, that is unless she has other plans.” His finger skimmed her cheek. She sucked in her breath.

She laughed hoping it didn’t sound nervous. “Favorite girl, my ass. You have more girls than you can keep straight.”

His face remained serious. “Hey, that may be true, sweetie, but none of them compare to you. You’re my favorite. So what do you say? You going to let me make the night memorable for you?”

She raised her eyebrow. “Memorable, huh? Now you’ve got my attention.”

He smiled. “I bet I do. And you’ve got mine. The night is yours. What do you want to do?”

Fuck you, then fuck you again.

She looked past his body to where he left the ice cream cake. “Looks like we should start with dessert first, before it melts, then get something for dinner.”

His thigh brushed hers as he turned to glance at the cake then faced her again. The firm touch of his muscle against the bare skin under her skirt heated her flesh. A slow, warm tingle traveled up her thigh to pool in her belly. The warmth was like the slow stroking of a flame, every cell in her body aware of his closeness. Every cell longed for his touch. Even her brain wasn’t immune as she struggled to keep focused on the connection. Just a slight shift of his feet and they no longer touched. With the connection lost, disappointment filled her.

“Sounds good,” he said, simply.

She blew out an aggravated breath. She was practically humping his friggin’ leg. What the hell had gotten into her tonight? Why was she acting like a schoolgirl instead of a grown woman? She rationalized that any breathing woman would react to such a sexy male body. It was all just a normal female-male reaction and nothing to do with the fact that each night she dreamt of his hot, sweaty body gliding over hers in every position imaginable. And now the subject of those dreams was standing oh so close to her.

She quickly snapped back to reality. “Thank you for the roses, Daren. I can smell them all the way over here.”

“Mmmmm. I can only smell you, Cass.” His head bent, his nose lightly resting behind her ear. When he inhaled, his warm breath teased her ear. She expected her legs to drop from under her. “Of course, you always smell great. Makes a man want to lay you down and kiss you from head to toe. You’re intoxicating, Cass.” His whispered words created goosebumps over her entire body.

Her mouth opened in shock. It took her a minute to find her voice. “Daren?”

He slowly pulled his head back, but remained nose to nose with her. She swallowed hard, her mouth suddenly so dry. He said nothing. His gaze scanned her face before fixating on her eyes. Was that lust in the brown depths staring back at her?

“Daren? Do you have a head injury or something?”

“No, babe. Why?”

This close, Cassandra could see the creases around his eyes when he frowned.

“Because it sounds like you’re hitting on me. That thing you just did to my ear...”

“Thing?” he asked, his lips forming a sexy smirk.

“Oh, shut up. You know what I mean.” She shoved against him, but he didn’t budge. “You practically stuck your tongue in my ear.”

“Mmmmm. Now that sounds like fun.”

What? Oh God, Daren had obviously encountered extraterrestrials, because she was not his type and yet he was clearly hitting on her. Hadn’t she dreamt of this moment? But now that it was happening, it seemed so surreal.

“What’s gotten into you?” she demanded, her back against the door and her eyes mesmerized by his.

He smiled again, his eyes offering a challenge. “Tell me to stop and I will.”

Stop? Was he fucking crazy? This was the closest he’d been to her other than on a dance floor, and he’d never pulled these moves on her there. Oh, hell no, she didn’t want it to stop.

She smiled, her heart did a slow drum roll. “So is this why you came over? To tease me? Doesn’t sound like a very nice thing to do to your best friend.”

“It’s not a very nice thing to do to myself either.”

“What are you talking about?”

His gaze flicked down to his waist then back to hers. “I think if you lowered those gorgeous eyes of yours south of my belt, you’d see that you’ve given me a hard-on with no relief in sight.”

Okay, she’d just *look*, but only to satisfy her curiosity. And she didn’t care about any damn superstitions about curiosity and cats. She was a woman. Her eyes widened at the obvious erection straining against the front of his jeans. The thickness grew longer as she watched and she swore it flexed. Well, now she knew what curiosity did to her *pussy*...it flooded instantly with desire.

“I gave *you* that? You’re the one who has me pinned against the damn door, practically sucking

on my neck.”

“I hardly have you pinned, Cass. You could move away at any time.” He leaned in again, his lips against her ear. “But make it soon before I change my mind about letting you get away. Maybe I like to have you pinned as you call it.”

She took a long steadying breath, closing her eyes briefly, then opening them to see that he was still there. “So this is what you came here for? To play games?”

“Do you really want to know why I came here tonight, Cass?”

“I’ve only asked like five times.”

A long finger brushed a curly strand of hair behind her ear. “I wanted to see you. Wanted to make your birthday special.” His voice dropped to barely louder than a whisper. “And, of course, you need your birthday spanking.”

For a long moment, Cassandra could only stare at her handsome best friend, the vision of him spanking her the only thought in her mind. His words, his stare, entranced her.

“Promises, promises,” she muttered, not really meaning to say it out loud, but it was too late. The words had slipped passed her lips.

The gleam of Daren’s eyes told Cassandra he wasn’t kidding.

“Are you serious?” she asked, her voice giving away her shock followed by a nervous giggle.

He continued looking down at her. “Absolutely. You know better than anyone that once I set my mind to something, I finish it.”

She swallowed hard and told herself to breathe. She wanted to speak, but her voice was mute. When she opened her mouth to take a deep breath, words slowly formed. “And you know better than anyone that I don’t play games, Daren. So stop. We’d better eat that ice cream cake before it melts everywhere.”

She pushed easily past, his muscular body giving way. She walked the few feet to the table and picked up the box and flowers. Daren's hard body pressed against her, his chest to her back.

His voice whispered into her ear. "I'm not into playing games either, Cass, unless, of course, they include sex toys and paddles. You take life too serious. I'm here to show you how to have a little fun."

She turned to face him, her bundles getting squished between their bodies when he didn't move back even an inch. "I know how to have fun, Daren. Let's start with this cake, then you're taking me dancing."

He followed her into the kitchen and leaned against the counter while she busied herself with plates, forks, and a knife.

His hand clasped over hers when she went to slice the cake. "Uh-huh, Cass. Not so fast."

"It's melting. If we wait any longer it'll be soup."

He stood behind her; his arms circled her until his hands covered hers as she held the knife over the cake. His mouth rested on her ear. Every cell in her body was alive with the awareness that he was hard, muscular, and potent. Her pussy wept with little waves of pleasure, pleading for his attention. She did everything she could not to lean her head back onto his chest and offer her throat up for his exploration.

"You need to make a wish, baby. Make it one I can help come true."

The promise in his voice was all she needed to tremble. She swallowed hard, closed her eyes, and formed a thought. There was only one wish she wanted—Daren to be hers, forever. No fling would do. No one-night stand would satisfy. That would leave her aching more than she was now. One taste of Daren would make her want him forever. She knew that as much as she knew she needed air to

live.

“Make a wish, Cass. Make a wish,” Daren whispered into her ear.

Cassandra silently made her wish, allowing herself a moment to envision it coming true and waking up to Daren every day for the rest of her life. But the Roaming Romeo was not the settling down type. Daren preferred a different woman in his bed every night. He liked to play and enjoyed variety. To him, the thrill was in the chase; once he got a woman in his bed he tired of her quickly and set his sights on the next target. Cassandra couldn't ever remember a time when Daren had a steady girlfriend. She had managed to stay in his life all these years simply because she'd never fucked him. Aw hell, did he just think of her like he would a sister? She could hear her dreams slowly shatter. If only birthday wishes could become reality.

Cassandra sighed and opened her eyes.

“Gonna tell me what the wish was, Cass?” Daren cooed, still close to her ear.

“No. You know if I tell you then it won't come true.”

He laughed and raised his head, but remained with his arms around her. “Or maybe I could make it come true. There's nothing I wouldn't do for you, sweetheart. You know all you have to do is ask.”

Would you be mine? Cassandra smiled at the cliché and immediately thought of the little Valentine cards kids traded at school. Daren could never be hers.

But at least she had his friendship. Adding sex to the mix would destroy the one relationship that had remained a constant in her life. Even the best orgasm in the world wasn't worth that, unless there could be future orgasms. Her only future with Daren was as his *platonic* best friend.

“You've brought me cake. That's a start.” She

avoided eye contact, feeling too vulnerable about her silly wishes.

Daren helped her slice into a cake that was now very creamy. She scooped two pieces onto plates, handed him one, and walked to the kitchen table. He sat next to her, his knee brushing her leg. Why was she so aware of his touch tonight?

She welcomed the coldness from the ice cream. Her body felt as if she'd laid out in the sunshine all day. She prayed her cheeks weren't flushed, although the warmth indicated they were. So she kept her head lowered, hoping the ice cream would cool her down.

"This is delicious. Very creamy," Daren said, his voice hinting of charm she didn't believe was just for silly ice cream. Could it be for her?

Cassandra risked a glance up and wished she hadn't. Daren was licking his spoon, front to back, in slow strokes. Visions of him doing that to her pussy danced in her head.

She spoke softly, her eyes still mesmerized by his tongue. "This was a very nice surprise, Daren. Thank you."

"Pleasure's all mine."

She laughed when a drop of vanilla ice cream smeared onto the corner of his mouth when he took another spoonful. "Eat much? You're wearing it," she teased, placing her spoon carefully on her plate.

She leaned over, a gesture too automatic to think about, and wiped her fingertip across the corner of his mouth to remove the ice cream drop. As fast as a bullet, he captured her hand. She sat in stunned fascination as he raised her finger to his mouth, his firm lips closing over it and taking it into the wet, warmth of his mouth. She gasped when he sucked on her finger with a slow pull so erotic that her pussy spasmed in greedy awareness. Oh my God, his mouth was like heaven—full of promises of

out-of-this-world pleasures.

Her eyes shot to his, the chocolate brown color glazed over with lust. His mouth moved slowly over her finger, licking it up then down. His stare was intense, her body reacting in more ways than she could imagine from such a simple touch. Her skin was feverish. Her mind was blank. The smell of vanilla from the cake made her drunk with desire. All she could focus on, all she could see, was Daren's mouth holding her finger prisoner. All she could feel was the heat of his mouth, the pressure of his tongue.

With deliberate slowness, he withdrew her finger from his mouth, kissing the tip before releasing it. He smiled wickedly, the devilish grin acknowledging that he'd turned her on.

"My, with lips like those, it's no wonder you can have any woman you want," Cassandra said, trying to make light of the situation. The last thing she wanted was to confirm the affect he had on her.

"Not true. I don't always get every woman I want."

She laughed and stood to bring her plate to the sink. "Yeah, right. There isn't a woman in this state that hasn't fallen into your bed."

"You haven't," he said matter-of-factly as he brought his plate to the sink and stood beside her.

"Ah, true. But we're best friends, so I don't count."

"On the contrary, my dear, I believe you count a lot."

She stared at him before speaking. She didn't want to be teased right now. "I need to change. You're taking me dancing. So go home, change, and pick me up in an hour."

He smiled, wide and bright. "Aren't you the bossy little thing, huh? But you forget that I like to be in charge."

“Your Dominant side doesn’t count with me. I’m your friend not your lover, so dominating me won’t happen.”

He smiled dangerously, as if she’d just challenged a tiger to a wrestling match. Expecting a smart-ass comeback from him, she was shocked when he said nothing but continued to watch her intensely.

“It’s my birthday. I get to call the shots,” she continued and walked him by the hand to the door. “One hour.”

His hand squeezed hers before letting go. Once in the hall, Daren turned to face her, his eyes dancing with heat. “One hour, Cass, and I’ll be back. If you’re not ready then we go out the way you are when I get here. Dressed or not. And I choose the place we dance.”

His smile was soft but he left no room for argument as he swiftly turned and walked out into the night. Cassandra looked at her watch, noted the time, and smiled. If he thought he could boss her around, he’d better think twice. After all these years, didn’t the man know any better? Oh, she would sorely test Daren’s dominant side if he thought of using it on her.

Daren Hughes would be eating out of her hand by the end of the night not just sucking on her finger.

Jesus Christ, what the hell had he been thinking? Daren parked his BMW in the assigned parking spot under his condo complex. Walking to his apartment was uncomfortable to say the least. The massive hard-on he sported, all thanks to Cassandra, bulged in his jeans. Fuck!

He let himself into the apartment, walked to the bathroom, and turned the shower on cold. He stripped, stepped under the stream, and cursed

loudly when the frigid water hit his heated body.

Christ, he'd gone over to wish Cassandra a happy birthday, not to seduce her. But the woman made it too easy, looking like a sex kitten with those pouty lips and come-fuck-me brown eyes that darkened to a deep chocolate when she was aroused. Her slender body fit perfectly against his. And that long, gorgeous, dark brown hair flowed down her back in thick waves. He could imagine taking a fistful of those locks to hold her against him as he pounded her pussy from the behind.

He growled loudly and lifted his face to the cold water. He had to stop thinking about Cassandra that way. She was his best friend, his only truly trusted companion. Yeah, she had a body that made his mouth water and his cock harden. But as much as he needed—no wanted—to feel her luscious hips thrusting into his, to feel her slender body writhing under his, he couldn't expose her to his Dominant side.

What he'd expect from Cassandra in bed would be more than their friendship could survive. She'd never accept his dark side, his need to dominate. Hell, it was more than most women could handle as he knew all too painfully well. He didn't get bored with women like Cassandra thought. Instead, women couldn't handle him in bed. Sure, they all talked the talk when they first met him. They all wanted to be dominated, but once he got them into bed and showed them exactly what he meant, they never came back.

Losing Cassandra the same way would be too much to bear. Oh, but the fun he could show her once her sarcasm got to work. Yeah, she'd surely challenge the best of his patience. He'd enjoy every second too.

Daren had dressed in record time before realizing he was rushing to get back to Cassandra.

Damn. It was going to be a long night if he didn't get his hormones under control. Even if he'd had the time to jerk off, it wouldn't have helped. It wouldn't be the same as Cassandra's hot body riding him and her sweet pussy milking his cock.

The ten-minute drive to her place took an eternity. Daren backed into a parking spot and strolled up the stairs.

He knocked on Cassandra's door, knowing she wouldn't be ready just because he told her to be. He smiled, his cock flexing in his tan slacks. His Dominant side would love to tame that little vixen. She needed a lifetime of taming and he'd be sure to enjoy it, but that wouldn't happen. His best friend never gave a man a chance in the Forever After Department.

His breath hitched when Cassandra opened her door, dressed in a red skin-hugging dress that barely covered her ass. The neckline gripped her ample cleavage snugly, her nipples proudly perked against the material. Long, silky legs ran on forever above three inch, red stiletto heels. Her long, dark brown hair flowed over her shoulders down her back. His hand wanted so badly to take a fistful of those beautiful long strands and pull her to him. He'd devour the luscious mouth that currently smiled with a feline grin.

"Right on time, Daren. Bet you thought I wouldn't be ready."

"Thought crossed my mind. Remember, Cass. I know you well."

"Mmmmm. We'll see about that. Now where are we going?"

He took her slender hand in his and walked down the stairs to the car. The click of her heels on the cement drew his attention to her gorgeous legs. Immediately, visions of those legs wrapped around his waist had his cock surging to life. He would have

her keep those heels on while she rode him. His breath hitched at the thought of Cassandra standing before him, naked, dressed only in those sexy shoes.

He opened the passenger door for her and looked his fill as she seated herself. "A place I frequent often," he told her. "Thought I'd spice things up for you tonight."

Her eyes widened at his words. He shut the door and walked quickly to the driver's side. As soon as he was seated, her scent assaulted him like a solid punch to the gut. She smelled of lilacs and vanilla. To keep from touching her, he immediately put the car in drive and pulled out into traffic.

"When you said a place you frequent, do you mean one of those fetish clubs?"

He glanced at her quickly before returning his eyes to the road. "Yes. It's Club Perform. But it's not what you're thinking."

Her giggle made his blood heat. "Oh? And what do you think I'm thinking?"

He grinned. "You're thinking there will be people chained to the wall getting whipped, or everyone will be dressed in leather." He looked at her. "Am I right?"

She laughed. The soft chuckle tightened his stomach.

"Okay. Half right. I imagined the leather, but not the whipping part. Do they really do that at those clubs?"

Her innocent curiosity shot right to his groin and his erection hardened painfully. God, the last thing he needed was for her to be interested in the erotic lifestyle he embraced. He would love to tutor her in the erotic side of lovemaking, to see her face flushed with passion and her clit swelled with lust.

"Daren! Watch out!"

Daren slammed on the brakes, tires squealing, and stopped inches from the rear end of a police

cruiser at a red light.

“Shit!” Daren yelled, watching the blue lights come on in front of him and the two police officers step from their vehicle. “Great.”

Daren rolled down the window, praying he didn’t have to step out sporting the massive hard-on in his pants.

“Problem with your brakes, sir?” the young officer asked.

“No, sir. I’m sorry. Foot slipped. That’s all.”

The officer looked into the vehicle at Cassandra then back to Daren. “Where are you headed?”

“Taking the lady out dancing. It’s her birthday.”

The cop gave him a shit-eating grin. “Lucky guy. License and registration. Ma’am, I’m going to need you to step out of the vehicle.”

“Why? What the hell for?” Daren demanded as he opened his wallet to retrieve his license.

She patted his arm, the simple touch scorching his skin. “It’s okay, Daren. Just do what they say.”

The other young officer opened the door for Cassandra and offered his hand to help her out while Daren could only sit there. Bastards were infatuated with her. Daren fought against a wave of jealousy he’d never experienced before. Why did they need her to step out of the vehicle other than to ogle her? Hell. He wished they had stayed at her place and he had gone with his original plan and ordered take-out. Then he could’ve talked her into that birthday spanking. Oh hell, now wasn’t the time to think of that.

Daren sat in his car like a caged animal. He wanted to get out and go to Cassandra. He could see her in his rearview mirror speaking with the officer while the other officer sat in the front seat of the cruiser, presumably running his info. Damn! Well, he sure was making Cassandra’s birthday memorable, but he wanted to be the only man she

remembered, not the two young stud wanna-be's in uniform.

The officer exited the cruiser, but instead of returning to Daren, he walked to the back of the car and started talking with Cassandra. A moment later, her laughter sang through the air.

Daren clenched his fists. What the hell was so funny? And why was she still out there? Surely they'd stared at her long enough. Another peal of laughter. His teeth ground together and his jaw was so taut it ached. She was so getting a spanking when they got home!

"Excuse me, officer? Are we done here?" Daren yelled out the window before mentally counting to ten.

A moment passed before Cassandra walked back to the car, where the officer opened her door and once again offered her a hand as she sat down.

"Thank you, Officer Riley. You're the sweetest thing."

Oh please!

The other officer came to Daren's window. "Pay attention to the road, Mr. Hughes. While I can't blame you for being distracted by such a lovely young woman, you need to focus while driving." He handed him back his paperwork. "Have a nice birthday, Cassandra. Enjoy Club Perform."

"Thank you, Officer Mathews," she said, giving a little wiggle of her fingers and a sinful smile.

When they were finally back on the road, Daren cursed. "What the hell was so damn funny back there?"

"What?" Innocence echoed her words. "Oh, you mean with the officers?"

"No. I mean with the damn boogeyman. Of course I mean with the officers."

She giggled, the sound shot all the way to his cock, making it grow hard again. "Oh my God. Are

you jealous, Daren?"

His hands tightened on the steering wheel. "What? Of course not. Why the hell would I be jealous of two cops when I'm the one you're out with?"

"Oh, I don't know. They were really handsome. And muscular. And I am single. They'd be good candidates for me to date."

Daren grunted.

"They were such gentlemen, all concerned about my safety." The whisper in her voice made his cock ache painfully. "They wanted to make sure I was with you willingly."

"What?" His head whipped around to look at her. "Why the hell wouldn't you be?"

Her gaze fluttered between him and the road. "Daren, maybe we should talk when you're not driving."

His gaze flew back to the road. "I can drive and talk, damn it."

Her hand slid over his thigh, soothing up and down. *God, please go higher!* His body tensed, hoping he wouldn't cum in his pants from her touch, but damn he wanted to feel that slender hand stroke his cock.

"You're right. I'm with you and not them, so no need to be jealous. They were going to write you a ticket for reckless driving, until I flirted with them and managed to change their minds."

His jaw tensed so much it ached. "I would rather have gotten the ticket than have you out there flirting with them. I can afford a goddamn ticket."

"It's not about being able to pay the fine. I just didn't want to be the reason you got in trouble."

Too late, sweetheart, I'm already in trouble—can't get you off my friggin' mind.

He stilled her hand on his thigh by covering it with his. He lifted it to his lips and kissed her

knuckles before releasing her. Touching her too much would land him in more trouble than he needed. Touching her would drop him to his knees.

Daren pulled up outside Club Perform and passed the keys and sizeable tip to the valet before opening the door for Cassandra and taking her hand. He led her to the front door where the security staff welcomed him with the handshakes and chest butts men used in lieu of hugs. He kept Cassandra close to him while gauging just how comfortable she was. If she wanted to leave, then they would instantly. But her eyes were filled with excitement as she looked around while a bouncer wrapped a black plastic wristband around her hand before they were allowed entry. Once inside the club, they headed to the bar. Daren knew all the employees here, and Club Perform catered to a more elite clientele. There'd be no scumbags pawing at Cassandra. Everyone here was screened before entry.

Normally, Daren would've taken Cassandra out dancing to one of her favorite nightspots on the other side of town. The kind of club that was just for dancing and drinking and would never allow the sexual atmosphere Club Perform offered. But he'd been compelled to share a glimpse of his lifestyle with her, and Club Perform would be the most desirable place to start. While it accommodated the BDSM scene, it wasn't as hardcore as most fetish clubs. She needed a place to feel comfortable and allow herself to have fun because, unless he was way off his mark, he sensed she hid her own desires and fantasies. And he doubted there was anything vanilla about them.

At Club Perform, couples could engage in an array of sexual trysts to fulfill their fantasies or fetishes. It wouldn't be uncommon, once the night grew later, to find people fucking up against the walls, at the tables, or even on the dance floor. Many

lucky Doms would receive blowjobs from their subs as they sat at their table, the sub on her knees sucking his cock at his command. He couldn't wait to see the expression on Cassandra's face when she played voyeur to such sexual acts for the first time.

Then there were the private rooms in the back that guests could rent by the hour or for the entire night. Liquor service ended at 2:00 a.m., but by then the crowd was fueled on enough alcohol and hormones to last them until closing time. Maybe Daren would consider renting one of those rooms for an hour and give Cassandra her birthday spanking after all. Now there was a thought to ponder. His dick came to life again.

Smiling, he handed Cassandra her drink and led them to a table by the dance floor. The fast pulse of the music emanated from a dozen speakers and the songs were chosen to entice customers to swing rhythmically on the dance floor. He couldn't wait to get her out there. They'd danced plenty of times, so he knew she had sweet moves. His cock flexed in agreement.

"This isn't so bad, Daren," Cassandra said, then sipped her drink. "You've always made your love life sound so dark and forbidden."

He offered half a smile. Dark and forbidden. If she only knew how good that could be. "This isn't my love life, babe. This is just a club I frequent to relax and meet people."

Watching as she sucked on the straw made him wish he was the thin plastic drink stirrer.

"Meet women you mean."

"Ah, be careful, Cass, or you'll sound like the jealous one."

She smiled, a sarcastic grin meant to intimidate. "Hardly. Besides, there's nothing these women have that I don't."

While he watched her nervously twirl her straw,

he spoke. "True. But these women like things, well sex, a little rougher, a little dirtier, and much darker."

"Maybe I do, too."

Breathe he reminded himself. "Not like this, Cass."

She frowned. "How would you know what I like? You've never asked."

His cock hardened like steel. "Believe me, Cass, I'd know if you were into the Dominant/submissive lifestyle."

She surveyed the room. "Well, I'll admit, I've never considered it before, but now you've raised my curiosity. I like to try new things and life has been a bit boring lately. Maybe this is just what I need."

He swallowed so hard that he checked to see if his tongue was still there. Did he just hear her right?

"Come on, bad boy. Dance with me," Cassandra demanded, taking his hand and leading the way onto the dance floor.

Okay, on the dance floor they were an even match. This he could handle. Or so he thought. Once she started gyrating her hips and moving her body to the beat of the music, he was a lost man. Lost in the vision of her body swaying in that sexy red dress. Lost in the smile plastered on her face as she swung in a circle, her hair flying around her. Lost totally and completely in her pleasure.

His hands gripped her waist and pulled her hard against him as the music changed to a low drumbeat. He held her pelvis to his cock, allowing her to ride him as her hips bucked against him. Those hard nipples plastered against her dress glided over his chest with her every move, adding to his sweet torture. Her smile faded, replaced by a knowing grin like that of a woman who had a man under her spell. Well, two could play that game.

His hands glided over her hips up to her ribs, up further to skim his thumbs along the side of her breasts, appreciating the gentle swell of her perfect tits. He was pleased with the way her eyes widened in acknowledgment, the way heat flared within the brown depths. Was she wet?

Quickly, he spun her around, holding her back to his chest as one arm wrapped tightly around her waist and the other on her shoulder. Her ass rocked back into his cock, sending a river of fire through his body, stealing his breath. His fingers splayed low over her flat belly, the soft material of her dress silky to touch. Her hand stroked the back of his neck as her fingernails gently scraped his skin, driving his arousal higher.

He hoped she felt the length of him as he ground into her ass. His hands moved up and down her thighs, over the dress to bare skin. She was smooth as the finest silk, hot as the brightest flame. His face found the curve of her neck and nuzzled her. She smelled delicious—lilacs and vanilla would never be the same for him. He heard nothing but his heartbeat, felt nothing but the awesome sensation of her slender body molded to his.

When she shimmied down his body and back up again, it was all he could do not to find a wall to fuck her against. God, his cock had never been so hard or so desperate. He reminded himself that this was his best friend and not some woman who understood the darker kind of sex he'd be expecting. But it was like he actually just met Cassandra because she was showing him a side he'd never seen before. This side of her was sensual, sexy, and downright desirable.

He twirled her to face him, seizing her arms behind her back as he held her to his chest. Her eyes flashed with a bolt of lust and her head swung back displaying the alluring side of her long neck. His teeth wanted to sink into that sensitive skin. She

was at his mercy with her hands immovable, but he regained control of his desires and released her.

She was his best friend. Maybe if he kept chanting that in his head, his cock would back off of its pursuit of her.

Taking her by the hand, he led her back to their table.

She picked up her drink and pointed a finger. "You know, I wasn't done dancing, Daren. Next time you might want to ask me if I want to be dragged off the dance floor."

Jesus Christ, she was inciting the Dominant in him so fiercely that she was lucky he didn't blister her ass right here. Talk like that would earn her a damn good paddling if she were his sub. He was used to calling the shots, not getting lectured by the woman he was with.

Damn, he would love to tone that attitude of hers down. He smiled at the thought. She'd give him the challenge of a fucking lifetime. He wasn't a fool not to realize what it would take to tame a woman like Cassandra, her backbone being just one of many obstacles. And that mouth. That beautiful mouth could open at any time and tear him a new asshole. God, he'd welcome that challenge. She was exactly what he'd been looking for in these damn clubs for all those lonely nights, the ideal woman who eluded him.

Why did the woman of his most erotic dreams have to be right under his nose the whole time? And why did it have to be the one woman he couldn't have? Fuck!

"I needed a drink," he said plainly before discreetly adjusting his cock.

"So? Do I have to hold your hand while you get it?" Her eyes spit fire. He loved it. "I said I wanted to dance tonight, and that's what I'm going to do."

Cassandra strutted back onto the dance floor as

the multitude of strobe lights glided over her skin, illuminating it. As she danced with the crowd, her slender body moved effortlessly to the rhythm. Daren was completely mesmerized by her. But she wasn't at one of her typical nightspots where sex waited until the couple got home. She was out of her element here and, just as he expected, it took under a minute before another man approached her.

Make that two men.

He should rescue her, but he wanted to see what she would do. And he didn't have to worry. There were rules here. So he watched carefully, never taking his eyes off of her. The two men sandwiched her, front and back, inching closer with each beat of the music. Cassandra cast Daren a wary look before turning back to her partners and shimmying between them.

Aw hell. She didn't have to enjoy it so damn much.

While he couldn't hear her laughter over the music, he could see that she was having a blast. Cassandra was the star of the room, every guy noticing her presence. Strangely though, Daren wasn't worried because everyone understood the rules. And the number one rule was clearly dangling from Cassandra's wrist. That simple plastic band clearly marked her as taken. She was Daren's for the night.

When Daren calmly walked onto the dance floor and claimed her waist, the other two men melted back into the gyrating crowd.

He enjoyed the look of surprise on her face. "Were you expecting them to arm wrestle me for you?"

She shrugged, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Kind of, I guess."

"Don't worry, baby. Under normal circumstances, I'm sure they would've wanted to do

me bodily harm for stealing you away.”

“Under normal circumstances?”

“Different kind of club, Cass. Different set of rules.”

“And what would those rules be?”

He held her hand out. “This bracelet signals to every male, and female, that you’re taken.”

Her mouth opened wide. “Taken? What the hell do you mean taken?”

He laughed because he should’ve expected this reaction. She’d never accept being claimed by anyone. Even by him.

His hips swayed into hers as the beat of the music increased. “A club like this must have firm rules. It keeps everyone safe. Keeps things orderly.”

She shrugged free of him and walked back to the table, her hips revealing her temper as they swayed back and forth, each step she took was more determined than the last. He followed closely.

“You still didn’t answer my question,” she demanded, her voice loud enough to be heard over the music.

He watched her for a moment, seeing the anger in her eyes flare. “That bracelet serves as a symbol. You arrived with me, so by wearing it, all the other patrons know you’re with somebody and not to hit on you.”

“I’m *with* someone. I’m not *taken*!” she said between clenched teeth.

“You’re right. Do you want to leave?”

She shook her head. “No. I want this bracelet off. I’m not taken. What if the love of my life is here in this crowd? Wearing this stupid thing would prevent him from hitting on me.”

Now jealousy rose like bile in his throat. “And you don’t think me being by your side would prevent him from hitting on you?”

Her chin rose three inches, clearly defiant. And

totally turning him on. "Different kind of club. Different set of rules," she repeated his words. "You said so yourself, Daren. If I'm not wearing this stupid bracelet then everyone here will know I'm not taken."

"Enough!" His tone obviously caught her off-guard as she clamped her lips tightly. "You'll wear that damn bracelet or we'll leave. You don't know this scene like I do, Cass, so you'll listen or we leave. Understood?"

Now, why he thought talking sternly to her would make her listen was beyond him. But when that sweet smile creased her lips, he knew he wasn't going to like her response.

"I understand, Daren."

She what? Every brain cell warned him to tread lightly. But the Dominant in him took pride in having Cassandra comply with his wishes.

Taking her hand, he caressed her knuckles as they leaned over the table. "Thank you, Cass. I know you don't understand this, but it's for the best."

She smiled sweetly again. "You have a good night, Daren. I'm going home." She abruptly yanked her hand from his.

Damn it! He should have suspected something when she gave in so damn easily.

"Cass? We don't have to leave."

"I don't give a shit what you do. I'm leaving."

She elbowed her way through the crowd to the door. Daren stayed right on her heel. Stomping through the door, she stepped onto the sidewalk and asked the valet for a taxi.

"Lady's all set. I'll just take my car," Daren said, handing his ticket and another sizeable tip to the valet who disappeared quickly.

Tapping her foot, arms crossed, she stared at him dangerously. "So now this stupid bracelet means you can tell me how I can get home?"

His patience was wearing thin. “We’ll talk about this in the car.”

“The hell we will. I don’t want to talk to you. Some birthday.”

Cassandra grasped the band and stretched the plastic until she could pull it over her hand. Then she threw it at Daren. His hand automatically caught it and shoved it in his pants pocket. His eyes watched her, his cock throbbing at her defiance. God, had he ever been so turned on?

The valet pulled up with his car and Daren opened the door for Cassandra. She took her seat without even a glance at him. As soon as he was behind the wheel, he peeled away from the curb and merged into traffic.

“I’m sorry, Cass.”

His apology was met with silence. That was never a good sign. She loved to talk. More than that, she loved to argue. Now, she wouldn’t even look at him. He’d screwed this night up royally. Trying to show her a glimpse of his lifestyle was such a bad idea in hindsight.

“So what are you sorry for?” she finally asked after a few minutes.

He dared to look at her and was relieved that she was no longer staring out the side window, but at least looking through the windshield. He’d take whatever progress he could if it meant she’d forgive him.

“I’m sorry for ruining your birthday. I shouldn’t have taken you there. We should’ve gone to one of your regular spots.”

“Did I say I was upset you took me there? No. I didn’t. I’m pissed because you marked me as taken—something I’m clearly not—by a man who would only rub against me on the dance floor.”

His hand gripped the steering wheel. “As your best friend, it wouldn’t be appropriate to do anything

more to you.”

“Oh, please. With your lifestyle, you’re worried about what’s appropriate?”

“You’re damn right I am when it involves you.” He took a long, steadying breath. “Christ, I know I’ve totally screwed up tonight, but do you think you can leave a shred of my manhood in place and not make me beg. Right now I feel lower than scum.”

She fell silent again.

“Cass.”

She sighed softly, a sure sign her temper was deflating. “You’re not scum, Daren. I forgive you. I even understand your motives. You just wanted me to have fun and be safe doing so. You’re the best friend a girl could have. But I am an adult. Remember that.” She patted his hand. “You can make it up to me by taking me for pizza and then coming back to my place for a glass of wine.”

Relief flooded him. “That, baby, sounds like the best idea tonight.” He drove to the closest pizza place, planning to eat fast. He didn’t need any more public spectacles tonight.

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