

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*



Seven Minutes  
of *Seduction*  
AFTON LOCKE

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Despite Eliza Worth's attraction to her boss, Zach Taunton, she's so fed up with his unreasonable demands she's decided to look for another job. Her matchmaking friend Margo, determined to give Eliza some sexual healing for her work stress, invites her to a singles mixer, where Eliza reluctantly agrees to play a game of Seven Minutes in Heaven.

In a dark closet, Eliza is quickly brought to the edge and beyond by a sexy mystery man. Her initial intrigue quickly turns to horror when she discovers her masterful, anonymous lover is none other than her slave-driving boss—and Zach seems to want her for a lot longer than seven minutes.

But first he'll have to relinquish some control and negotiate his way into her heart.

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Seven Minutes of Seduction

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# *SEVEN MINUTES OF SEDUCTION*

Afton Locke

## **Chapter One**

Eliza Worth fought the urge to yawn as she entered Zach Taunton's office. Her boss, the new director of business development, probably had no idea how many nights he'd kept her awake from equal doses of stress and lust.

"Have a seat and tell me what the proposals department has accomplished this week," he said.

As usual, she took the simple chair across from his modern desk while he stood and paced. She spread her milestone report on the cherry-wood desktop. Hopefully focusing on the papers would take her mind off his subtle cologne.

Why did she have to be the team leader? One of the others might not be so distracted by the way his cotton shirt hugged his compact torso. Or how his gold-brown hair looked so rumpled it begged to be touched and smoothed down.

Being alone with him in this room didn't help. The soft, buff carpet, floor plant in the corner and warm tones of the furniture were as inviting as a comfortable hotel room. It would look even better with the overhead fluorescent light turned off. The rumble of traffic outside sounded miles away.

"Well, let's hear it," he said impatiently.

She cleared her throat and summarized the report progress aloud.

"In other words, the targets haven't been met." He'd stopped pacing and stood facing the window, toying with the blinds as he spoke. Good. That meant she wouldn't have to look into those demanding, dark eyes. The rich smell of fresh coffee drifted from the forgotten mug on his desk, making her mouth water.

"The department has been working at full capacity—beyond full capacity—for months," she countered.

"There are a lot of IT service providers out there. Crawford Constructs has to win more business," he replied as he walked back to the desk.

With no warning, he grabbed the charts and sat on the edge of his desk, nearly in her lap, while he perused them. With Zach perched higher than her, yet so close, Eliza felt dominated. He crossed one ankle over his other knee, giving her a front-row view of his crotch. Clearing her throat, she forced herself to look away.

He grabbed a couple swallows of coffee. "We've got to keep up better with the requests for proposals coming in."

Eliza folded her arms. What did he think they were—machines? They'd all been working like dogs without so much as one word of thanks for a job well done. While some nights she went home so exhausted she barely tasted her dinner, other times she arrived home too late to even bother eating.

Realizing she'd never be happy under that management style, Eliza had already sought another job. In fact, she'd gotten a message from her potential new boss this morning, offering her the position. She didn't mind working hard but nothing ever pleased Zach Taunton.

Her gaze wandered back to his crotch. What if she eased down the zipper and put his cock into her mouth? Would *that* please him? The man never sat still. He'd already uncrossed one leg and crossed the other. His cock would likely be just as restless, pummeling her mouth—in and out, in and out.

She crossed her legs as a wave of heat wedged itself between her thighs. *Uh-uh*. She refused to stoop to sexing up the boss to get special favors. Leaving was her only option out of this impossible situation but part of her would miss these crazy sexual fantasies.

"You've already said no to hiring more people and we can't cut corners." She tapped the tip of her pen against her bottom lip to keep her mounting frustration in check.

*Relax. This isn't your problem anymore*, she told herself. Zach would be history after she accepted the new job offer – which she planned to do as soon as possible – and gave her two weeks' notice.

"True," he replied.

Had they actually agreed on something? Eliza almost laughed at the irony. But why was he staring at her mouth that way? When she lowered the pen, he looked away.

"You could reconsider Molly Fletcher's predicament," she added.

He frowned and stood to pace again. "When is she returning to work, by the way?"

She set the pen on his desk, harder than she'd intended. He didn't even ask how Molly's broken ankle was doing. Over a week ago, Eliza had told him the proposal writer wanted to work from home while recuperating. Some hours would be better than nothing and they could really use the help.

*Not your problem anymore*, she reminded herself. *You did what you could*.

"It could be at least another week or two," Eliza said, "unless you want to reconsider bending the rules of the company's no-telecommuting policy."

Zach sat in his black leather chair behind the desk and gripped the arms. "Absolutely not. If I let one person do it, I'll have to let others. Then everyone might goof off and nothing would get done."

Eliza fought the urge to grab his shirt collar and shake it. Instead, she took a slow, even breath. "I see."

Truthfully, she didn't see at all. The incentive would motivate people and allow them to work hours they'd usually lose when a child had to stay home sick from school. Or, as in Molly's case, the employee wasn't physically able to deal with the office and public transportation yet was still able to work.

But she'd argued with him at the last meeting until she nearly shook with rage. He hadn't budged and she'd eventually learned trying to negotiate with him was pointless and exhausting. When Zach Taunton made up his mind about something, that was that.

She realized now would be the perfect time to tell her boss she was leaving, and exactly what she thought of him while she was at it. She didn't want to give notice, though, until she'd talked to her new boss personally to confirm the offer. And did she really need to tell Zach what she thought of him? Surely he was aware of what a jerk he was. She'd no longer have to answer to him and never intended to see him again, so why bother trying to convince him to change his mind?

It was much easier to just say, "I see."

When she felt composed enough to look at him again, she wondered why he gripped the chair arms so tightly his knuckles were white. Eliza blinked to make sure she'd seen correctly. He looked...insecure. As if his entire world might fly apart. The little-boy look in his big, dark eyes dissolved her anger. She almost wanted to hug him and tell him everything would be fine if he would just change his ways.

"If Molly runs out of sick time," he added, "maybe the employees can donate some. I'm never sick so I'd donate mine, but I haven't accumulated much since I'm so new."

Well, heaven forbid, Eliza thought. The man had actually made a concession, paltry as it was. Did a good person exist in there somewhere? Or was he a jerk through and through, packaged in a sexy body?

She didn't need a sexy body—or even a man, for that matter. Her single life suited her just fine. But she couldn't help wanting one of those hot, alpha heroes from the classic movies she watched every night. Not that she saw herself as a helpless, hysterical female lead, but the heroes were caring, tough and tender, all rolled into one.

A movie hero would let Molly Fletcher work at home. Zach was no hero.

"Oh, I almost forgot this," Zach said.

Eliza gasped when a heavy stack of paper, neatly bound with a large clip, landed in her lap. She hadn't realized he'd left his chair.

"What is it?" she asked.

"The new style guide for proposals."



She frowned and didn't bother brushing back her brown hair when it fell into her eyes. *New style guide?* Was he out of his mind? What was wrong with the old one they'd been using for years? Her fingers went cold as she flipped through the hundred-plus pages.

"When does it go into effect?" she asked.

"Immediately."

*Of course it does.* "I see."

*I see.* The automatic words nearly gagged her this time as they left her throat. She longed to argue how learning and conforming to the new style guide would slow proposal production even more, but surely he already realized that.

This was just one more change to add to the long list of ones that had been forced upon them since Zach Taunton's arrival. As she glanced at the view of trees and picnic tables out the window, though, peace filled her.

Now she was *sure* she'd made the right decision when she'd looked for another job.

Standing up and gathering her papers, she plastered a wintry smile on her face. "Is there anything else, Mr. Taunton?"

"No. Thanks, Eliza." He grabbed the pen that she'd left on his desk. "Don't forget this."

His fingers brushed hers when he handed it to her, sending tingles of electricity straight to both nipples, making them almost painfully erect. Thank goodness she always wore full-coverage bras to work.

Now that he stood so close to her, nearly eye-to-eye due to his short stature, she noticed the golden beard stubble starting to grow on his face. She didn't dare say so but it was incredibly sexy. Her fingers itched to test it...soft or rough? Moist heat coated her panties when she imagined that stubble scraping across her sensitive neck.

Something else occurred to her. He looked tired. His eyes even looked irritated, as if he'd been reading papers all hours of the night. At least his hard-working ambition earned him a few points in her book.

Come to think of it, his shirt was more wrinkled than it should be. Did he sleep here too? His office didn't have a couch but the leather executive chair looked comfortable enough. Of course, the desktop was big enough to lie down on.

She'd pictured herself lying across it more than once, with Zach's cock driving into her. These wild fantasies had to stop, she thought as she bit her bottom lip to regain composure. The intensity of all the deadlines must have fueled her libido.

And how long had they been facing each other, close enough to kiss? Eliza pressed her lips together, realizing with embarrassment she had parted them at some point. Did that explain why he was staring at her mouth...again?

"I've dumped a lot on you," he said softly. "Do you have any questions or anything?"

She couldn't even remember her name at this point. "No, not right now."

Why did he have to be such a sexy package? The sooner she started her new job and never saw him again, the better.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eliza entered her cubicle and dropped the mammoth style guide on her desk. She sat in her chair and just stared at the papers thumbtacked all over the fabric panel wall in front of her. Then she gulped the coffee left over in her mug, wincing when she found it stone-cold.

Meeting with Zach always left her in a daze. His high energy, demands, physical chemistry – or all three – made her feel as if she'd just run a marathon.

"How did the meeting go?"

The unexpected voice cut through the background sound of people typing on computer keyboards. She looked up at Ted, one of their seasoned proposal writers.

"You don't want to know," she replied to the slim, dark-haired man. "New style guide."

"Ugh." He peered over the top of his square glasses at the big stack of papers on her desk. "Is that it?"

She nodded. Ted hadn't been as vocal as some of the others about missing time with his family due to overtime but Eliza knew it bothered him. While he walked away with a sigh of defeat, she rubbed her eyes, realizing they were as irritated as Zach's.

They couldn't keep up this pace forever. With a common goal, team building and motivation, they could sprint hard for a while but not long-term. She knew it, and knew Zach knew it too. So why did he insist on pushing them anyway until they dropped?

Molly had broken her ankle by stepping off a curb wrong, exhausted after a long day of overtime. Hers was the first casualty of this crazy new management scheme but surely wouldn't be the last.

When the scent of microwave popcorn drifted past, her stomach growled. Eliza ignored it and took her cell phone out of her purse to listen to the message about the offer, just to make sure she hadn't dreamed it. The voice of her new boss sounded laid-back and reasonable. He would be out the entire day and invited her to call tomorrow to give her answer. As soon as she did that, she'd tell Zach.

Life would be good again.

Guilt for bailing out on the team pressed down on her. How would they fare without her standing up for them? They were free to leave too, she thought as she put away her cell phone. Hopefully they would be strong enough to make that same tough decision.

By the time Zach realized his management style didn't work, it would be too late. She knew she shouldn't feel sorry for him, but she did. That scared-little-boy look as he'd gripped the arms of the chair had done something to her heart.

When her office phone rang, Eliza groaned because it ended her after-meeting recovery break. But instead of the business call she'd expected, it was her friend and former coworker, Margo Villiers.

Eliza watched the minutes pass on the bottom-right corner of her computer monitor as they talked about the latest sexy dress Margo had bought.

"I wish I could chat longer but I'm swamped," she finally said.

"You're *always* swamped," Margo complained.

The exaggerated inflections in her friend's rich voice made Eliza smile. "Some of us have to work for a living, you know."

"If you'd come to my parties more often, sweetie, you could find a rich man of your own," Margo replied. "I highly recommend the work-free lifestyle."

The idea of getting rid of all the stress *did* sound tempting. Ever since Margo had married a rich businessman, her life had been one of shopping, leisurely lunches and entertaining. But Eliza knew herself. That kind of life would bore her eventually. She needed to work, just not like this.

"In fact, I'm having one of my special mixers tonight. I called to invite you," Margo added.

"Mixer" was a mild term for it. Since Margo's biggest hobby was matchmaking, she invited successful singles for drinks, conversation and – if desired – hot, creative sexual escapades.

Eliza sighed. "Thank you, Margo, but I'm just too exhausted to do anything after work lately." Watching sexy heroes in old movies in her bunny slippers while eating ice cream was the closest she got to sex these days.

"Your new boss is still the slave driver, eh?"

"I'll say." Eliza grabbed her pen and squeezed hard, surprised by her impulse to snap it in half. "You wouldn't believe what the man – Never mind."

"He must be sexy."

Eliza dropped the pen. "What? Why would you say that?"

Margo laughed, a lovely, musical sound. "I can hear it in your voice, sweetie. You want the man."

"That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. I can't stand him."

So why were her panties getting damp again?

She almost told the other woman she'd received a job offer but didn't have time to answer the questions that would surely follow. Besides, until she confirmed the job, she was afraid something might jinx it and leave her stuck with Zach forever.

Margo just laughed again. "You must come to the mixer tonight. I insist."

Eliza looked at the time display again. She had to get off this phone but knew arguing with Margo would eat up even more time she couldn't afford to lose. It would be easier to just make an appearance at the party.

"What time?"

"Half past nine, and don't be early," Margo said.

"Why not?" Suspicion knitted Eliza's brow. "You're not trying to fix me up with somebody again, are you? I told you I don't like blind dates."

"Of course not. I just have a lot of preparations to do before the guests arrive."

*Whatever.* "All right. See you tonight."

Eliza hung up the phone, wondering why she had accepted the invitation. If standing close to Zach hadn't stirred up her hormones, she probably would've turned it down. Oh well. It was just a party.

How bad could it be?

\* \* \* \* \*

Zach stared into space for a couple of minutes after watching Eliza walk out his office door. He loved the conservative straight skirts she wore and the way they hinted

at the sweet curves of her ass underneath. She didn't dress provocatively but didn't need to.

He drummed his fingers on his desk. His cock ached. Hell, it had ached during the entire meeting but he'd fought off a full-blown erection until now. Every time Eliza's silky brown hair had fallen across her eyes, he'd itched to smooth it back. And that moment at the end when she'd parted her lips...

Did she want him as much as he wanted her?

Unfortunately her big gray eyes never told him much. They had looked stormier than usual when he'd told her the proposals department needed to step up the pace to keep up with all the RFPs coming at them.

And he'd been *sure* the new style guide his boss demanded would shatter that cool, maddeningly calm control she'd been maintaining throughout the meeting. To his surprise, she'd barely batted an eye.

Why hadn't she argued with him today?

He liked the way her cheeks flushed when she argued and the way her upturned breasts heaved with her sighs. It made him want to rip off her high-necked blouse, slip, bra—and whatever else she armored herself with—and get down to the heart of the matter.

Even when she *wasn't* arguing, he wanted to sample her bare skin with his hands and mouth. At least she never fawned or acted subservient like the rest of them. The woman just simmered under those conservative clothes.

Eliza Worth was not an ass-kisser. She was intelligent and talented and got along well with the rest of the staff. The thought of that lush bottom lip of hers below his belt made the head of his cock throb. Maybe he wished she *was* an ass-kisser...

He was sure he'd caught a glimpse of desire in her eyes. Maybe the chemistry he'd sensed between them affected her too. He squeezed the outline of his erection through his pants. If only he could forget about work and indulge in a few minutes—or hours—of pleasure with her.

The ringing phone pried his thoughts away from his staff member's sexy mouth. Seeing his boss's number on the caller ID killed his erection too.

"Your numbers are down." Linton Crawford's cold voice sounded so clear it was as if he were in the same room, not fifty miles away.

*Linton.* Who would ever name their kid Linton? Maybe that explained why the man always seemed to have a thorn in his ass.

Zach reached for a stress ball and squeezed the life out of it. "Everyone is working very hard. Progress takes time, Mr. Crawford."

"The fiscal year ends in less than a month. You'd better have more new customers and repeat business on the books. The targets state —"

Geez. This guy was even worse than his father.

"I'm well aware of the targets." Zach dragged his fingers through his hair and pulled the ends. There probably wouldn't be much of it left by the end of the year. "You won't be disappointed."

After the call ended, he hurriedly glanced over his agenda. The pace was so fast now he could hardly afford to take a bathroom break anymore. If he spent many more nights in his office, he might as well move out of his apartment.

And the Molly Fletcher situation made him feel like a complete schmuck. Eliza surely thought he was a jerk and, for some reason, what she thought of him mattered. A broken ankle wouldn't keep him out of the office but he realized people did have illnesses and injuries.

Maybe he should reconsider modifying the company's no-telecommuting policy, but the thought of confronting Crawford about it made his stomach churn. The man didn't compromise on anything.

The phone rang again. *What now?* Crawford had probably called back to hassle him some more.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Taunton."

Zach blinked in confusion at the seductive female voice. It definitely wasn't Crawford.

"I'm Margo Villiers and I called to personally invite you to a little mixer at my home this evening. It begins promptly at nine o'clock. Please don't be late."

"Thank you but I don't have time for parties."

He used the same brusque tone he reserved for telephone solicitors and other people he didn't have time for. The name sounded familiar, though.

"Wait!" She must have realized he was already in the process of hanging up. "This is a *special* party. Eliza Worth will be there."

He had time for this. Now he remembered where he'd heard of Margo. Her *parties* were known as a way to meet attractive singles and even more renowned for their sexual games. He'd received written invitations before. He had no idea how he'd landed on the guest list but the parties sounded so intriguing, he'd planned to attend one sometime. With his career occupying so much of his life, he still hadn't gotten around to lots of things on his *sometime* list.

More importantly, Eliza's name got his attention. Yeah, he definitely had time for this. He'd make the time.

"I've heard of your...mixers," he said. "Eliza is coming? Are you sure?"

His hand sweated as he gripped the receiver, making it so slippery it almost slid out of his hand. An image of Eliza's hand around his slick cock followed, slamming into his gut. She didn't seem the partying type, especially this kind of party. Obviously there were sides to the mysterious woman he hadn't yet discovered.

"Yes," Ms. Villiers continued. "In fact, she wants to have a private encounter with you."

So he *hadn't* imagined the desire he'd seen in her eyes. This time Zach *did* drop the receiver.

"Sorry," he muttered after picking it up again. "You were saying?"



"Since you're her boss, she's very shy about this," Margo continued. "Please don't discuss it with her. Just come."

*Oh, I definitely plan to come. All over her slender legs and those upturned breasts...*

"I'll be there."

Zach hung up the phone, wondering when he'd gotten so out of breath. His erection returned full force, his balls hot and achy between his legs. Anticipation needled his spine, reminding him it had been way too long since he'd climaxed.

An encounter...with Eliza. What kind of encounter? Did she want to be tied up? Spanked? He'd give anything to lift that demure skirt of hers and dominate her sexually. An image of her upturned ass bent over his desk clawed at his cock, which demanded release. He squeezed himself, half tempted to unzip his pants and ejaculate into the wastebasket.

*Stop. Save it all for tonight. For her.*

He should have asked Margo about the specifics. His fantasies would attempt to fill in the blanks the rest of the afternoon. After staring at his agenda for a few minutes more without comprehending a word, he shoved it aside. His concentration was shot for the rest of the day. Linton wouldn't be pleased if he knew Zach's focus had drifted off task.

Just this once, to hell with Linton Crawford.

## Chapter Two

*I'm really not in the mood for a party.*

Eliza's legs grew stiffer with every step toward the front door of Margo's elegant home. *Especially not this kind of party.*

Her feet already hurt in the high-heeled sandals she wasn't used to wearing and wrestling with the new style guide all day had worn her out.

Standing on the single front step, she paused to peer into the panels of glass flanking the door. To her surprise, sounds of laughter and flirtatious voices from inside battled with a cricket singing in the thick, dark vegetation around the entrance. She looked at her watch, which read nine fifteen exactly. Why were there so many people here already when Margo had specifically told her not to come early? Was she up to something?

The bas-relief carvings on the wooden door invited her to press her hands against it for support. Watching the whispers in ears, roving hands and fuck-me-now body language among the well-dressed men and women inside caused her stomach to clench into a knot. Drinks first. Games later. At least Margo's mixers were predictable.

So why was she reluctant to go in?

Sighing, she moved her hand to cover the doorbell without pressing it, torn between getting this party over with and going home to watch another classic movie.

"Going in?"

A couple of men approaching behind her hastened her decision. *One drink. Then I'm out of here.*

She entered the high-ceilinged living room, feeling as if the tide had just washed her ashore. Within seconds, Margo's black stilettos clicked across the polished wood floor, accompanied by the signature scent of her expensive French perfume.

"There you are! I was afraid you wouldn't come, sweetie."

Seeing her friend's upswept black curls, gold hoop earrings and halter dress of tangerine silk made Eliza feel dowdy in her straight blue skirt and short-sleeved white blouse.

A frown drew Margo's elegantly curved brows together. "I told you to dress sexy. You look as if you just came from the office."

Eliza pointed at her feet. "Not quite. I went home and put on nice shoes."

Before she could look up, cocoa-colored fingers with long, red nails unbuttoned the top button of her blouse and pulled the fabric apart to reveal the beginning swells of her small, high breasts. A couple of men looked over with interest. If only she and Margo weren't standing in the middle of the room.

"There, that's better," Margo crooned. "Now relax and have a drink. I have lots of fun planned for tonight."

The scent of flowers from the lavish bouquets set on round, antique side tables almost made Eliza dizzy, and all the voices echoed louder than usual tonight, despite the thick mauve Aubusson rugs and full-length drapes.

"Why are there so many people here already?" Eliza asked. "You told me to arrive no earlier than half past nine."

Uncertainty flickered across Margo's face. "Did I say that? I meant *nine*. Sorry for the mix-up."

"Well, I can't stay long. I'm beat."

Margo narrowed her eyes. "It's that pesky job again, isn't it? Well, that's why you're here. To relax. Promise me you'll play one game."

Eliza sighed, realizing she shouldn't have come. She'd only agreed to show up, not to play games. In the past, she'd met a few interesting men and had gotten some dates out of it. She'd even played a game once, involving skinny dipping in the pool. The thought of getting physical with some strange man tonight, however, left her yawning. She closed her eyes for a second and opened them, having made her decision.

She turned to pluck a flute of champagne from a passing waiter. "All right. One game but only if you promise to stop trying to fix me up. I enjoy being single. I—"

When she turned back, her hostess was gone.

Eliza sighed and headed to a wall near a column of drapery for momentary privacy, sipping from her glass. While the doorbell chimed to admit more guests, she perused the room.

As usual, the men looked rich and powerful in their blazers and dress shirts. Some glanced her way with questioning gazes. She responded by crossing her free arm in front of her and looking away. *Not interested.*

And why wasn't she? It had been a while since she'd had a boyfriend, or even gotten laid, for that matter. Why couldn't she stop thinking about work, wondering what Zach would dream up next to make everyone miserable?

The thought of him made the bubbles in the champagne suddenly come to life. From somewhere across the room she heard a laugh that reminded her of his—earthy, robust and powerful, the laugh of a conqueror. The sound of it tightened every inch of her body, hardening her nipples inside her bra.

Now we're getting somewhere, Margo would probably say. The champagne must be affecting her mind because she found herself wondering...what if?

What if Zach were here? As a high-powered, eligible bachelor, he very well could be.

What if he played a game with her? Or *games*...

Downing the rest of the champagne in one gulp, Eliza gripped the stem of her glass nearly hard enough to snap it in half. Thinking about that arrogant, thoughtless jerk was out of the question. She was *not* attracted to him. She did *not* want him to fuck her.

Especially not on a desk with hard, cold mahogany against her back and the hot skin of his powerful body pressing against her front. If he was as energetic in bed as he was at work, he could probably make her come again and again.

Her cunt fluttered at the thought, making her panties damp and hot between her tightly pressed thighs.

*Forget the promise. I've got to get out of here.*

She plunked her empty glass down beside a tall vase of lilies and was heading toward the front door when Margo rang a bell.

"Time for some games," her friend called out above the lingering murmurs of conversation.

Eliza stopped in her tracks and straightened. Well, she had promised one game. Maybe her assigned partner would take her mind off work...and Zach.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eliza stood, arms crossed, in the middle of a hallway lined with closed doors on the second level of Margo's house.

"Seven Minutes in Heaven?" she repeated. "But that's a child's game."

A game she'd never played during her awkward teen years but one she'd heard a lot about. The irony of getting to live out a teen fantasy now, when she was up to her ears with the responsibilities of adulthood, made her shake her head.

"I assure you, there are no children in there." Margo stood with her hands linked behind her back and a strangely suspicious expression on her face. "Things will get more creative later but this is an excellent icebreaker."

"So who—"

She didn't get a chance to finish as Margo slipped her purse off her shoulder "for safekeeping" then gently but firmly shoved her into the dark room and locked the door behind her. On the way in, she looked for the man she'd be enclosed with, but all she had time to notice were shelves on one side of the spacious interior and a floor-to-ceiling curtain hanging on the other.

Her breath caught when she realized the room wasn't just dark. It was completely black. She couldn't see a thing now. Margo must have had special padding or weather-stripping installed around the edges of the door.

"You're not allowed to talk, starting now," Margo said, her voice muffled.

Eliza fought down the urge to pound on the door and beg to be let out but knew that would make her resemble a childish idiot. Not being able to see and knowing nothing about who was in the closet with her sent her heart rate into the aerobic range.

Her other senses soon took over. She heard the rustle of curtain, a man's breathing and...oh God. That was Zach's cologne. The distinctive blend of exotic spices and understated class had distracted her mid-task more than once at work.

Coincidence, she told herself as she clasped her hand across her throat. Lots of men wore the same cologne. He couldn't possibly be here.

This man, whoever he was, didn't seem nearly as inclined to pause and analyze the situation as she did. She gasped when a questing hand brushed her waist and arm, followed much too quickly by two steely arms fastening around her. Goose bumps exploded across her arms as rolled-up shirtsleeves and very hot forearms slid across her skin.

A pair of lips found her ear with uncanny precision and slashed across it, sliding into a jagged path down her neck. Beard stubble—another reminder of Zach—scraped her skin, sending dual sensations of alarm and pleasure shooting down her spine.

With her arms all but pinned to her sides, she could do nothing but slide her hands around the man's waist. His body was hot and muscular under her fingers. Muscles

flexed beneath the soft shirt as he maneuvered her to stand against a row of shelves. The delicate scent of laundered sheets mingled with his cologne, reminding her of beds.

She turned her chin toward his mouth, needing to taste him. Suddenly his hands anchored both sides of her face, holding her in place for a kiss. No, not a kiss—an onslaught. He skimmed her lips with his tongue before biting, tasting and teasing. Without even knowing exactly how, she found herself slack-jawed and senseless, wanting everything he had to give.

He tasted like wine, with a slight salty tang, as if he'd eaten caviar. While he claimed her tongue with punishing swirls of his own, his legs pressed hard against her, his cock even harder, bruising the delicate flesh over her pubic bone through their clothing.

“One minute has passed.”

The automated voice nearly made Eliza jump out of her skin. Margo had thought of everything.

The sensation of tugging at her blouse brought her attention to her breasts. Her blouse went slack and threatened to fall off when he unbuttoned the few large buttons. Needing and aching, her nipples anticipated strong fingers or a hot, flicking tongue.

At the same time, alarms went off in her head. Exactly how far did people go in this game? Surely seven minutes wasn't enough time to go all the way but she was at his mercy, whatever he planned.

If this man fucked her in the dark, she wouldn't even see his cock. She would only be able to feel it, thrusting into her drenched pussy.

“Wait, I—” she uttered.

“No talking,” he whispered. He enunciated the words so slowly she couldn't pick out any accent or speech pattern that might identify him.

Still moving quickly, he reached inside each bra cup to stroke and pinch her nipples to full attention. Heat whipped through her belly, wanting seven minutes and more of this, but his touch was cursory, as if he were just marking his territory.

He clutched her hips, crushing her pelvis against his in a slow, grinding rhythm of torture. Moans built up inside her throat with unrelenting pressure, needing to be released. Even her breathing was impossible to control. Blinded by darkness, with this strange man ravishing her body, she'd never felt so vulnerable in her life. Her cunt pulsed with deep, almost painful throbs. Trickle of arousal escaped her panties and dampened her thighs until the scent of it mixed with his cologne, filling the space.

*Zach. Oh God, Zach.* It took everything she had not to say it loud. Her basest instincts told her this man pressed against her body was the very one who drove her crazy, while her logic argued it couldn't possibly be.

But her fantasies wanted Zach, so she let them have him. For these seven minutes, he *was* Zach. Realizing how much she'd wanted him all this time made her knees give out with no warning.

"Two minutes have passed."

Her hands fluttered against stacks of folded linens, towels perhaps, as she struggled to regain her balance but the mysterious man didn't seem to want her to. One hand pushed firmly down on her shoulder while the other cradled the back of her head so she didn't bump it on the shelves on her way down.

She'd barely reached a sitting position when he clasped the backs of her calves and pulled her legs out straight. Within seconds, she found herself lying flat on the carpeted floor on her back.

Eliza blinked rapidly, struggling to see something, anything, as she adapted to the sudden change in position. He didn't give her much time as he pressed his weight down on her. His chest surged against hers with each breath and the scent of his cologne flooded her senses so deeply she knew she'd never forget it as long as she lived.



She couldn't believe a complete stranger had pinned her to the floor—and couldn't believe she wanted more. He shifted his weight a little to the side and paused, as if wanting to be sure she was comfortable. Considerate *and* passionate.

Her thoughts scattered when a warm, purposeful hand skimmed up her thigh and under the hem of her skirt. The whispers of friction as he rubbed her skin filled the cocoon of the closet. Goose bumps raced down her calves as a flare of heat shot through her pelvis.

*Yes, Zach, touch me there!*

*It's not Zach*, she told herself. *He's just a stranger*. Her pussy ached for his touch, whoever he was. When his hand eased between her thighs, she surrendered to the darkness and the stranger, parting her legs.

"Three minutes have passed," the mechanical voice intoned.

"Shut up," he whispered, answering the voice.

A frantic pulse beat deep within her cunt as the stranger stroked circles outside the crotch of her wet panties with one finger. Each fiery stroke made it harder and harder to think so it took her a few moments to realize the game was almost halfway over.

No more uncertainty about what this dominating stranger would do to her next. When the man plunged his finger beneath her panties to stroke her erect clit, she realized a few minutes wouldn't be nearly enough.

She held her breath when the touch stopped. He couldn't stop now! Hearing a sucking sound made the muscles inside her pussy tighten so quickly she thought she might explode. What was he doing? Tasting her juices on his finger?

Her back arched off the floor when he drove his finger deep inside her with no warning. Whether he'd wet his finger with saliva or not hardly mattered. She was already wet enough to flood the room and not terribly far from coming.

That one thrust broke through the meager defenses she had when she'd stumbled into the dark closet. As the man's finger claimed her with one deep, relentless stroke

after another, she no longer cared who he was or what he would think of her. Only her body mattered as the sounds of suction and her impossibly wet flesh filled the room. Her panties tugged at her body as his finger worked inside her. Feeling him inside the damp fabric filled her mind with fantasies of quick feels in semi-public places.

"Four minutes have passed," the familiar voice intoned.

Within seconds, Zach could have his hand under her skirt in his office or even on the elevator. No one else would have to know about slick fingers tangling with the wet silk of her panties and even wetter folds of her swollen pussy.

The man didn't kiss her again but she didn't mind. This was about anonymous, impersonal sex, not love. And anonymous, impersonal sex was all she could handle right now. She met each thrust of his finger with her own. Flesh slid against flesh and wet satin panties slid against the inside of her linen skirt, which rubbed across the carpet in turn, building heat across the sensitive skin of her ass.

She needed to touch him too and learn the texture of the man who gave her such pleasure. Her hand, so weak it took an effort to lift it, brushed his shoulder before homing in on his face. Stroking the prominent cheekbone reminded her of Zach and how his face looked the sexiest at a three-quarter profile.

The man caught his breath and paused as if her exploratory touch felt just as good to him as his finger stroking her erect clit did to her. Her hand drifted to his hair and she let her fingers tunnel into the soft, springy tufts before dropping her hand back to her side.

He rubbed her again, quickly resuming the steady, rapid pace. With her sight useless in the dark, every bit of input coming through her four other senses whispered *Zach* into her head, her blood and especially her aching cunt. He really was here with her, if only in her mind.

"Five minutes have passed."

As her head thrashed from side to side, her breaths came faster and faster. The man seemed to know exactly what she needed, fingering her with more speed and force at

the right time. Each nerve in her body pulled tauter with the approach of her climax, her defenses nonexistent.

She wanted Zach. Needed to surrender to him just like this so they could work out their differences. Maybe even date... Part of her couldn't stand him but there was no denying what the man made her feel. Just talking to him made her heart beat a little stronger and her breath come a little faster.

He exuded power that could tear apart her world and build her a brand new one all at the same time. Something in her needed him as badly as she needed to get away from him. While tiny tremors radiated from the base of her spine, she imagined the anonymous finger was Zach's powerful cock, filling her and claiming her, the floor beneath her was his desk.

Yes, she wanted to be naked and spread out on his desk while he did whatever he wanted to her body, making her moan, tremble and maybe even scream. She would do whatever he told her to—suck his cock until her mouth hurt and drink every bit of his cum if that was what he wanted. And she'd do it all without arguing, surrendering completely to pleasure.

Her cunt tightened, pulling every muscle in her body as tight as a bowstring. No more arguing... No more saying *I see*... Just surrender...

"Six minutes have passed. There is only one minute left."

*Only one minute left.* The thought had barely formed in her mind when spasms of exquisite pleasure rippled through her pussy, followed by contractions so powerful her entire upper body shot off the floor to crash against his chest.

"Zach!"

*Oh no. Why did I do that?*

A force bigger than her self-control had torn the word from her throat but the man didn't seem to mind as he pulled her shoulders toward him. Weak from what he'd done to her, she let her torso meld against his. The sensation of his beard stubble against her cheek set off a new wave of contractions in her cunt.

To her surprise, he held her close in an intense grip that filled her with his scent and left her breathless. Wouldn't hearing another man's name make him feel jealous or distant?

Unless the man's name *was* Zach...

He gently brushed the hair out of her face and kissed her one time. The pressure of his lips reminded her of how hard his finger inside her had been, but the kiss ended with a soft tenderness that surprised her again. When he pulled away, the darkness of the room swallowed her, making her feel lost.

The gentle communion she craved ended all too quickly but this was just a sex game, she reminded herself. Before she could react to the scraping sound of a metal zipper, he grabbed her hand and filled it with several inches of hot, hard cock.

He must want her to return the favor. If only they had more time. Still tingling and disoriented from what had possibly been the most intense orgasm of her life, she explored the length of him. Inside the quiet space, his breaths sounded as loud as gale-force winds.

Her fingers slid over the tip, slippery with pre-cum, then drifted down to the base where a tuft of wiry pubic hair met the metal teeth of his zipper. A deep, throaty moan rewarded her and sent a tiny aftershock coursing through her drenched pussy. As if to hurry her pace, he cupped his hand over hers and moved it faster.

"Seven minutes have passed. Your time is up."

Disappointment shot through her. It couldn't be over. She was just getting used to the stranger and this interlude had only whetted her appetite. She jerked in surprise when someone pounded on the door.

She heard the man's zipper again while struggling to pull her skirt hem down and button her blouse. Her hair probably resembled a rat's nest from writhing over the carpeted floor but would have to wait.

Predictably, the door opened wide and Margo stood there with a big grin on her face. Although the hall beyond was dimly lit, Eliza's eyes stung as she recoiled from the sudden light.

"I've never seen you so disheveled," Margo declared as she handed Eliza her purse and grinned. "You must have had a good time in there."

Eliza's face burned with a fierce blush for the first time in years. The dark space had belonged only to her and the stranger. Having the door opened destroyed the secret, forbidden feeling, making her wonder if she'd imagined the entire thing. The cream between her legs, however, was very real.

Now was her chance to find out who the man was. She spun around, only to find the room exactly as it had looked when she'd entered. When she reached for the curtain, Margo pulled her backward with a surprisingly strong grip.

"The second rule for my version of this game is the partners remain anonymous...for now," the other woman added as she linked arms with her.

Eliza tripped over her feet, her legs still shaky from the strength of her orgasm, as she let her friend whisk her down the hall.

"How was it, sweetie?" Margo asked, her dark eyes dancing with mischief. "You came, didn't you?"

"I enjoyed it...more than I thought I would." Eliza studied her feet as they walked down the grand, curving staircase leading to the living room. "I promised I'd play one game. I should go now."

Margo led her to a large powder room with silvery wallpaper to freshen up.

"Do as you wish," her friend told her, "but the only way you'll discover the identity of that man is by sticking around."

Did she really need to know who he was? Eliza wondered as she took a comb out of her purse and applied it to her hair. Looking into the large mirror with dressing-room style lights revealed just how disheveled she looked. Her mascara was smeared, her

blouse was wrinkled — not to mention buttoned wrong — and her lips were swollen from the stranger's hard kisses. She looked as if she'd been fucking for hours.

The musky scent of him clung to her hands, making her nipples harden all over again, before she turned on the faucet to wash up. She had to stay and find out the man's identity, she decided as she dried her hands. She had to know if Margo had, in fact, invited Zach...if the man in the closet was her boss.

What the hell would she do if he was?

## **Chapter Three**

Eliza stood beside a palm tree near Margo's pool area, waiting to find out the identity of her closet stranger. Subtle outdoor lights lined the serpentine pool and cast warm reflections on the stucco exterior of the home. Couples leaned against the black iron bars of the upper decks or sat in intimate huddles at umbrella-topped tables.

The shadowy area around the palm tree suited her fine because the last thing she wanted was some new man to hit on her. No one could compete with the closet man right now, not when she still felt his touch all over her body.

The table closest to her, like the others, held a basket of expensive condoms. Margo might throw wild parties but at least she was a stickler for safe sex. Eliza set her purse on a chair and picked one up, feeling the round ridge under the gold foil wrapper and imagining her closet man rolling it down his hard cock – fucking her.

A shiver went through her, racing straight to her pussy. She dropped the condom back in the basket as if it had caught fire.

She grabbed an hors d'oeuvre from the tray of a passing waiter but barely tasted the crab and cheese. It was a way to pass the time more than anything else. Searching the face of every man who wandered around the tiled perimeter of the pool claimed all her attention. Had that pair of lips bruised hers? Had the finger of that one over there been inside her? No. Without even knowing how she knew, she discounted them all.

Tired of waiting, she dusted cracker crumbs from her hands. As soon as Margo came to the pool to tend to her guests, Eliza planned to get the man's identity out of her if she had to wrestle the woman to the ground. Crossing her arms again, leaned back against the palm and took a deep breath of evening breeze laced with the faint scent of pool chlorine, trying to wait patiently.

Did it even matter who he was? Wasn't Zach the only man she wanted? Getting concrete proof that the man in the closet hadn't been him would just ruin the fantasy.

Time to go home.

A new man turned and left the bar area, walking briskly toward her. He wore a white cotton dress shirt, open at the neck and rolled up at the sleeves. Black, pleated pants topped with an expensive leather belt showcased lean, powerful hips.

He walked as if he owned Margo's house and everyone there. Eliza knew that walk. Her heart rate nearly tripled and it was a good thing she hadn't been holding a drink because she would have dropped it.

"Mr. Taunton! W-what are you doing here?"

The second blush of the night swept across her face. He was obviously here for the same reason everyone else was, including herself — sex.

An odd little smile toyed with the corner of his mouth as he took a long swallow of his amber-colored drink. His dark eyes held hers over the rim of the glass the entire time. She tried to tear her own gaze away and failed.

"I came for a little recreation," he replied.

He stepped closer, decreasing the space between them. Although she could have easily stepped around the tree at her back, Zach's nearness short-circuited her impulse to move. The gold in his hair looked muted in the semi-darkness, the ends more tousled than usual, as if restless fingers had been through it. Eliza's fingers tingled at the memory of touching the closet man's hair.

A breeze stirred the dark palm fronds overhead and made them dance. It also brought the scent of his cologne straight to her senses. Goose bumps peppered her arms and legs and suddenly she was back in that dark closet, writhing on the floor.

*Oh my God, it's him!*

Cologne didn't prove anything, she told herself. The only way she could rule him out for sure was to ask him, and she wasn't about to do that. But human scent wasn't



such a simple matter. She knew the same brand of cologne could smell completely different on multiple men. A man's scent was something physical and as unique as a fingerprint.

She reached behind her and placed her hands on the tree, seeking support. "Recreation? I thought you were all work and no play."

When he stroked the golden-brown stubble on his chin, the tender flesh on her face prickled, remembering the sensation from that first aggressive closet kiss.

"Funny," he replied, stepping closer. "I thought the same of you."

And if she had any doubts left about the identity of her closet lover, he inserted his left index finger into his mouth and sucked gently as he pulled it out. The action was quick but deliberate, the way he did everything, and his eyes never left hers. Even though he didn't touch her, she was pinned hard against the tree, as if he'd lashed her to it with a hundred coils of rope.

Then she knew — really undoubtedly knew — it was him.

Perspiration broke out across her forehead and her knees threatened to give out. She turned to face the tree, breaking the lock of his gaze. How could she have made out with her boss in a closet like some oversexed slut? She should have insisted on knowing his identity before she'd gone in. Better yet, she should have stayed home tonight.

Luckily she managed to suppress a small yelp of surprise when his body suddenly pressed her against the smooth, slender cylinder of the tree trunk. The hard ridge of his clothed cock pressed against her buttocks almost hard enough to bruise, drenching her panties with fresh, liquid heat.

"We have some unfinished business to take care of," he said in a low tone close to her ear.

It was the same tone he used when giving orders and issuing nearly impossible deadlines at work. The kind that didn't take no for an answer.

"Do we?"

She winced when her voice squeaked as high as a little girl's. What had happened to the composure she usually maintained at work?

Zach's finger, shattering her into a thousand pieces, that's what.

His cock pressed against her even harder. "You know damn well I need to come."

Bark scraped her chest as she wriggled out from between him and the tree, putting a few inches of needed space between them so she could think. Tonight was too crazy for words and happening way too fast. Despite the fact her cunt ached and she wanted him to take her up against the tree, she had to be sensible.

They'd just played a sexual game, she told herself. They could still agree to forget about everything the next morning. Still maintain professionalism at the office while she worked her last two weeks. After that, they'd never see each other again anyway.

But it *hadn't* been just a game, she realized. Those seven minutes had changed everything.

She squared her shoulders and faced him. "I never would have agreed to Margo's game if I'd known it was you. Please, let's agree to forget it ever happened. Good night, Mr. Taunton."

He frowned and cocked his head. "First of all, call me Zach. Second of all, when your friend called to invite me here, she told me *you* had requested to play with me."

A bolt of shock, entwined with fury, zapped through Eliza's limbs. "I did no such thing!"

Margo had better not show her face down here because she was angry enough to throw her into the pool. How dare she call him and tell such an outright lie? Now Eliza regretted complaining so much about her job. Spreading her legs for the boss was *not* her idea of relieving work stress.

"Why didn't I see you among the other guests when I arrived?" she asked.

He shrugged. "I was probably already in that closet. Margo put me in there shortly after I'd arrived and told me to wait for you."

Zach dragged an impatient hand through his hair, making it look even wilder...as if he'd just climbed out of bed. The movement made the ice cubes shift in his glass. Even that musical rattle seduced her, filling her head with an image of him rubbing one of those melting cubes down her belly. Hearing distant splashing from the pool didn't help either.

"I thought you knew it was me from the start, and when you yelled my name I was sure of it."

She leaned a hand against the tree for support. Did that explain why he'd held her so closely afterward, as if he had deeper feelings for her? No, he couldn't possibly. Neither could she.

So why did she feel as fragile as an eggshell right now? As if one wrong glance or word from him could crush her heart?

"I—" she stammered.

He set his drink down on the empty table beside them and held out his hands in supplication.

"I *never* would have forced myself on you. With all the sexual harassment laws these days, I took a big enough risk as it was, thinking you'd instigated it all."

"Don't worry," she said quickly. "I won't hold this against you. It was just an innocent misunderstanding."

Well, maybe not *innocent* but he wasn't to blame. Margo was.

He frowned again. "Wait a second. If you didn't know it was me, why *did* you scream my name?"

Eliza glanced up at the top of the tree, wishing she could climb up there and escape the embarrassing question. The more they talked about those intense seven minutes, the harder they would be to forget.

She looked away, letting her straight hair fall across her face. "I...fantasized it was...you."

It had been the best of both worlds, she realized. Willingly playing sexual games with him would have been too weird, given their work relationship. But on an instinctual level, she *had* known it was him. She just hadn't wanted to admit it. Simply enjoying him without all the analysis had been much easier.

This "incident", however, would hang between them at work. When he asked her to do something, she'd think about his finger driving into her and her body shattering when she reached her peak. It would be unbearable.

"Please, let's forget it," she repeated, flinging her hair aside as if to physically push the memory away. "We work together, for heaven's sake."

He intercepted her flailing hand and held it in a grip that was gentle yet not easy to break. "I can't forget the way you moaned my name when you came. Can you?"

She tugged her hand but not hard enough to break away from him. "I have to go. As I'm sure you're aware, I have a lot of work to do tomorrow."

"Seven minutes was just an appetizer," he replied, "making me want you even more."

He stroked lazy circles into the palm of her hand with his thumb, making her knees rubbery and her nipples harden inside her bra.

"Now that we're in this exotic setting, why not enjoy it to the max?" He tilted his head, indicating the scenery around them. "Then we can forget it. What do you say?"

He picked up one of the condoms and held his hand out to her, palm up with the condom in the middle of it. Eliza looked at the candles burning around the edges of the pool, reflecting into the aqua water, while a breeze wrapped her in Zach's alluring scent.

*Do it!* her body screamed. Those seven minutes had been an appetizer for her too. She would never be able to concentrate on her work now. Her mind would keep drifting back to that magic room, dark and filled with the scent of their arousal. She would constantly imagine the weight of his hard cock in her hand and wonder how it would feel inside her.

Pocketing the condom, he stepped closer until his body touched hers and pressed her hand discreetly against his erection. Even through the fabric of his black pants, she could feel his heat and sense his barely restrained energy. It reminded her of a high-voltage power line. God, it was the sexiest thing she'd ever touched.

"I can't stop thinking about how soft your hand felt around my bare cock," he breathed in her ear. "To hell with work tonight. I need to come, Eliza. We need to find another room. Now."

Her throat went dry at the sound of his voice. Emotions threatened to pull her in half. While her fingers, with minds of their own, traced the outline of him, she couldn't help thinking about how he'd driven her out of a job she'd once enjoyed.

Although her aching cunt begged her to get that cock inside her, Molly Fletcher's face filled her mind, refusing to budge. She imagined she could even hear her voice.

*Don't betray me. Don't betray your team by sleeping with that tyrant.*

The head of Zach's penis made his pants hot and damp where she touched him, and the scent of that heady cologne teased her when she moved closer. Suddenly her stiff work clothes felt much too confining and uncomfortable. She longed for him to strip them all off so he could rub those male juices over her bare skin, marking her with his scent.

Just one night, he'd asked. Couldn't she forget work for one night?

Her fingers fumbled with his zipper, needing that hot, hard flesh in her hand again. Merely anticipating it released a hot gush of cream between her legs.

She yanked her hand away just as quickly and folded her arms tight against her body. "No."

His eyebrows went up at least an inch. He looked thoroughly surprised. "No? No one ever says *no* to me."

"Which is exactly why I just did," she replied with her chin raised.

He sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. "Of course you can say no. I'm just confused. I thought we had chemistry and could at least enjoy the rest of tonight together."

"I can't have sex with you," she stated.

"Then just rub my cock." He stroked his warm hand down her upper arm, sending a wash of heat across her skin that threatened to break her resolve. "You came. Now help me come. It's a fair trade."

She shook her head but the anger stiffening her neck made it difficult. What she'd experienced in that closet had been magical. Pleasure and emotion had stripped away her inhibitions, especially the moment he'd held her close. Now he spoke as if they were just machines with sex organs.

The closet hadn't been real, she reminded herself. It was just her fantasy.

"That's so typical of you," she finally said. "Making heartless business deals even about sex."

"Heartless?" he exclaimed. "All right, let's talk this out."

"Why? So you can convince me to rub your cock? Do you realize my job has become such a living hell I can't even sleep at night? And that's why I—"

She stopped herself. She'd already decided not to tell him about the job offer until she'd confirmed it with the new company. She pursed her lips, realizing her voice—heck, her entire body—trembled with emotion she'd apparently suppressed for months. She couldn't even put a label on it. Anger accounted for most of it but what else? She wasn't sure she wanted to know.

Hopefully he wouldn't notice. She took a deep, cleansing breath, struggling for calmness, but it didn't stop the shaking. Uncrossing her arms but still holding her limbs taut, she fought to hide it from him.

What in the world was wrong with her? So what if he was a jerk at work? Couldn't she just enjoy the night as he'd suggested?

Unfortunately no. She couldn't separate sex from the entire package and betray her team. She wanted this man with an intensity that scared the breath out of her but she couldn't live on a fantasy. Zach was a real man, one she wasn't even sure she liked.

Reaching out, he caressed the sides of her face and looked into her eyes with such warmth and compassion she nearly cried on the spot. She never realized his hands could feel so soft and caring.

"My God, Eliza, you're shaking."

His voice was as tender as his eyes and hands. Apparently the man had many sides, some of which she'd never seen until tonight.

"We definitely need to talk," he said softly. "And not because of my cock. Because you're clearly very upset and I need to find out why."

She raised a skeptical eyebrow. "You sound as if you really care."

He nodded hesitantly, as if the emotion had caught him off guard too. "I guess I do. Is that such a surprise?"

"I'm afraid so," she replied.

"Let's find a more intimate spot."

She grabbed her purse and followed him past a Jacuzzi to the very back of the pool area, to a small, round table, flanked by two metal chairs. The single votive candle in the center of the table and wall of foliage behind it provided an atmosphere far more intimate than the boardroom.

He eased her into a chair with the gallantry of an old-fashioned gentleman and even pressed a tender kiss to the back of her hand before letting go. This was nothing like work. It reminded her of a romantic date.

*He's just trying to win me with charm.*

No, she'd been around Zach long enough to know he never bothered with charm. He controlled things and to hell with what everyone else thought about him. How could he be such a different person outside the office?

The care and concern warming his eyes as he looked at her from across the small table appeared absolutely genuine. Although she'd stopped trembling, a sudden rush of heat behind her eyes scared her more.

He folded his hands on the table. "Now tell me what's on your mind."

While gazing at the light patterns reflecting on the pool beyond, she struggled to pull her thoughts together and organize her list of grievances for maximum impact. To her chagrin, a couple entered the Jacuzzi, embraced in a passionate kiss as they pulled each other's suits off.

Zach grinned. "Looks as if we have some entertainment to watch during our meeting."

Eliza cleared her dry throat and tried to look away from restless hands roving over wet, glistening flesh. Her cunt contracted when the man squeezed the woman's breasts together, licking and sucking each nipple in turn. She'd ached for the same treatment from Zach but seven minutes hadn't been enough time.

If only they could exchange places with the couple right now. She needed his mouth on her breasts...

More importantly, though, she needed to tell him how she felt, even if she had to sacrifice a night of mindless sex to do it.

Although she was leaving, her team would still be there and she needed to set him straight. A man who could work such magic with his fingers shouldn't be such a lousy manager. He should be the best he could possibly be.

Had she lost her mind? She actually wanted to help him.

He held up a hand. "And before you get started, I've decided to let Molly Fletcher work at home until her ankle gets better."

Disbelief made her blink. "What changed your mind?"

"I realized I was being an unreasonable schmuck," he replied with a shrug.

She managed a smile. "There might be hope for you yet."



"Don't let that stop you. Go ahead and let me have it."

Forcing her eyes away from the couple, she told Zach how his arrival at Crawford Constructs had changed everything for the worse. She spoke for her entire team and left nothing out, including the relentless deadlines and heartless decisions that made her feel like just a number — a *powerless* number.

"A year ago my life was completely different," she added. "I had a job that worked. Now it doesn't, threatening my ability to earn a living."

She winced, not intending to make it sound so personal. She was supposed to be representing her team in a dignified way, not pouring out her heart. His sympathetic brown eyes weren't helping.

He spread out his hands. "I'm sorry to hear that. Maybe I can make some concessions but you're going to have to be a little more specific."

"All right but I'm not sure a few concessions will even fix this."

She sat straighter and relayed her complaints as she thought of them. If only she'd known ahead of time about this "meeting", she would have prepared a list. His nearness and the nipple-tightening scent of his cologne made logic difficult.

"And another thing," she added. "We don't mind working late when there's a deadline but many of us need to take a break first. I need to go home, feed my cat, eat and exercise. Then I can come back with enough energy to get it done."

He shrugged. "If I let people go home, they wouldn't come back."

Hearing his distrust made her nails dig into her palm. "I would," she protested, "and I guarantee the others would too. Instead, I have to stay there, hungry, exhausted and non-productive, which makes me even more exhausted the next day."

He let out a big breath as he leaned back in his chair and looked up. "I had no idea my decisions affected your life so much."

"I'm not alone, either," she said.

Her cool hands rested in her lap. The passion he'd aroused in her earlier simmered on low, refusing to dissipate completely, and the naked couple wasn't helping. Soft female moans, impossible to ignore, filled the air. Eliza decided to risk a glance at them to satisfy her curiosity.

The woman clutched the rounded, tiled edge of the Jacuzzi while her pale ass gyrated in the churning water. The man gripped both her hips, spreading her cheeks apart, and fucked her from behind. Eliza forgot herself for a moment, staring, mesmerized at the rhythmic flash of wet, thrusting cock.

*Zach!* The echo of her earlier scream came back to her. If this conversation didn't go well, she'd never feel him inside her, never scream his name again. Even fantasies would be impossible. They had to talk so she could get everything off her chest.

He lowered his head and looked at her with brown eyes so tender she barely recognized them. "I'm sorry you're having such a rough time, Eliza."

"And the team," she added.

"And the team," he repeated.

Hope flared through her chest. Could there possibly be more to this man than tough management? Was there a heart in there, waiting for her? She forced herself to stay calm and detached without getting her hopes up.

"I appreciate your concern," she replied.

"But you have to realize I'm running a business. Occasionally I have to make tough decisions that aren't popular." Intensity animated his movements. "I have to push Crawford Constructs to the next level. After all, that's why I was brought in. It's not personal."

She nodded, realizing she'd thought so much about her point of view, she hadn't considered his at all until now.

When he rubbed a pattern in the wrought iron tabletop with intense concentration, her breath caught as she remembered the way he'd stroked her cunt in the dark room.

Even during this serious discussion, she couldn't make herself stop wanting him. She was hopeless.

The woman in the Jacuzzi moaned louder now as her partner drove into her harder and faster. Even Zach looked at them and squirmed in his chair. Was his cock aching to be released? If only the horny couple would go away so she could concentrate and figure out, once and for all, how she felt about this man.

"You can go home in the evening to feed your cat," he told her. "I trust you to return. In fact, I kind of like the idea of our working late hours alone together. We don't always need the whole team."

She rested her hands on the tabletop as calmness filled her for the first time all night. "Thank you for that." She looked into his sincere brown eyes, even managing a smile. "Just having you listen to me means a lot. I didn't think you would."

He flinched as if she'd slapped him. "I had no idea people thought I was such a heartless monster. I have a boss too, you know, and he demands perfection."

"I guess I should have asked for this kind of meeting before I looked for another job," she blurted out.

His hand whipped out and gripped one of hers so quickly, she gasped. "You're not leaving, are you? Damn it, Eliza. I need your talent."

"I've received an offer."

The calm, mechanical way she said it surprised her. She'd looked forward to this moment ever since she'd begun looking for another job—telling him exactly what he could do with his *old* job. After this conversation, a confrontation like that no longer seemed relevant or fair.

He stared at her without speaking, his dark eyes wide with...what? Fear of losing control, her...or both? Again, she saw the scared little boy clutching the arms of the executive chair.

"An offer... Have you accepted it yet?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Good," he replied.

"If things stay the way they are, I won't be the last. People need breaks from incessant deadlines, and understanding of their needs. And if you want to retain the top talent, it doesn't hurt to offer incentives such as telecommuting and flexible hours."

He looked away and ran a hand through his hair. The bleak tone of his voice surprised her when he said, "I know."

She leaned forward and slapped her hands down on the table. "Then why?"

At that moment, the woman in the Jacuzzi screamed her climax. Both she and Zach turned to stare, their conversation momentarily forgotten. The man ejaculated, raining pearly white drops on the globes of her upturned ass. For one blinding second, she *was* that woman, letting Zach mark her with his cum and claim her as his.

"I need to do that to *you*." His voice was so hoarse she barely recognized it.

And oh, how she wanted him to. The passion that had slowly simmered throughout their conversation roared to life with no warning, squeezing her cunt so hard it ached with wanting him. Before she could react, he'd bounded out of his chair, come to her side and pulled her to her feet.

"What are you doing?" she asked breathlessly.

He guided her closer to the shrubbery and wrapped her hand around his bare cock. She hadn't even heard his zipper open.

"Meeting adjourned," he declared. "Make me come, Eliza."

His rigid flesh was even slicker than before and as her fingers slid down the shaft to his balls, she realized how hard and tight they were. He would come quickly. She needed to see him come, not because he'd ordered her to but because she wanted to.

Still, she hesitated. "Someone might see us," she whispered.

"It didn't stop *them*," he said, jerking his head over his shoulder to indicate the Jacuzzi. "Please. Make me come hard enough to scream your name the way I did for you."

How could she refuse? No matter what else happened, she owed him this pleasure. Standing close to his side, she slowly rubbed the taut flesh of his penis, admiring the perfect shape of it in the moonlight. The head flared like an arrow, as dynamic as his personality. This was much different than groping around in a dark room. She could see his body and his reactions.

His breaths came quick and hard as she stroked the length of him.

"Faster," he whispered.

"Always giving the orders, eh?" she teased.

The hard grip of his hand on the back of hers let her know he wasn't in the mood for jokes. His fingertips pressed into her skin. She nearly groaned when the trembling returned but this time it wasn't her. A grin of triumph raced across her face when she realized he was the one shaking now.

He wanted to come so badly he shook with it. He squeezed her hand harder, his need for control obvious. That was it, she realized. He had to maintain control over everything and everybody at all times. Not because he was a monster but because he couldn't handle losing it.

Despite the insistent pressing against her hand, she held it still as his cock pulsed and twitched under her fingers.

*"Elizaaaaa..."*

His low, drawn-out moan made her fingers tighten around his cock in a spasm of instinct but she still forced her hand to remain still. The control was all hers, she realized. It always had been. She could walk away from him and his straining cock tonight. Likewise, she could walk away from her job and make a living somewhere else. Adjusting to a new job would be stressful at first but she could handle it.

She turned her eyes to his, communicating she was the one in control here. Impossibly, his cock became even larger and hotter inside the cage of her fingers. Still holding her hand around it, she watched with fascination as emotions he'd never revealed to her before—uncertainty, frustration and longing—flickered across his face.

"Say the magic word."

Had she said that? Her voice had sounded almost as low as his had been, just short of a growl. They weren't civilized workers in an office right now. Tonight's events had stripped them down to their most primitive natures. They'd spent seven minutes in a dark closet and had watched two people fuck in front of them with carefree abandon.

"P-please."

His voice was little more than a whisper. She imagined the word wasn't one he used frequently, and didn't come easily.

"Sorry." She let go of his cock this time and hid her hand behind her back. "I didn't quite catch that."

"I said please, damn it." He looked down at his upturned hardness and then closed his eyes tight as if struggling for control. "Please...rub...my...cock...now."

Smiling, she teased him with a light tattoo of fingertips down his shaft. When his hand, sweating now, clapped over the back of hers, she finally let him guide her fingers to move faster. Hot drops of moisture coated her panties when he moaned and reared back his head, gasping as if the world had suddenly lost all its oxygen.

His cock thrust into her hand wildly, as if uncontrollable. With the right mix of force, considerateness and passion, he could make her do whatever he wanted. The realization made her breath catch in her throat. Maybe she didn't have as much control as she thought.

Did it really matter?

She didn't even think she'd be able to breathe again until he came. It was as if the entire world stopped and waited for his release. The tighter she squeezed her fingers

around him, the harder his lean hips bucked. The thought of so much power, drive and energy pounding into her body made her lightheaded.

Her cunt throbbed in time with the strokes, tightening and tightening until she thought she'd explode. She wanted more. She wanted *him*. All of him. Never in her life had she so needed a man to bury himself deeply inside her.

Nevertheless, she would just bring him off this way, as they'd agreed. One favor for another. Anything more would be too dangerous but she would have so many fantasies after this...wherever she worked.

"Suck me, Eliza!" he demanded. "I need to feel your mouth around me."

Her body was wound so tightly she almost obeyed without thinking, the scent of his pre-cum so palpable she could practically taste it already. Her mouth watered, longing to taste his hardness and the unique musk that had tantalized her all night. But touching him was one thing. Opening up her body, even her mouth, and letting him inside was quite another.

She just couldn't risk it.

## Chapter Four

Eliza's hand stopped, still wrapped around his cock. "Sorry. That's not part of our agreement."

*Damn logical, methodical woman!*

Zach's cock burned and throbbed in her hand, not caring what they'd agreed to. He was so close to coming his balls had squeezed into hard, aching knots but he needed to come deep inside her pretty mouth. Not in the bushes in front of them like some oversexed teenager.

At work, she usually acted cool and controlled, even when she disagreed with him. Tonight he'd discovered a new woman. He'd never dreamed she could be so uncontrollable and that just made him want her more. Her bottom lip was lush and full, belying the prim schoolteacher image she portrayed with her conservative clothes, minimal cosmetics and no-nonsense haircut.

He would get his cock into that luscious mouth if it was the last thing he ever did...

*Stop it, man. That kind of thinking won't work.* To gain control, he had to give it up. But how was he supposed to go against his nature when his entire body screamed at him to come?

His restless eyes scanned the pool area for alternatives. The couple in the Jacuzzi had left but there were a few women around without partners. Attractive and provocatively dressed, any of them could get him off. Then he could go home, prepare for tomorrow's meetings and call it a day.

No. It had to be Eliza. Everything that had happened between them tonight, even their tense meeting, had driven her further under his skin. He knew he would think about her all day tomorrow – every day – until she left him for another job.



There was no way in hell that would happen. Not if he could help it. But first things first. He needed her to surrender right now, not by forcing her, but from desire.

*"Please, Eliza. Please put your lips on my cock. Just once."*

"I should really be getting home," she replied. "We shouldn't even be doing this."

Glossy, brown hair covered one eye as she turned her head. He realized he'd watched the same movement multiple times at work. Each time he'd seen her brush it away, he'd wanted to do it himself. This time he did.

"But I said please," he whispered.

He stroked the back of her wrist while her fingers—not pulling away but not rubbing him either—teased his aching shaft in a sort of noncommittal torture. His throbbing penis was so wet with pre-cum it was as if he'd already come, drenching her slim, pale fingers. And thinking of that nearly made him orgasm for real.

*Don't come now. Make it last! And don't think about stroking her cunt.* But he couldn't help it. He put his hand over his mouth, inhaling the scent of her arousal that still clung to him despite washing his hands earlier. Her mouth looked as soft and yielding as her delicate pussy had been.

Even in total darkness she'd been reserved, but passionate. She'd hesitated with nearly every move he'd made—unbuttoning her blouse to stroke her firm nipples, sliding his hand up her skirt—then surrendered. Having her shatter in his arms when she'd come had been the final victory.

Desire rippled down his spine like a bolt of lightning, coming dangerously close to his balls and setting them off. He took a deep breath and held it until his lungs burned. How the hell could he control her when he couldn't even control his body when he was around her?

"Can't we negotiate this?" He placed a hand over hers so he wouldn't come yet. "You don't want to have sex and I respect that. I'll even warn you so you don't have to—"

She arched a brow. "Swallow?" she interrupted. "That's good, because I'm not sure about...swallowing."

A flash of white heat flickered through his groin when he realized she'd consented to putting his cock in her mouth.

"Fair enough. Swallowing is optional. Now get on your knees."

She looked down at the concrete with a doubtful expression on her face. Unfortunately the smooth tile around the pool didn't extend back this far. Damn. Why hadn't he brought a jacket for her to kneel on?

He scrambled to sit on the round iron table, hoping it wouldn't topple over in the middle of things, and opened his thighs, offering his straining cock to her. Sitting with his back turned should hide her well enough from everyone else.

"See? I'm a reasonable man."

He wished he could take the damn pants off and feel all her bare skin against his. Better yet, jump into that Jacuzzi with her and fuck with carefree abandon as the other couple had. He loosened his collar, breathing faster with anticipation.

One touch of her beautiful lips and it would be over, most likely, but so worth it. He held his breath as she bent over, positioning herself, and gripped his thighs with soft but capable hands. He inhaled the fresh scent of her hair; it reminded him of being in the closet when his other senses had compensated for lack of sight.

He couldn't help crying out when those full lips brushed the head of his cock. How could she feel so gentle and soft? With her hair threatening to fall into her eyes again, she looked up at him with big gray eyes.

His heart stuttered to a near stop when she extended a perfect pink tongue to swirl around the tip of him. Even though she wasn't on her knees, he fantasized she was. Maybe someday she would be, but not because he wanted to dominate her.

Then why? He groaned, deep and long, as her tongue flicked the tiny opening, followed by her lips encircling his engorged head. He wanted her on her knees because... Because... Oh God. She was killing him!

Because he wanted her to trust him, completely and irrevocably.

"Deeper, sweetheart." He only reached out intending to stroke the sexy shine of her hair but once he touched her, he couldn't help tangling his fingers in the silky tresses and pressing her head to guide her wet mouth farther down the length of his cock. "Take all of me. Or as much as you can," he amended.

Even though most of the sensation centered in his swollen cock head, he needed her mouth on his entire shaft, down to the root of his aching balls. He couldn't remember ever needing anything or anyone this much. Nothing else mattered, including his job. Especially his damn job...

Mindless now, he pulled her head toward him while he pushed his cock into her mouth a little farther, a little farther still. The breath strangled in his throat as more of him disappeared between her lips. *All. Take it all...*

To his surprise, she pulled away, panting. Coldness settled in the pit of his stomach when he realized the soft haze of passion he'd seen a moment ago had vanished. *Don't stop, damn it!*

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Zach, I...I think we'll both enjoy this a lot more if you let me go at my own pace."

He'd pushed her too hard. But it wouldn't feel as good if he eased up. He wouldn't have any control over that mouth and how deep, hard or fast it pleased his cock. He lightened his grip but his fingers still tangled in her hair.

"Better?" he asked.

She nodded and his breath caught when she licked her wet lips with that dainty-looking yet very capable tongue.

"Terrific," he exclaimed. "Just don't stop. Please."

*Please. Please. Please.* He'd say the word a million times if it made her happy. Anything to keep her close. A sigh of surrender escaped him when she gripped his thighs again. His cock strained toward her, so hard it ached. He groaned her name when she kissed the tip of his penis. Negotiation definitely had its advantages, he thought as drops of pre-cum coated her lips.

The circle of her mouth slid down his cock so slowly he swore time had stopped. Although every instinct screamed at him to thrust deeper, he fought it with everything he had. He released her head and planted his hands on the table behind him. His vision almost shimmered with stars when her lips brushed his pubic hair. God, he was all the way in her silky-wet mouth and throat.

When her lips slid back toward his tip, the slow torture was better than anything he'd ever experienced. If they'd done it *his* way, it would be over already. Her way was so much hotter.

"This is...real...teamwork," he uttered, barely able to talk.

She made a sound of amusement or approval. He didn't know which but the sensation vibrated down to his balls, almost making him come.

"Eliza," he said to distract himself while he struggled for control. "I'm going to yell your name when I come. Just like you yelled mine."

As her lips slid lower, his vision went dark around the edges, shooting with tiny white stars. He was so close and she had total control over him. She would make him come when she decided it was time and that was just fine with him. Control was overrated anyway.

After her hot, soft mouth passed more than halfway down the length of him, she hesitated as if trying to decide whether or not to deep-throat him again.

"Deeper, Eliza. I need this so much."

His arms shook, rattling the table as he fought the urge to touch her head and guide her where he needed her. He gasped when she went deeper on her own. Impossibly, impossibly deep. And just as slowly, she slid her lips back to the top.

Control was *definitely* overrated. Not knowing what would happen was much better.

When her tight lips reached the flange of his head, his nerves all fired at once, clenching his balls in a sudden, steely grip. He'd promised to warn her but...he couldn't even talk. Shit!

"Coming," he muttered, gasping for air. When he finally found it, he yelled her name.

With her hand clutched around the base of his shaft, they both watched as endless geysers of cum shot from him. Some drops fell to the table while others dripped down his semi-hard cock. Sure, it had been a while since he'd had sex but he couldn't remember ever coming like this.

"I guess we should have gotten a towel," he muttered.

It was a stupid thing to say but easier than admitting he felt more for her than simple pleasure. To his surprise, her tongue reached out and lapped at the juice-laden tip. They hadn't agreed she'd swallow but, at the moment, Zach was glad she was willing to break the rules.

"Oh yes. Taste me, Eliza." He struggled to catch his breath. "Never forget the taste of me."

He watched as she lifted a pearly offering with her tongue and took it into her mouth, savoring and tasting. It was the sexiest thing he'd ever seen.

"More," he ordered.

But they both knew he wasn't really telling her what to do. She was doing what she damn well pleased and his body was so satiated he didn't care who gave the orders. It didn't matter anymore.

He watched and trembled with intense sensation as she licked and swallowed and licked again until his spent cock was glistening wet but clean. She did an excellent and

thorough job, which didn't surprise him because this was how she approached her work.

What an exciting lover she would be long-term, fucking and pleasuring him this thoroughly every night. But then he'd never get any of his real work done and might end up a failure. Instead, he'd savor this special treat, remembering it in the months to come when he worked like a dog for Linton Crawford.

He liked the idea of having his essence inside her. For one night, anyway, he had made her his.

"May I touch your hair now?" he asked.

"Yes."

He stroked the silky strands away from her face and looked into her gray eyes. "Thank you, Eliza, for giving so much of yourself. It was beautiful and I'll never forget it."

Emotion gripped his chest, making him drop his hand and look away as he put his penis back inside his pants. Did he even deserve what she'd just given him? Probably not.

Now that he'd come and lust had stopped occupying every corner of his brain, he replayed their earlier conversation and gazed into her eyes again. Hearing her grievances had felt like looking into a mirror and he hadn't liked the man looking back at him.

He'd made her suffer, and others too. The woman couldn't even sleep at night because of him. He wouldn't mind keeping her up all night with lovemaking but not with anxiety over her job, for God's sake. He'd upset her so much she'd actually shook with frustration. How he wished he could scoop her into his arms and erase every worry, but the damage had already been done.

At work, all he could think about was the goal of turning the company around and how to achieve it. The success of the company benefited them all. Linton Crawford

pushed him so hard he didn't know which end was up most of the time. Things would be different if he could make all the decisions.

And she was right. He couldn't keep driving everyone at such a frenetic pace forever. The employees would get ill or fed up, and leave. Molly had broken her ankle after a long, grueling day and now he was losing Eliza. Was his fear of being a failure worth it? Things had to change, but how?

He needed his people but hadn't really *seen* them as people. He'd certainly seen Eliza as a person tonight. She matched him with wit, negotiation skills and passion. The soft, sexy woman behind the cool, steely exterior intrigued him. She was unlike anyone he'd ever met. Who else at Crawford Constructs would have the guts to sit him down and tell him what a tyrant he'd been? Nobody. The place was full of yes men and women.

Eliza Worth was definitely not a *yes* woman. She was a true match for him.

The realization sent the blood draining from his face. Zach Taunton had never needed a mate. Relationships were too distracting. His cock just needed to be inside her tonight. That was it.

She frowned. "Is something wrong? Our deal is accomplished, isn't it?"

"Fully," he replied. "I just realized some things."

"Oh?" she asked, raising her brow again. The sexy gesture made him hard all over again.

"One, I'm a total jerk. Two, I believe you're the only person I've ever met who's not afraid of me."

Those gorgeous lips, which had been wrapped around his cock just moments ago, smiled. "Should I be?"

He jumped off the table and straightened his pants. "Of course not."

But he was afraid of *her*, because tonight she'd made him lose complete control. He kissed her hand because he knew she'd like it. More importantly, he didn't trust himself to kiss her on the lips and not get lost in her softness again.

"Please don't accept that offer," he told her. "I need you."

Conflicting emotions played across her face, pulling those beautiful lips taut. "I'll keep that in mind when I make my decision."

Frustration tore at his gut as he thrust his hands into his pockets. He'd listened to her and they'd pleased each other tonight. Why wasn't that enough to change her mind?

"What will it take to get you to stay?" he asked. "More money?"

*You can't control everything*, a little voice reminded him. *Especially her.*

"I just need some time to think." A confused frown puckered her brow. "I mean, I'd planned to accept the job offer."

A bit of triumph trickled through Zach's blood. He'd gotten her to rethink her decision. At least that was something.

"Good night, Zach," she said gently.

"Good night, Eliza. Tomorrow will be business as usual." He winked at her. "I won't even mind if you're a little late."

\* \* \* \* \*

"There you are. I've been looking everywhere for you lovebirds."

Eliza crossed her arms when she heard Margo's voice and her stiletto heels on the large tiles around the pool. Hot shame raced across her skin when she realized her friend would have seen Zach's cock in her mouth if she'd walked out a few minutes earlier.

"How could you?" Eliza demanded.



Margo put a hand to her upper chest and feigned a look of innocence. "How could I what?"

"Call my boss and tell him I requested to spend seven minutes with him in a dark room."

"I did it for your health. Stress kills, you know." Margo drifted between Eliza and Zach and put her arms around both of them. "Besides, you make a lovely couple. Eliza, sweetie, I never knew you did fellatio with such finesse."

Eliza's stomach dropped to her knees. "Wh-what are you talking about?"

Margo's silk dress rustled as she pointed to one of the palm trees behind the table Zach had sat on.

Zach squinted up at it and stiffened. "Damn it. There's a camera up there! I want that tape destroyed."

"Don't worry," Margo assured him. "It's already been deleted."

"You watched us?" Eliza's hands balled into fists. She should never have come tonight.

"Not the entire episode." Margo waved a hand. "At an expensive home like this, surely you realized we have security cameras?"

Zach's stiff posture relaxed and he laughed his booming conqueror's laugh, spreading warmth in Eliza's belly. "We should have."

Eliza shook her head. So much had happened tonight, she was in a daze. It would take days to sort through it all. She still tasted Zach in her mouth, still wondered what had possessed her to drink every bit of his seed when they'd agreed she wouldn't.

The chemistry between them was much stronger than she'd ever imagined, but it was more than that. Tonight she saw him as a real man with real feelings, not a cold tyrant.

"Well, it's been an interesting evening," she told Margo as she collected her purse, "but don't expect me to attend your next mixer. Good night."

"Before you leave, you must see my husband's study," Margo said. "We just had it redecorated."

"Some other time," Eliza replied, smoothing down her blouse and skirt.

"Please?" Margo grabbed both their arms and tugged. "It will only take a minute. Then you can go home."

Zach winked. "She did say please. How can we resist?"

As they followed their hostess, Eliza realized there were fewer people around the pool than before and even fewer inside. It was so late many of them had gone home or found private spaces inside the house to get better acquainted. Sleep was the last thing on her mind and as much as she wanted this night to be over, she realized a small part of her didn't.

The study was a large room on the lower level. They stood at the threshold, looking inside.

"Come on in," Margo urged, "so you can see it better."

When the three of them entered, Eliza stood transfixed by the floor-to-ceiling walnut bookshelves covering every wall, and the large chandelier in the center.

"It's spectacular," she said, looking up at it.

"I knew you'd love it." Margo giggled—followed by the sound of the door closing behind them and a lock bolting in place.

"What the—" Zach exclaimed.

Eliza flew to the door and turned the handle, to no avail. "I don't believe her. Now she's locked us in here!"

Zach gently nudged her aside and applied force to the door. "It's locked tight. Unless there's a chainsaw around, it appears we're stuck."

"Windows," Eliza exclaimed, looking around frantically.

"There aren't any." The acoustics in the room made Zach's laugh sound especially rich and warm. "Your friend is a piece of work."

"*Friend* is not the word I'm thinking of right now." She crossed her arms and looked at her watch. "Hopefully she'll unlock the door in seven minutes."

She couldn't be alone again with Zach. They might be tempted to have sex. If that happened, her heart would be lost. They'd already done way too much tonight.

"I wouldn't count on it," Zach replied as he walked around the room. "At least she left us food and water."

Eliza frowned at the crystal decanter of ice water and tray of fruits, nuts, cheese and crackers on the sideboard. There was even a basket of Margo's ubiquitous classy condoms.

"She thought of everything, all right," she muttered as she dropped her purse onto one of the wingback leather chairs.

When Zach came up behind her and slid his arms around her waist, the rigid tension in her body dissolved at once.

"The woman is determined we spend time together," he said gently. "Why not make the best of it? This room is a dream."

"The fact that she took away all our control, making us prisoners, doesn't bother you?"

"Not with you here." He kissed her ear, making her feet feel as if they'd left the ground. "I can think of worse prisons."

She let her hands rest on his as he clasped her waist, unable to deny how right it felt to be here with him. Maybe Margo knew something she didn't. Allowing herself to relax, she took in the surroundings.

The high ceiling, crown molding and bookcase finials made the room timeless. A huge walnut desk stood in the middle of the room on an Oriental rug, an oasis in a sea of honey-colored tile. A clock ticked from somewhere but otherwise the room was a quiet sanctuary, seemingly miles away from the rest of the house.

It had Zach written all over it.

"It is lovely, and much bigger and lighter than that closet," she said. "I bet you'd love to have an office like this."

Seeing the desk reminded her of her fantasy. The surface was more than large enough to support her entire upper body if she bent over it while he took her from behind.

"Tell me your fantasies," he whispered in her ear.

Had he read her mind? She gasped when he squeezed her closer, pressing the outline of his hard cock against her buttocks. Apparently he was raring to go again and so was her cunt. It swelled and moistened, needing him inside.

Without another word, he let go of her to take her hand and pull her toward the desk. Eliza's heart pounded as they approached the large leather chair. Would he fuck her there? How would that leather feel on her bare skin?

To her surprise, he sat her in the chair and stepped back. It engulfed her and squeaked as she shifted to get comfortable.

"How does it feel to be the CEO?" he asked. He even pulled up a small chair in front of the desk and sat. "Go ahead. Order me around."

Eliza ran her finger along the molding edging the top of the desk, venturing to the sheet of glass covering the wood top. It was cold, hard and unforgiving. The thought of it touching her skin made her belly muscles clench.

"This is silly," she said.

He raised his eyebrows and jumped up, coming around the desk to approach her. "This isn't your fantasy? Come on. Everyone at the office would probably kill for the chance to give me orders."

She got out of the executive chair and clasped her nervous hands behind her back. "I don't have any fantasies."

"Liar."

He stepped behind her again and ran his strong, warm hands down her bare arms, sending shivers up her body. If he only knew how much he aroused her when he stood behind her...how close he'd come to her fantasy.

His cock felt even bigger and harder through their clothes. She pressed her thighs together tightly as if to deny the fact her panties were hot and completely soaked. The scent of arousal—both hers and his—mixed with his cologne, a warm note among the symphony of cool wood and leather smells of the room.

"I need you." His voice was hoarse and barely recognizable. "If you don't tell me what your fantasy is we'll make something up, but I've got to have you, Eliza. Here. Now."

As if to underscore his point, he reached in front of her and deftly unbuttoned her blouse. The movement of fabric made her nipples grow so hard they hurt. Ribbons of desire laced through every muscle, paralyzing her. She could do nothing but watch his busy hands undress her.

"W-we agreed not to have sex," she stammered.

He reached inside her bra with one finger, tweaking her nipple with relentless precision until she thought it might explode.

"It would be impossible to work together if we did," she added, trying to convince him *and* her traitorous body, "even for two weeks if I change jobs."

"How can we *not* have sex in here?"

He nipped her earlobe with his teeth while working the other nipple, making it just as big and hard as the other. His free hand went to her hip, giving him more leverage to grind his hardness against her.

As diligently as she tried to resist rubbing her ass in time with his slow, thrusting movements, she couldn't. A soft, strangled cry flew from her throat when he pulled the hem of her skirt up to her waist, exposing her panties.

His hand moved to stroke the drenched scrap of fabric between her legs. "You want me. Don't deny it."

She stared straight ahead, the image of the executive chair blurring along with her vision as waves of pleasure emanated from her cunt, weakening her legs. "All right, I want you but that doesn't mean—"

With one deft movement, he used both hands to pull her panties down to her ankles. The wet fabric brushed her inner thighs on the way down, making her cunt leak more hot juices. Never in her life had she been this aroused.

He reached around to brush his hand across her pubic hair, barely touching her clit. "This is our only chance. Our only night. We have to make it special."

Eliza's body filled with such need she nearly cried. They weren't standing in a semi-public place anymore, negotiating. They were alone and needed each other with a force she could no longer control.

Maybe they both needed to lose control—in each other—just this once.

"On the desk!"

"What?"

"Take me across the desk from behind," she cried. "*That's* my fantasy."

## **Chapter Five**

"Now we're getting somewhere."

Zach crossed the room in two strides to retrieve the basket of scented condoms and put them on the desk. Trembling with need, Eliza barely had enough time to step out of her panties before he grabbed her bare hips and walked her to the edge of the desk.

"Bend over, honey. Let me see that beautiful ass of yours."

"Yes!" she yelled, louder than she'd intended.

She was completely out of control now, mindless of what she said or did. All that mattered was Zach finally making her fantasy come true. She planted her hands on the desktop.

"Let's get these off first." He pulled her shoulders up and tugged off her blouse and bra, tossing them across the desk to land on the other side. "I want to see your bare breasts pressed to the glass."

She helped by kicking off her shoes and removing the skirt still bunched around her waist.

"What about you?" she protested. "I'm naked but you're not."

"New rule," he replied. "I get to keep my clothes on."

She knew why he did it. He needed to be in control. Being naked, vulnerable and all his swelled her clit with anticipation, so she didn't argue.

He swiftly pushed her torso onto the glass, making her cry out in surprise. The desktop was even colder and harder than she'd imagined it would be. It felt like a concrete slab! The glass pressed into her aching nipples while the rounded edge of the desk nestled firmly against the juncture of her thighs. Her skin shivered against the cold

but, oddly enough, the shocking discomfort only aroused her more. While her body heat gradually warmed the surface, a hot rivulet of cream dripped down her thigh.

"You know what?" He used a finger to trail her cream across her ass cheek. "This beautiful ass of yours is just begging for a good spanking."

Equal doses of shock and desire shot through her. "You wouldn't."

He responded with his signature conqueror's laugh. "I just made up another rule. I get to spank and do whatever I want to this gorgeous ass of yours for the next seven minutes."

"I don't like your rules," she said.

He stroked the curve of each cheek, making her hold her breath as she wondered what he'd do. Was he just bluffing or did he really plan to spank her? His touch felt so gentle and perfect, stoking the heat building in her cunt.

She grunted in surprise when the first slap came. "Stop, Zach. Right now!"

Her response only made him slap her again, then again, making her clit throb harder and harder. Each place he touched made her skin tingle, as if electric currents ran through her. Soon her entire ass stung and burned with pain and pleasure.

When she tried to stand, he held her shoulder down to the table with a strong hand. She breathed hard as her mind slipped into primitive abandon. As if she were a trapped animal, she clawed the glass and fought to get up, hair falling over her eyes and obscuring her vision.

He laughed and the infuriating, sexy sound of it made her scream. "Shut up! You can't control me."

"I get it." He laughed again. "You like to be told what to do."

"Absolutely not."

"Your pussy says otherwise," he replied calmly as he swiped a finger across her drenched folds.



That unexpected touch loosened her self-control even more. She wriggled her ass backward, begging for more sensation.

“You *love* being controlled,” he added as he inserted his finger and pushed it deep. “Do you know your pussy lips are just as full and soft as your mouth? And I can make you come whenever I decide to?”

She pushed back on his finger. “Then make me come now. Please!”

“Patience, Eliza.” He withdrew his finger.

“Just fuck me already before I change my mind,” she snarled.

He bent down and whispered in her ear. “As you wish.”

The sound of his zipper followed by that of the condom packet tearing sent a moan keening from her throat. An exotic coconut scent filled the air as she heard him unroll it onto his cock. She wanted to see it too, so she turned her head against the glass and watched.

He was really going to do it. Her boss, Zach Taunton, was going to fuck her. She’d never wanted a man—or anything—this much in her life. Nothing mattered but this moment. Not tomorrow. Not her job. Nothing.

When his hand touched her hip, she flinched, thinking he was going to slap her again. Instead, he grabbed her hard. Probably hard enough to bruise her delicate skin but she didn’t care in the least.

The tip of his penis brushed across her clit, sending her nerve endings into overdrive. She expected him to lunge inside all at once but he was gentle and slow, allowing her to accommodate him.

Each inch seared as it entered her. Bit by bit, she allowed him into her body...into her heart. How could he be so dominating one minute, pushing her down on the glass and spanking her, and so gentle the next?

Once he was all the way inside, he made a sound somewhere between a moan and a groan of triumph.

“Oh Eliza. Hell. You feel perfect.”

“Yes,” she whispered with her face turned and pressed against the hard glass as if it were a soft pillow. She wanted to tell him he felt perfect too but forming sentences was beyond her.

He tortured them both with his slow and thorough strokes. The glass under her face clouded with her short, hot breaths. She clawed at it again, wanting to escape yet never wanting it to end.

*Am I dreaming this?*

This was her fantasy. Zach taking her, fucking her and making her his. He alternated between stroking her hips gently and gripping them hard.

“Take me, Zach. Take me!”

He lunged a little harder and a little deeper. “Are you sure, Eliza? I can’t promise I’ll be gentle.”

“I don’t want you to be.”

She arched her back to give him better access to her drenched cunt. Whatever he wanted, she would give more. As promised, his grip tightened on her hips and he drove in hard. The sudden sensation of pressure as his cock head pressed her cervix sent her heart thumping into her throat.

“Are you all right?”

Unable to speak, she just nodded. His cock brushed against the tight muscles deep inside her pussy, setting off tremors of need. Zach made love as powerfully as he managed her at work.

Time seemed to stop altogether as he pounded his pelvis against her, driving her against the desk with the steady force of a pile driver. The bulk of wood creaked softly from their movements.

Caught between hard man and harder wood, her soft body surrendered while holding its own. She should ask him to slow down. There would surely be bruises but the occasional tingle of discomfort only tightened the muscles of her cunt more.

"You feel tighter by the minute." His voice was so strangled she barely recognized it. "Mine. You're all mine tonight."

"Yes." Her answer was a whisper so soft she barely heard it herself.

She gasped when one of his hands pushed its way beneath her breast. Although her body was already overloaded with sensation, she lifted up from the glass a little to give him access. The gentle touch of his fingers against her nipple made it pinch so tight... practically hard enough to break the glass.

The rich wood tones of the study blurred in and out of her vision like a kaleidoscope. Emotion moistened her eyes as she finally squeezed them shut in surrender. This is just sex, she reminded herself. After tonight, it would be over.

His hand moved lower to rest over her mound as he continued thrusting into her. Restless fingers found her erect clit and stroked it. Burning heat and pleasure, so intense it was almost unbearable, radiated from his touch to engulf her entire body.

"Zach. Zach!" She cried his name over and over, unable to stop.

"I love hearing you moan my name." His fingers stilled. "But does that mean you want me to stop or keep going?"

"Do. Not. Stop."

"Is that an order?" he asked.

"Hell yes!"

He laughed as he lunged and stroked, lunged and stroked. The rich sound of slapping bodies filled the room and nearly hastened her climax. She swore she would never get tired of hearing it.

"Now, Eliza," he whispered.

She frowned. "What?"

He answered by angling his cock and stroking harder while squeezing her clit between his thumb and forefinger. Intense pleasure exploded in her core, jerking every muscle hard. Her hands clenched the desktop, arms painfully taut, until it felt as if both her body and the desk beneath her shattered at the same time.

*Am I falling? Please catch me, Zach...*

But the desk was still there and his cock was still inside, anchoring her. It pulsed deep within her body and the sound of his long groan coaxed even more moisture from her channel. Their bodies had bonded so strongly, each tremor of his cock triggered an aftershock in her pelvis.

This was their last bit of communion before losing their connection forever. Eliza planted her hands on the desktop and closed her eyes when he pulled out of her just as quickly as he'd entered.

It was over.

Her back felt as if she hadn't stood upright in a hundred years when she tried. Their lovemaking had been the most natural sensation in the world, making any other position seem awkward and unnatural. Where had Zach thrown her clothes?

He wrestled off the spent condom, deposited it into the gilded wastebasket beside the desk and put his cock back into his pants.

"Look. We moved the desk," he crowed in triumph as he surveyed it. "It's crooked now."

Eliza's eyes widened but, remembering the power of their orgasms, she wasn't too surprised.

"Maybe we should move it back." She giggled, drunk on what they'd just experienced. "Margo might notice."

She forgot to blink as he faced her and ran his hands gently down her body, starting at her shoulders, arcing over her breasts and skimming down her belly to her hips. The

light, reverent touch was just as powerful as the firm stroking had been earlier. Each inch of her skin responded to him, beading into goose bumps.

She should at least attempt to hide the effect he had on her, shouldn't she? He was still fully clothed. He was also her boss, a fact that had slipped her mind while his cock had done such magic inside her.

"I need my clothes," she said. Anything to end this naked vulnerability. Her bottom lip even trembled as she made the request.

"Not yet." His dark eyes warmed her as they swept the length of her body. "You're already starting to bruise. We shouldn't have been so rough."

"I don't regret it," she replied as a sweep of hair mercifully covered part of her face.

But he swept it back again. "I love how you fought me and then gave yourself to me."

Trying to seduce him hadn't even occurred to her. Tonight she'd just been herself, her true self, without all the *shoulds* and *shouldn'ts* getting in the way. She'd never felt freer, she thought as he led her to the executive chair and pulled her onto his lap.

"It takes a special woman to match me," he said as he looked into her eyes with his earnest brown gaze. "When I discovered most of the women I dated were weak, cold or completely uninterested in my career, I just couldn't connect anymore. I gave up."

Her? A match for Zach Taunton? If someone had suggested it just yesterday she would have scoffed at the idea, but she couldn't deny their powerful chemistry. Tonight he'd seen the real her, not the cautious, masked woman from the office.

She looked down at the damp pubic hairs peeping out from her tightly pressed legs. "I'm going to ruin your expensive pants."

"I don't give a damn about a pair of pants," he said as he kissed her. "I love having you naked in my lap."

The softness and tenderness of his lips surprised her. His tongue entered her mouth and fluttered against hers in tender communion. Even his body, which had been

ramrod-hard all evening, felt soft and fluid as it molded against the chair and her. How could the same man have been so hard and conquering earlier tonight?

*Tonight.* It seemed endless yet much too short...and almost over. She noticed a small silver clock on the desk for the first time.

"My God. It's almost midnight," she exclaimed. "Shouldn't we have turned into pumpkins by now?"

He laughed and brushed the hair out of her face again.

"I'll never get tired of hearing you laugh," she blurted out before putting a hand over her mouth. "What am I saying? After tonight, things will be formal again between us."

He stroked the length of her thigh before he picked up her other hand and squeezed it. "I don't want it to end tonight."

"We agreed."

"To hell with what we agreed." He frowned. "Can you deny the connection we've shared?"

Heat burned behind her eyes as she shook her head. She should never have made love to this man. Thinking she could have a little casual sex with him and then forget it all had been insane.

"I've seen so many new sides to you," she admitted. "I think I even like you now."

Laughing, he kissed her hand, making her shiver as his beard stubble brushed across her fingers. "I must have done something right tonight. Seriously, Eliza, we can't let this end."

She shrugged. "You're my boss. If I stayed, we can't have a relationship. It wouldn't be fair to the others."

Not only that. What if the sides he'd shown her tonight were only illusions he'd used to seduce her? Their chemistry might have affected her brain.

His smile disappeared as he nodded. "We'd probably be tempted to have sex in the office too. I'd need to take you across *my* desk."

A shiver of delight went through her as she pictured him locking the door in the middle of the day, clearing off the papers, pulling off her clothes and taking her.

"But if I leave as planned..." she added.

He looked toward a distant bookshelf and frowned. "I can't stand the thought of losing you either way, at the office *or* in my bed."

Her stomach clenched into a cold ball. "I should accept that job offer."

She would miss him. Even though they hadn't been close until tonight, she'd gotten used to seeing him nearly every day. The prospect of working somewhere else felt more dismal than ever.

"You know how many hours I put in at the office," he added. "Replacing you and getting someone new up to speed would take up even more of my time." She knew what he was going to say before he even said it. "Even if we had a relationship, we wouldn't have a lot of time to see each other."

"I know," she replied, "but maybe it would be better than nothing."

The cell phone in his pants pocket vibrated under her right butt cheek.

"That feels nice," she said, wanting to prolong their tender bonding in the chair. She didn't even notice her nudity anymore. Once they stood up, it would be over.

He shifted her weight as he reached into his pocket. "I must have gotten a message earlier while we were occupied. I'd better listen in case the boss called. *My* boss."

Feeling giddy from the sex, she laughed into her hand. "Oh. I forgot you had one of those."

But the humor left her when Zach's body went completely rigid. His voice, his eyes—everything resumed the steely edge so familiar at work.

"I don't believe this! He wants a big proposal done by Monday morning. That means I'll have to have people work all weekend...again."

Eliza frowned. Although the prospect of working extra hours didn't distress her, spending time around Zach without being able to connect emotionally or physically would be torture.

Zach turned the phone off and all but threw it onto the desk. "That man is impossible. People are going to quit left and right after this."

She leaned against the cushioned arm of the chair and raised a brow. "Is he now?"

"I'm sure everyone has said the same thing about me," he admitted. "Even you."

"I guess I never realized how much your boss affects you." She traced the seam of his pant leg, hoping to calm him.

Zach dragged his fingers through his hair. When he pulled it into tufts, Eliza realized now why it usually looked so ruffled. She'd realized a lot of things for the first time tonight. Now aware of the pressure he was under, she understood his actions a lot better. Seeing him as the enemy and an obstacle in her life the past several months had been easy but shortsighted.

He wasn't a monster. He was human.

"Because *he* never compromises, *I* can't compromise," he added.

She lifted a brow. "Why can't you?"

He frowned, his leg jiggling under her with restless tension. "Because he'll replace me. I can't fail at this."

The tenser he looked, the more she wanted to soothe him. Her hands drifted to his shirt, smoothing the expensive cotton in wide arcs across his pectorals.

"That feels nice," he said.

She smiled in triumph when her calming strokes made him take a deep breath and lean back in the chair. But the phone message had broken the spell of their post-coital bliss and she was getting cold.



Back to reality, she thought as she hunted for her clothes and put them back on. Zach still sat in the chair, completely quiet as he swiveled it around until facing away from her.

"I should check my messages too," she said, reaching for her purse. "Then I'll call Margo so she can let us out of here."

Funny how trying to call Margo had never occurred to her when they'd first been locked in. She smiled. She must have subconsciously wanted to be locked up with Zach.

She had one message so she accessed voicemail. It was her mother, reminding her to come over for dinner next week. After saving the message, she accidentally replayed the one about her job offer.

"Who was that?" Zach asked. "I heard a man's voice."

Eliza nearly dropped the phone in surprise. She'd been so focused on the message she hadn't realized he'd gotten out of the chair to stand behind her. His jealousy warmed her. It was as if he already thought of her as his, despite the circumstances.

"My job offer," she replied. "I didn't mean to play it."

The small smile tugging at his lips looked so forlorn she couldn't resist kissing him. He locked his arms around her, hard, as if he'd already lost most of her and was trying to hang on to what was left.

"If you take it, I hope you get a nice boss," he told her. "A nice but *unattractive* boss."

"If he's not nice, I'll whip him into shape." She grinned at Zach. After months of angst and uncertainty, she finally felt as if the pieces of her life might fall back into place.

"That's what I like most about you, Eliza Worth. You're not a *yes* woman." He sighed and rubbed his forehead. "But you made me realize something tonight. I've been a *yes* man and everyone is paying for it. I think I need to sit down and have a talk with my boss too."

"In front of a Jacuzzi with two people fucking?" she asked.

His laugh enfolded her with warmth. "No. A simple conference room will do."

"Have you ever thought of starting your own company?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied slowly, "but that's no small undertaking."

She grinned at him and looked into his eyes. "I happen to know Zach Taunton never bothers with anything *small*."

"What if you were my partner?" he added, pushing back her hair. "We'd be an unbeatable team."

When his new erection pressed against her pelvis, full of promise, her body melted, eager to give everything he wanted. She touched his rough cheek. "We could have some very hot lunch breaks."

"We could," he agreed. "But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Why don't we start by dating and see where that takes us?"

"That sounds like a plan." She pointed at the big desk. "Before I call Margo, let's go back to the chair so we can explore the possibilities."

He pressed his hand over his erection. "This time I want *you* on top."

"Is that a new rule?" she asked.

"No, it's just a suggestion." He took her hand and led her to the chair. "I'm not going to tell you what to do anymore...unless you want me to."

## About the Author

By day, Afton Locke is a logical programmer, but by night she swims in the mystical world of dreams. Intrigued by all things unexplained, like ghosts and karma, she delights in spinning dark, sensual stories that pull readers below the surface of everyday (and sometimes boring) life to the depths of forbidden fantasy.

What else would you expect from someone with her moon in the 12th house/Pisces and Neptune in the 8th house/Scorpio? She lives in the mountains with her husband, dog and spooky black cat.

Unlock your darkest fantasies with Afton Locke.

Afton welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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