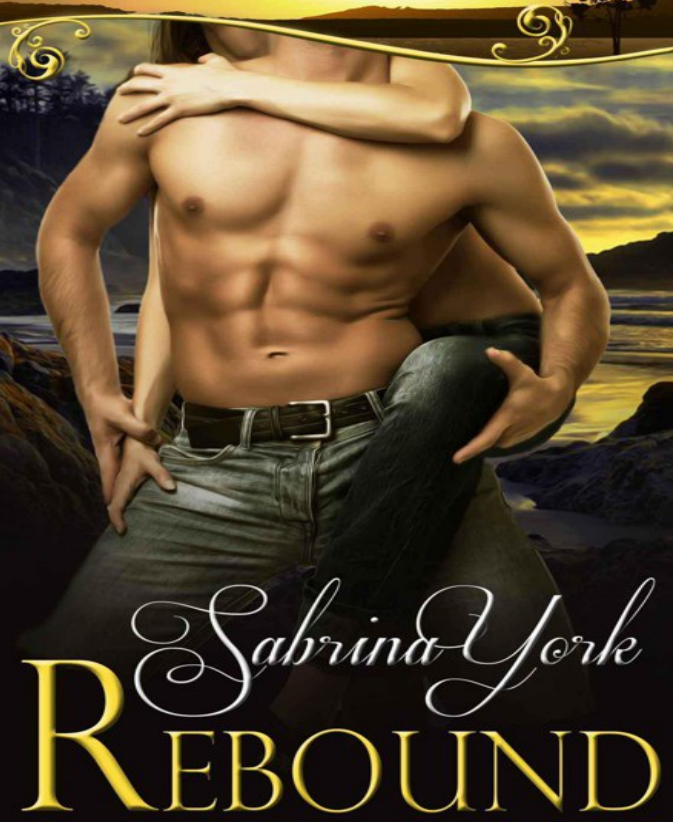


A TRYST ISLAND EROTIC ROMANCE



*Sabrina York*

REBOUND

Rebound: *A Tryst Island Erotic  
Romance*

*by Sabrina York*

Rebound

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to Carrie Jackson and Alexandra Cross. When you read the book, you'll know why, if you don't already.

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## Chapter One

Kristi Cross set her heavy suitcase on the deck encircling the house and stared at the last trails of sunset shafting through the clouds and dancing on the darkening water of the horizon. She stilled, captured by the beauty, the peace, the perfection of the moment. She loved living in the Pacific Northwest, and this was why.

It had been a long, frustrating day. She'd planned to spend it puttering in her shop, closing at four and heading out to the island for a weekend with friends. But no. Instead she'd wasted hours attempting to converse rationally with a city zoning-bot who wanted to make her



funky, friendly neighborhood into an industrial complex. And then she'd endured more aggravation at the DMV trying to explain she was, in fact, who she was. And of course there was that trial of patience at the post office, standing behind a very charming elderly woman who insisted on paying for everything with pennies.

Which she counted out. One. At. A. Time.

But this? This panoply? This glorious splay of color and nature and peace?

It made it all worth it.

She was ready for a break from real life, thank you very much.

And it had nothing to do with that

nasty scene with Rolf this morning.

Truly. It didn't.

Besides, that relationship had been over long before she'd walked in on him fucking her best waitress in the storage room.

There was no other word for what she'd witnessed. Fucking. Plain and simple.

No doubt, she'd miss Savannah more than Rolf. He hadn't exactly been present, only paying attention to her when he wanted sex. She should have dumped him months ago.

It was a pain in the ass being in a relationship all by yourself.

The last gasp of sunlight winked out,

and a velvet blanket draped itself over the horizon. Kristi couldn't see it, but she could hear it, *smell* the sea. Her soul knew it was out there, vast and beautiful, constant and soothing. And that was enough.

With a sigh, she picked up her suitcase and let herself into the back hallway of the vacation house she shared with a group of college buddies on an island nestled in Washington State's San Juan archipelago. The island's official name was Trystacomseh, after a long-dead Indian chief, but the locals called it Tryst Island for short. She didn't get out here very often because her business, Beanie's Book and Coffee, kept her tied

to the counter. But after a day like today, she really needed it. She'd checked the online calendar and been ecstatic to find a spot open—this was a last-minute whim, and the house was completely booked on many weekends. There were only so many beds, after all. Lucy had agreed to cover her Saturday shift, so Kristi had packed a bag and headed over to the ferry terminal.

Because her day was going the way it was, she'd missed the ferry. But she'd been able to catch a ride with Darby Britt, who'd been in Seattle stocking up on supplies for the bar.

In a perfect world, she would never have climbed into a boat with Darby. He

drove like a demon escaping hell. But she'd needed the ride. And frankly, she'd enjoyed the feel of the wind whipping past, the tang of the sea spray and the sense she was jetting far and fast from the annoyances of her life.

Her hair would probably never be the same.

She smoothed the tangled locks into what she hoped resembled a human configuration as she checked the white board on the wall by the back door, just to see who had signed in—and her pulse stalled.

Damn. Of course *he'd* have to be here. What were the odds?

Kristi had had a mad crush on

Cameron Jackson since her freshman year in college. Everything about him had drawn her, from his tall muscular form to the broad, friendly smile. He had a wicked sense of humor and could keep up with her snarky banter.

Of all the Dawgs, as they called themselves—the eleven souls who'd lived in McCarty Hall at the University of Washington and formed a bond while screaming at the television during football season—Cam was, by far, the most gorgeous. For four years, when they'd all converged on the lounge for their gridiron fix, she'd lusted after him. Even knowing—*knowing*—she wasn't his type. Not by a long shot.

She'd lusted after him when they weren't watching football too.

And damn it, she still had that stupid crush on him.

It was stupid. Really it was.

Kristi wasn't blind. She saw the kinds of women he dated.

They didn't look like her. She was... well, curvy was a nice word for it. And his current girlfriend was a wraith. Not skin and bones, but pretty damn close. You could *see* her clavicle. Kristi was pretty sure she had a clavicle. But hadn't ever seen it.

Robyn was always flawlessly turned out, with flawless makeup, talons for nails and a perfectly disciplined coif.

She wore Prada.

Kristi liked clompy boots and funky outfits she picked up in a second-hand shop. She *might* wear mascara—if the world was coming to an end or she had a date with Channing Tatum. Or something like that.

She was definitely *not* modelesque. Certainly *not* a wraith.

A low laugh resonated from the great room down the hall and her heart did a painful back flip. She would recognize that laugh, shiver to that laugh, anywhere. Any time.

She frowned. She hated when her heart did gymnastics, as it always did around Cam. Her heart was freaking



Mary Lou Retton around Cam.

Ah well. She had to face him eventually. Apparently they were spending the weekend together. At least Robyn's name wasn't scrawled next to his on the board. She threw back her shoulders and plastered on a big old friendly smile as she rounded the corner.

The house, perched on a rise overlooking the Pacific, was magnificent. The hub of the structure was the sprawling great room spanning the length of the house. Rustic and lodge-like, it sported a huge fireplace on one end and a rough-hewn, long dining table on the other. The ceiling vaulted to a high peak over the open kitchen and the

seaward-facing wall was all windows, giving the impression that nature was one with the house. Sofas and chairs were sprinkled about in welcoming configurations.

Kristi's focus locked on Cam.

He glanced away from the TV and broke into a grin. "Kristi! Hey."

"Hey, Cam." The stillness blanketing the house told her they were alone. The Dawgs weren't known for being quiet. "Where is everyone?" She dropped her purse on the table.

"You're late. They all went to the bar."

It was the tradition. First night on Tryst Island, everyone went to Darby's.

“Oh? Why didn’t you go?”

He shrugged. She tried not to fixate on the way his broad shoulders moved in the cotton of his T-shirt. She tried not to fixate on the thick muscles of his neck, or those biceps or—God help her—that chest. Molded as it was by his tight shirt.

A man like Cam should never wear a tight black T-shirt. It should be against the law. He was a brilliant computer programmer and should, by rights, be a super nerd. But with that bod, he could have been a gym spokesman or a male model for those sexy romance book covers. Or a porn star. Or something. She’d seen him in swim trunks—gotten a gander at his bare chest, the cut abs, the

broad, flexing pecs...

It got a little difficult to breathe, so she thrust *that* image from her mind.

He was a hottie. And not just his body.

His face was equally fascinating with a square jaw, high cheekbones and slightly crooked nose. His features were sharp, but the whole of it was softened by an open, charming expression and azure eyes that crinkled at the corners. A slight smile always teased his perfect lips. His hair was jet black, short and curly—just the way she liked it. She longed to run her fingers through it.

She didn't linger on the fantasy though. Otherwise she might start

drooling.

She did that sometimes.

Thank heaven he was oblivious to her obsession.

He switched off the TV and stood. “I didn’t feel like dealing with a crowd of people tonight.”

Kristi nodded and wandered to the fridge, snooping for something to eat. As she made herself a quick sandwich and opened a beer, he strolled over to the breakfast bar and leaned on the counter and *looked* at her.

They’d been alone together before. She had no idea why this time his fixed attention made visions of the two of them, entwined, race through her mind.

It was probably the hint of mischief, that wisp of flirtation in his eye.

But that was typical Cam. He flirted with everyone. And everyone knew it was just that. Flirting.

No. This was something different.

She cut the crust off her sandwich and cast about for something innocuous to say. “So, how’s work?” He managed the Seattle office of an enormously successful online retailer. Work was always a safe topic.

He shrugged. “The usual. But my sister and I just started a website company on the side.” He stole one of her chips.

“You’d be good at that.” Cam had

always been a whiz with computer code and Susanne was gifted in layout and design.

“It’s fun. We landed a huge account last week. And we’re talking to Lane’s dad about a redesign of his corporate site.”

“Congrats.”

Lovely. Small talk. She could do small talk. Even with Cam. Although the thoughts swirling in her mind challenged her lucidity.

“Besides, she needed...something.”

Kristi nodded and stared at her plate. Susanne was far too young to be battling breast cancer. “So... How’s she doing?”

He grimaced. “It’s tough. The chemo

treatments especially. But she's almost done."

"Is she still living next door to you?"

"In the guest house. I can't bear to think of her dealing with all that on her own."

"But the company sounds exciting."

He nodded. "She loves it. I'm glad we did it." Kristi had no doubt Cam had launched into this new enterprise for one reason and one reason only: to give his sister something to live for. "And the coffee shop? How are things going for you and Lucy?"

She licked a little mustard from the corner of her mouth. "It's Montlake. It's coffee. Business is great."



“Great.”

“Great.”

An uncomfortable silence fell between them. Well, it was uncomfortable for her—probably because of the heat prickling her neck and crawling up her cheeks. So she opened her mouth and said the first thing she could think of. Just to fill the space.

“How’s Robyn?”

*Shit.* She could have kicked herself. Why bring *her* up? Kristi took a bite of her sandwich and nearly choked at his reply.

“We, ah, broke up.” He glanced down and scraped at something on the countertop when he said it, so she

couldn't tell anything from his expression.

“I'm...sorry.” It was a lie of course. She was delighted beyond words. She'd hated thinking of them. Together. In bed.

Besides, no one had liked Robyn. Every time she'd attended one of the group's get-togethers there'd been some nasty scene. And the things she'd said to Lucy during the divorce had been unforgivable.

Even if Lucy hadn't been Kristi's very best friend—and business partner, and roommate—she would have hated Robyn for that. What woman wanted to know her husband had come on to his best friend's hoochie mama?

Kristi had never told Cameron about that. No one had. They hadn't wanted to hurt him.

But maybe they should have. He deserved to know the truth.

She grabbed her plate and a beer and rounded the counter, settling herself at the table. He followed, taking the seat across from her. He picked up a deck of cards someone had left and riffled through them.

“Are you?” he asked.

Kristi blinked. “What?”

“Are you really sorry we broke up?” He flashed her a grin. “Because I’m not.”

The heat in his eye slammed into her

like a tsunami. Something glimmered there, radiated from him in licking waves. It almost felt like...interest. In her.

*Sexual* interest.

*Impossible!*

Still, lust, desire, years of wanting him welled up within her. Her mouth went dry as dust. She couldn't swallow.

And she couldn't look away.

They sat there, tangled in the moment for an eternity.

If she'd been a different woman, she would have strongly suspected he was coming on to her. Granted, it was only with his eyes.

But this was Cam.

And she was Good-Old-Reliable-Kristi. They were *friends*. Buddies.

That was it. Nothing more.

With great effort, she forced herself to focus her attention on her sandwich. As though bologna and cheese held the secrets of the universe.

Clearly, she was letting her crazy imagination see things that weren't there.

He shuffled the cards idly. Kristi peeped at his fingers. Long, lean, nimble fingers. Fingers that probably knew how to touch a woman. Probably knew how to—

She cut that thought off at the root with a brutal slash.

No need to torture herself.

She took a sip of her beer. “So, um, how long were you together again?”

“Two years.”

“Hmm. Long time. Pretty serious.”

He chuckled. “Obviously not.”

Her chin shot up at his tone, the bitter tinge of it, and against her will, she met his gaze again. “What happened?”

“I came back from a tech conference. Early...” He trailed off and did a one-handed flippy thing with the cards.

Yeah. Definitely nimble.

She gulped. “A-and?”

He quirked a brow. “What do you think?”

“She was with someone else?”

“Yup. In *my* fucking bed—sorry.”

“No need to fucking apologize.”

He tipped his head to the side. “I love that about you Kristi. No drama.”

She blotted the crumbs on her plate.

“I have my share.”

“Maybe. But you don’t drag everyone into the pit of despair with you.”

“The pit of despair?” She bit back a smirk. Now who was being a drama queen?

He raked his short, dark curls. “Now that it’s over, now that she’s out of my life, I can see how crazy-making she was. Why are you smiling like that?”

Kristi nibbled her lip. “You could have asked me how crazy-making she

was.”

He barked a laugh.

“Or you could have asked Jamie. Or Cassie or Emily or Kaitlin. Or Lucy. Especially Lucy.”

“Seriously?” He gaped at her. “*No one* liked her?”

“None of the girls.” She shot him a saccharine smile. “I’m sure the guys appreciated you bringing her around. Especially when she wore that floss thingy. What do you call that again?”

“A bikini.”

“Was it? Was it really? Because I think they cheated her. Or she forgot to put it all on. Or—”

“Now Kris. Your claws are coming



out.”

“It could at least have covered her butt crack. Nevertheless,” she smirked, “the guys liked the view.”

“Well they can have her.” Something must have flickered over her face. His eyes narrowed on her. “What?”

“Nothing.”

“Aw Christ. Did she make a play for one of the guys?”

She didn’t answer. She couldn’t. Instead, she said, “Would you really wish her on your best friends?”

“Hell no. The last thing I want is to see her again...especially here.”

Kristi twisted her napkin. That would be...awkward. “Well, anyway. I’m

sorry about all that, Cam. I know how it feels to walk in on someone you...” She trailed off and frowned at her beer. Somehow the bottle was empty. “I’m getting another. You want one?”

“Sure.”

He watched her head back to the kitchen—she felt the heat of his stare all the way to her core. Like he had some kind of laser vision.

Again, probably her imagination.

She did have a very active imagination.

At least when it came to Cam Jackson.

As she handed him his beer, their fingers brushed. She was able to hide

her visceral response to his touch, but he probably didn't miss the flinch.

He cleared his throat. "So... You've walked in on someone?"

"What?" She'd lost the thread of the conversation.

"You said you know how it feels."

"Ah yes." She plucked at the label on her bottle. Just to have something to distract her. From him. "Same dealio with Rolf."

"Really?"

"Hmm." She gazed out the wall of windows at the ocean in the distance, but it was dark, so all she could see was their reflection in it. Her attention naturally gravitated to him. She could

tell he was studying her intently. She had no idea why.

“Want to talk about it?”

“Not really. We’re done, he and I.” He chuckled and her head snapped around. “What’s so funny?”

He winked at her. “I never liked Rolf either. I thought he was a douche.”

“He is.”

“And why does he think he’s God’s gift to women? Prancing around like he owned the place? Making those idiotic, cocky comments—”

“He thought he was clever.”

“That’s what you get for thinking.”

Kristi couldn’t hold back her snort. She grabbed a napkin as beer shot out

her nose. Cam could always make her laugh, even when life wasn't very funny.

He crooked a brow and smiled wickedly. "Need another beer?"

She chuckled. "I better not."

"Wanna play Hearts?"

Kristi checked the clock. It was just eight. They had at least a couple hours before everyone came back from the bar. And she did love a good game of Hearts. "Sure."

He nodded and dealt the cards. They were halfway through the first hand when he broke the silence.

"Do you remember the first time we played?"

"You had to teach me."

“Took me all night.”

“That was hardly my fault.” She rearranged her cards. “You kept pouring me shots.”

“You’re the one who kept drinking them.”

She feigned a pout. “I had to keep up with Jamie.”

“Now, *she* was easy to beat.”

“So was I, once you got me liquored up.”

His chortle rumbled through her. “You figured out my strategy.” He shot her a saucy leer. “You sure you don’t want another beer?”

“No way. I’m winning this game, buster.”

They played for a while longer before he spoke again. This time, his words sent a scalding sizzle through her solar plexus. “You know Kristi, I can’t remember a time when we were both... single.”

Her heart seized. “*What?*” Thank God she hadn’t just taken a sip of beer—she would have spewed it across the table for sure.

“Think about it. Since the day we met, one of us was always in a relationship.”

Usually him.

She didn’t respond. She didn’t know what to say.

He winced as he took a trick. “I just think it’s interesting. That’s all.”

“What’s... interesting?” It took everything in her not to mangle her cards.

“You know. That we’re both available. Both here. Alone.”

Under the weight of his steamy gaze, all uncertainty wafted away. That was definitely interest simmering in those steely blue orbs.

Kristi’s pulse went into rapid-fire mode. Her breath hitched. Heat lashed through her.

“I...ah... W-what’s your p-point?” She tried to act all blasé, but the stuttering probably ruined it.

His expression shifted, darkened. The smoldering, seductive mien made her



belly flutter. “I was thinking we could play...for something.”

“S-something?”

“A kiss, maybe?”

*Brain freeze.*

Every thought fled. Every cogent inkling spun out of reach. She could only feel. Stare at him in shock. *Ache* for him.

His tongue came out, dabbing at his lips. She fixated on it, imagining that tongue, what it could do. The havoc it could cause on various parts of her trembling body—

“A kiss?” A squeak. “We’ve never k-kissed before.”

He leaned closer. His voice dropped

an octave. “I’m aware of that.”

“But-but... I thought... We’re just friends.”

He studied her over his cards, stroking them slowly. “Are you saying you don’t want to kiss me?”

“I... No! I just... We’ve always... It’s probably...”

Amusement—twined with certainty—lightened his intensity. “What are you trying to say, Kristi?”

She meticulously rearranged her cards. “I just... I didn’t think you found me attractive. That’s all.”

He boggled. “Are you crazy? You’re stunning.”

A little thrill flickered up her spine.

“I’m not.” She ignored his frown at that, and plowed on with her reasoning.

“Besides, in all these years, none of us... well, none of us have.”

“Lane and Lucy did.”

“And look how well that worked out.”

“I’m suggesting a kiss, Kristi. Just a kiss.” He stroked his lips. “Be honest. Haven’t you ever wondered what it would be like between us?”

A hot tide crawled up her cheeks. He didn’t miss it. He couldn’t. Her cheeks were neon red. Like a well-cooked lobster.

His features tightened. A muscle ticked in his cheek. “You have. Haven’t

you? Imagined it?” The hint, the thread of uncertainty in the words struck her to the core.

*He was uncertain? He was nervous?*  
Holy Hannah.

“I...” She plucked at the label again. It was becoming quite shredded.

“Maybe.” A whisper.

“Well. So have I. Often.”

She gaped at him. “Often?”

“Very often.”

“But...” She swallowed the words clogging her throat.

“But what?”

“I... Robyn was perfect.”

“She was.” Her belly dipped at that.

“But when she smiled, she didn’t smile with her whole face. Not the way you do. She didn’t embrace life. She just kind of clung to the edges. You toss yourself in.” He fondled the neck of his bottle. “It’s an attractive quality, Kris. A man can’t help wondering...”

“Wondering what?”

“If you make love that way too.”

Ooh. Those words skimmed over the air between them, smooth and silky and oh so beguiling.

Not that he needed to seduce her.

Hell, all he had to do was *breathe* and she wanted him. Still...

“Are you drunk?”

He grinned. “Not in the slightest.”

“This is probably a bad idea.”

His grin broadened.

“Cam, we’re both on the rebound.”

He shifted, as though something was making his position uncomfortable.

“Sometimes you score the winning point off a rebound.”

“A basketball analogy? Really?” He knew she was a football fan.

“If the shoe fits.” He reached across the table and took her hand in his. His heat enveloped her, sank in and made her want to weep. She could only imagine how good he would feel touching her *all over*. Pressing her into a downy mattress. Entering her in a hard, hot thrust...

Lordy. She could imagine it. So well, her body was already preparing for it. A slick dampness eased between her thighs. Her nipples pebbled. Her womb clenched in hunger.

“What would the others think?”

“Why would we tell them?” His expression was far too innocent. “It’s only a kiss.”

“One kiss?”

“One kiss. A forfeit. If you win the game, I kiss you. If I win, you kiss me.”

She glanced at his lips. Strong. Powerful. Perfectly formed. She’d wanted to feel them, taste them, *have* them since the day they’d met. Why was she dithering? What was she afraid of?

Well, other than heartbreak.

But she'd long ago learned that heartbreak could come whether you were careful or reckless.

Might as well be reckless.

She would rather enjoy a decadent sliver of fudgy brownie than suffer through a lifetime of rice cakes.

“Okay. Let's do it.”

He stared at her. The tension between them mounted, hummed. His Adam's apple made the slow journey up and back down his throat. Then he picked up the cards, shuffled once and quickly dealt out a new hand.

Kristi's pulse raced. Her mind whirled. Her body trembled.



She was going to do it.

After all these years.

She was going to kiss Cam Jackson.

## Chapter Two

Cam hoped to God Kristi couldn't see the tremor in his hands as he tossed the cards into piles. He couldn't believe he'd finally worked up the nerve to ask. He couldn't believe she'd said yes. That he was finally going to get a taste of the most luscious woman he'd ever known.

He hadn't always wanted her like this. When they'd first met, he'd seen her as a more of a little sister, goofy and funny and always up for some grand adventure. But as time passed and he'd gotten to know her better, gotten a glimpse into her soul, his interest had been piqued.

When she'd graduated from wearing

oversized football jerseys to outré outfits that enhanced her figure, he'd been intrigued. But in the last year or so, she'd become something of an obsession for him.

One day, last summer, everything had changed.

He'd taken her out on the jet ski—just a ride around the island. A lark.

And holy hell.

The feel of her arms around him, her scent as it wafted on the breeze, the enticing pressure of her breasts against his back. He'd nearly gone cross-eyed.

He'd always loved her sense of humor, the way she looked at the world. He loved that she was smart and

fearless. And that every moment he spent with her was just plain fun.

But that weekend, he'd been struck by a bolt of lightning.

Now all he could think about were her full breasts, the enticing curve of her hips, that hourglass waist. He spent a good portion of the day and the better part of the night imagining how it would feel to hold her sumptuous body against his, caress her generous curves, bury his face between those glorious swells. More than once, he'd caught himself thinking of her when he was with Robyn.

Well, he wasn't with Robyn now.

And she wasn't with Rolf.

And, win or lose this game, he was

going to win. He was going to get what he wanted. He was finally—*finally*—going to taste her. Maybe more. If he was lucky. He hoped to hell the others stayed at the bar long enough for his plan to come to fruition.

Though it wouldn't hurt to speed things up and throw the game.

He tossed out a card.

She wrinkled her nose—damn, she was cute when she wrinkled her nose.

“Really, Cam?”

“Huh? What?”

“That's your lead? The queen of spades?”

“Yup.”

“Are you trying to shoot the moon?”

Because I already took a point.”

“Just play.” She shook her head and underplayed the queen. He ate a whopping thirteen points. And then he led with the jack of diamonds. She took it with her ace and then went on to win the hand.

He really wasn't paying attention. He was busy planning his assault. If he lost the game, *he* got to kiss *her*. And he wanted to *kiss her*. In fact, the desire, the need to orchestrate the entire clinch bubbled deep in his gut.

He dealt again, trying not to glance at the clock. This should be the last hand if he played his cards right. Or wrong, as the case may be.

And yes. She won. Easily. In fact, she spanked him.

Although he didn't let his mind linger on *that* image. It was far too distracting.

Instead, he leaped to his feet so quickly his chair toppled over. He ignored it—and her little ‘*eep*’—and came around the table in a rush to yank her into his arms and...yes! Yes. The feel of her, molded against him, was delicious. He'd known it would be.

The scent of her shampoo, or her perfume, or just Kristi, enticed him. He drew it in, savoring the moment, the knife's edge of intense anticipation.

“You won,” he murmured, gazing down into her wide hazel eyes. “Now I

have to kiss you.”

Her lashes fluttered. Her lips pursed. She wiggled a little against him and his cock stirred. “You *have* to? Well, isn’t that just—”

She didn’t finish. Whatever she’d been about to say never made it out of her mouth because he took her then. He dipped his head and settled his lips over hers and ate the words, consumed them. A thrill shot through his solar plexus at the contact. Warm, supple, sweet. Fragrant.

He surprised her by diving in like that. She went a little stiff, but it didn’t take long for her to relax and respond.

And hell. Did she respond. Did she



ever.

The kiss, which he'd intended to be slow and provocative, quickly raged into something else altogether. And when she uttered a throaty moan and her tongue peeped out to touch his, he nearly lost his mind.

He changed the angle of his head and deepened the kiss, holding her in place with one hand to her chin. The other roved.

God, she was amazing. He drew his palm over the flare of her hips. It dipped in at her waist and then rose up her ribcage. He nearly passed out when he skimmed the underside of her breast. Nearly passed out because all the blood

in his brain shot straight to his cock. His whole body thrummed with every beat of his heart.

He cupped her and she made another charming little noise. When he scraped a thumb over her nipple, she whimpered.

He longed to suck it. Draw it into his mouth and nibble and nip. Make her thrash.

He lifted her up onto the table and when she started to protest, he shifted his attention to her neck, nuzzling her there, right behind her earlobe. She gasped and garbled a word that might have been “more” and dug her nails into his shoulders.

He loved that as he drew her higher,

teased her to a fever pitch, her responses became like his—feral.

He'd known she'd be like this in her passion. Wild. Unrestrained. Demanding. He loved it. Fucking loved it...but he wanted, needed, more.

He fumbled with the buttons on her blouse.

His euphoria tumbled into the dark abyss when she stopped him. He pulled back to look at her, although pulling back was the last damned thing he wanted right now. Fortunately, a tiny chunk of his brain was still functioning. It reminded him he'd been raised to be a gentleman.

He could go for the jugular again. He

could renew his attack on the sensitive spot he'd found, the one at the base of her neck that made her warble and squirm and arch into his cock with a mind-bending pressure. He could make her forget whatever stupid objection she was about to present.

But he wanted more than a mindless fuck with Kristi.

He wanted a lot more.

“What is it?” he asked. And damn, his voice was rough. He barely got the words out.

“You—you said one kiss.”

“I wasn't done yet.”

She laughed as she pushed him away and rose from where he'd splayed her on

the table.

Yeah. He'd been ready—he *was* ready—to fuck her on the dining room table.

Some evil ifrit in his head howled at the idea of all the future meals they'd share. Here. At this table. And none of the other Dawgs would know the manner in which he and Kristi had defiled it.

Lucy would fucking kill him if he screwed her business partner—or anyone for that matter—on her dining room table.

But then, Lucy would never know. And his cock was rather insistent. His cock wanted to be in her. *Now*. He reached for her. Stroked her neck,

teasing that tender spot.

She shivered but stepped out of his reach, twining her fingers together as though she need to restrain herself from grabbing him again.

Then again, that could have been hopeful thinking on his part.

“We need to talk, Cam.”

He sucked in a deep breath and blew it out slowly in an attempt to regain control of his wayward lust. *Fuck*. A conversation. He hated conversations. Especially at moments like this. Right now his warrior was riding high. He wanted nothing more than to conquer. Storm the castle. Plow through her defenses. His battering ram was primed

and ready to go.

And she was calling a halt.

*Fuck.*

“Okay.” He turned away. He couldn’t look at her. Not now that he *knew*.

Knew what she felt like in his arms.

Knew what she tasted like. Knew how fucking responsive she could be when he

---

“Protection.”

One word. As though she couldn’t manage any more than that. And forced out to boot.

And, ah. That word.

He whipped around and gaped at her, his pulse rushing in his ears. She wasn’t calling a halt. She was...negotiating

surrender. A bolt of electricity sizzled through him. “Did you say protection?”

She shrugged. Just a tiny lift of one shoulder but it made him zero in on her breasts. Her nipples were hard, visible through the silky material of her blouse. “We’ve never talked about...you know...health stuff.”

Health stuff. Right. “I have condoms.” Shit, he had a full, unopened box in his suitcase. Not that he’d planned this once he’d seen her name pop up on the calendar this afternoon. But it did illustrate the value of positive thinking.

“Thank God,” she gushed. He was dying to find out if she gushed elsewhere. “I didn’t bring any.”



“And for the record, I’m clean.”

“Me too.”

“On the pill?”

“Yes.”

Shit yeah. They didn’t need the condoms.

Their gazes locked. They stared at each other for a long moment. Tension crackled.

“Do you think you can make it downstairs?”

She tipped her head to the side like a puppy who thought she heard something about *going for a walk*. “Downstairs?”

“I’m in the grotto.” He’d made sure to get here first. Whoever arrived first got

their choice of rooms. He'd made damn sure he got the single in the basement. Far away from everyone else.

She didn't respond. She didn't say a word. She turned tail and sprinted for the door leading to the staircase.

Naturally, he followed.

The bottom floor of the house was one big rumpus room with a single bedroom and bath on one end. It featured an enormous wide screen TV and a pool table and several comfortable sofas. But Cam had the bed in mind for this, his first time with Kristi.

And there would be others. Many others. He was resolute about that.

Determined.

He didn't count on her being just as determined as he.

As soon as they pounded down the stairs and rounded the banister into the rumpus room, she turned to him and began tugging his T-shirt out of his waistband. "Off," she demanded. "Take it off. I want to see you."

He didn't hesitate. Hell. What red-blooded man would? When a Rubenesque goddess demanded a man strip—a man stripped. He whipped off the offending garment and tossed it onto the pool table.

"You too," he commanded and then all thought escaped him as she complied,

yanking her blouse over her head without even unbuttoning it. “Holy fuck.”

All he could do was stare. Stare at her exquisite breasts, full and heavy and cupped in some kind of Victoria’s Secret torture device. Torture for men, that was. Her bra was lacy and black and had tantalizing curlicues that framed her milky globes in a way designed to drive a man insane.

He wanted to rip it from her, let her breasts spill out into his hands. But he didn’t. He traced the edge, exploring the provoking contrast of colors. She shuddered. Her jaw clenched. Her lips parted and her eyes glazed. When he

dropped a little lower to tease a fat nipple through the lace, she sighed. “Cam. I’m so wet.”

Of all the phrases in the English language, that was the one he couldn’t resist. Not at a moment like this. Not when it fell from those lush lips.

He made a sound even he didn’t quite recognize, something bestial. It vibrated on the skeins of air between them. And then there was no air between them. There was nothing between them but her wisp of a bra. He plastered his bare chest against hers and walked her back until she bumped into the pool table. He lifted her up and set her on the edge and took her mouth with his.

As exhilarating as their first kiss had been, this one was better.

Holy mother of God, was it better. He consumed her and she gave it right back, full measure. Operating on instinct, pure animal lust, he unsnapped her jeans. She grunted and leaned to the side so he could peel them off. Well, not off, but down to her boots. He couldn't be bothered with those. Not now.

He changed angles and nibbled her lips, fucked her gently with his tongue. She scored his neck with her nails.

When he teased that warm wet slit through the cotton of her panties, she began to shake. A whimper passed between them. He wasn't entirely sure

whose it was.

He slipped beneath the band and touched her again. Skin to skin. And fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

She was dripping wet. Slick. Scalding.

He scraped over her clit, circled it, rubbed. She stiffened. Saliva pooled in her mouth. He drank it in, relishing in the taste of her mindless desire. For him.

If he wasn't mistaken—and he didn't think he was—she'd come. Just then. To a tiny touch.

*Holy. Fuck.*

Insanity raged.

Need raged.

Pounding passion, a mindless urge

possessed him.

He flipped her over and yanked down her panties, so she stood before him, bared to him, bent over the table, legs splayed as far as her pooling jeans would allow. Without a word, he unzipped his jeans, yanked out his cock, and thrust it home.

He nearly came when she clenched around him. Delight stabbed his every nerve as he sank into her welcoming cunt. She was everything—everything—he'd ever craved. Tight and slick and warm and so fucking wonderful.

“Kristi. God.”

She made a sound in response, but his brain couldn't make sense of it. So he



just said her name, again and again, in tandem with every thrust. She pushed back against him, arching into his lunges, growling and snarling and sobbing in turn.

He felt her tension rise. It took him with it, ratcheting him higher and higher. His balls tightened into hard little nuts, his cock swelled, dripped with anticipation of the coming storm. His manic plunges became shorter, harder, deeper.

She warbled a moan and came around him, shuddered around him, sending new shards of mind-blowing pleasure skating up his spine. Her weeping sheath sucked at his sanity with each and every stroke.

In some corner of his mind, he heard a door open, wafting voices, laughter. And then clomping footsteps overhead.

Panic rose.

Kristi heard it too. She glanced back at him, her eyes wide. “C-Cam!” she whispered.

“Hush. Hush.” He was too close to stop now. Too close to an all-consuming rapture. The thought of stopping made the savage beast within him rise up and howl.

He tightened his hold on her luxuriant hips, loving the way his fingers sank deep. He yanked her toward him, held her still and pummeled her. The sight of his cock disappearing again and again,

sliding between those amazing ass cheeks put him over the edge.

Well, that, and her orgasm. Different than the first she'd had, this one was stronger. A powerful demand for his cum that could not be denied.

Her entire body quaked. A 9.6 on the Richter scale followed by a series of delirious aftershocks. She buried her face in her arm and bellowed. The sound was muffled, but perhaps not muffled enough. Cam didn't bother to worry that anyone upstairs heard. He didn't care. He didn't care about anything but swamping her, filling her, flooding her.

And it came. He came.

Hot, scorching, delicious release.

Sweet relief, twined with the most  
powerful bliss he'd ever known.

Because he was in her.

In Kristi.

The way he'd ached to be.

Finally.

And she'd been magnificent.

## Chapter Three

Kristi had no time to recover. Her heart was still pounding, rivulets of pleasure still cascading through her when the door at the top of the stairs opened and Lane hollered down, “Cam? You there?”

“Y-yes.” His voice was wobbly, broken, as though he’d worn it out, growling and muttering and pleading with her in his passion.

But his brain had snapped back into gear, thank God. For, as she would have lain there, sprawled nearly naked on the pool table, a quivering pile of mush, *he* somehow *knew* Lane would be coming down the stairs.

As those ominous footsteps descended, Cam yanked up her jeans and helped her to her feet to fasten them—though she had to lean against the pool table for support because something seemed to be wrong with her knees—and then he yanked up his own. He collected their discarded clothes, tossed over her shirt and tugged on his.

As she stood there, dumbfounded, fumbling with her blouse, he grabbed the billiard rack, neatly confining the balls at the far end of the table, and whipped it off, sending the balls rolling in all directions.

Before she knew what had happened, certainly before Lane reached the bottom

of the stairs, she was fully dressed with a pool cue in her hand, and Cam was leaning over the table, staring at the white ball with fixed attention, preparing to shoot.

It was a completely innocent scene, and quite convincing, she supposed, if there hadn't been the distinct smell of sex in the air.

Hopefully Lane wouldn't notice.

He rounded the banister and shot her a broad grin. His sandy blond hair flopped into his eyes and he brushed it back. "Oh, hey Kristi. I didn't know you were coming."

She smiled, and then winced as Cam took his shot. The crack of the balls

seemed terribly loud. For some reason, none of the balls managed to find a pocket. “It was a last-minute thing. I needed to get away.”

Lane snorted. “I know the feeling.”

Kristi had a hard time believing Lane ever felt the need to escape a banal existence. He was the son and heir of business magnate Reese Daniels. A trust fund baby, like so many of their neighbors on the island. He flitted through his life on a whim, never worrying about mortgages or cell phone payments or how the hell he was going to afford a car that actually worked.

He hadn't wanted to join his dad's firm when he graduated—so he just



hadn't, choosing instead to get his Master's and then a Ph.D. in history. Now he taught at the U. Other than his divorce from Lucy, nothing bad had ever happened to him. In his whole existence.

Lane Daniels was the reason Kristi knew, without a doubt, that life wasn't fair.

But he was a nice guy and a good friend. And she liked him.

“So...” Cam took another shot, though it was hardly his turn. “How was Darby's?”

“Rowdy. Crowded. Some screeching band.” Lane toyed with a little cube of cue chalk.

“You're back early.” Cam shot him a

look that could have been construed as accusatory. If Lane had been paying attention.

Lane shrugged. “We decided to move the party here.” He sighed. “Maybe we’re getting old?”

“Never say it.” Cam tossed his cue onto the table. Apparently the game was over.

“Who’s here?” Kristi asked, replacing her cue in its holder on the wall.

“Holt and Drew. Cassie. Your sister’s here too.” Lane nodded up the stairs.

“Oh.” *Crap.* What was Bella doing here? That was all she needed. Her baby

sister sniffing out what had just happened. And Bella would know. She always knew things she wasn't supposed to know.

When Lane and Lucy had divorced—and neither had wanted to give up the vacation house—they'd agreed to share it in a co-op with their friends, whose leases went to pay the astronomical property taxes. It was the only thing they hadn't battled over. Bella had been included in the co-op.

This had been uncomfortable for Kristi, given their history, but Bella was good friends with Cassie and Emily, two of the other Dawgs, so there was no escaping it. Kristi tried to make nice

whenever they were forced to spend time together, but Bella clung to her resentment as though it was a life buoy in the middle of a stormy sea.

You'd think she'd be over it by now.

Although, Kristi had to admit, she still felt the sting of guilt. Even now.

"I should go up," she said. "I haven't seen her in a month." She tried not to glance at Cam, even though she could feel his gaze on her.

"Yup," he grunted, racking the balls. "We should go up."

"I'll, um, meet you up there," Kristi said. She needed to visit the facilities first. And tidy up. The guys nodded and headed off without her.

When she emerged through the door to the great room, Andrew gave a whoop, loped over to her side and swung her up in his muscular arms. He twirled her around, lifting her off her feet. “Ka-risti!” he crooned, giving her a big smooch on the cheek. “I haven’t seen you in a pig’s years.”

On one of the passes, Kristi caught Cam’s fierce expression. His hands were fisted at his side as though he was struggling to keep from punching someone.

When Drew finally put her down, Cassie hugged her as well, although it was a much more subdued offering. “How wonderful to see you.”

Holt waved, but didn't get up from the table and Bella, at the kitchen sink, shook her head. "I should have known that was your suitcase in the hall. And you left your plate on the table." It was gone now. Along with the smattering of empties. At least Kristi hoped they'd been empty. She vaguely remembered them tumbling onto the table when Cam pressed her back in a frenzy of passion...

Heat rose again. To cover her consternation, she snapped, "Sorry *Mom.*"

Seriously? Bella lecturing *Kristi* on being messy?

She was about to say something more

—perhaps something even more acerbic, when Cam stepped in and saved her.

“My fault. I dragged her downstairs for...a game of pool.” She was sure she was the only one to catch that little pause.

She tucked her hair behind her ear and took a seat at the table. He sat next to her, letting his thigh relax against hers.

Great. More heat.

“I’m so glad you came,” Cassie said with a grin that transformed her face from serene Asian goddess to mischievous minx. Her smoky brown eyes twinkled. “One more chick to even the numbers. Maybe we won’t have to watch stupid car races all weekend. You

can bunk with me and Bella. We're in the big room. It'll be like a slumber party."

Holt groaned. "I'm right next door. There'll probably be giggling all night long."

Cassie leaned into him and batted her lashes. "We'll paint our toenails and talk about boys. You're welcome to drop by. I'll braid your hair." She ran her fingers through the long dark locks he usually kept confined in a ponytail.

"Ugh." Holt sent a pleading look at the other men, mouthing "Save me."

Fortunately everyone was paying attention to their lighthearted repartee so no one noticed Kristi's flinch when Cam



rubbed his leg against hers under the table. She shot him a playful glare and he winked.

Drew dropped into the chair next to Holt and flipped open a beer. “I’m right there with you, brother.” He riffled his short blond spikes and glanced from Cam to Lane. “Unless one of you want to share your single?”

The two men—one who’d had the foresight to arrive first and snag the best room, and the other, who owned the house and therefore always got the master—shook their heads in tandem.

Drew chuckled. “It was worth a shot.” He fixed his attention on Cassie. “Did you bring Big Bertha?”

“No,” Cassie growled. It was no secret how much she hated being teased about Big Bertha. That’s probably why they did it every chance they got.

“Excellent.” Drew and Holt high-fived. “At least we won’t have to listen to her practice into the wee hours.”

Kristi couldn’t hold her tongue. Not at this. “I love the cello, Cass. You can play for me anytime.”

Cam sent a scorching glower at Drew, but Kristi knew it was completely in jest. When it came to teasing Cassie, Cam was one of the worst. “How dare you make fun of Big Bertha?”

“Stop calling her that!”

The guys all dissolved into laughter.

Lane wheezed, “*Her*. Did you hear? She called it *her*.”

Cassie crossed her arms over her chest and put out a lip. “Just for that, I *will* keep you up all night.”

The banter continued, with everyone chiming in, but Kristi completely lost the thread of the conversation, because Cam brushed her knee. Then trailed higher, drawing a sizzling line up her thigh. Her mouth went dry. Her vision blurred. He inched closer. And closer. And closer.

Had her clit ever thrummed that hard? That fast?

Just when she thought he was going to do it, just when she thought he was going to cup her tingling slit—*right there*

*under the table in front of everyone*— he reversed his path. She nearly groaned in frustration. She shot him a frown and he grinned like a monkey.

*Bastard.*

And then it occurred to her. What was good for the goose...

He wanted to play tease the pussy? Oh, she could play.

She shifted in her seat and hooked his ankle with hers. Slowly, she drew it closer, spreading his legs. He stiffened when she surreptitiously dropped her hand into her lap, then swallowed a gulp as she walked her fingers onto his thigh.

It was an odd angle and hardly comfortable, but Kristi didn't care. She

leaned back in her chair so she could reach—

Holy Hannah. He was hard.

Again.

Already!

She froze when she encountered that stiff pike. Then moved into action again. Forcing her features into an intent expression, making a determined effort to laugh when everyone else laughed, nod when they nodded, she traced his length with a feather-light touch. He shivered. She glanced at him. His jaw was set, muscles bunched, as though his teeth were clenched. He turned his head and their gazes clashed. The intensity rolling off him made her belly flip.

He leaned closer and whispered,  
“You’re gonna pay for this, Ms. Cross.”

She bit the inside of her cheek and  
whispered back, with a devious squeeze,  
“I hope so, Mr. Jackson.”

Something flared in his eyes.  
Something primal and raw. She had the  
sense he was on the verge of wrenching  
her against him and taking her mouth in a  
savage kiss—despite their audience.

And she wouldn’t have cared.  
Because whatever beast lurked in him,  
prowled within her as well. She needed  
him, in that moment, the way she needed  
air.

“So, Kristi...”

Her name sounded like a claxon

across the table; it occurred to her that Holt hadn't needed to speak quite so sharply.

Of its own accord, her head swiveled toward him and her questing hand dropped away. Cam took it though, and held it against his thigh. She focused on Holt's expression. Had that been displeasure on his face, just before he'd settled back into his slick, urbane, blasé persona?

“Um, yes, Holt?”

“I was just wondering where Rolf is.”

*Rolf?* It took a moment for her to remember who Rolf even was. “Ah.” She looked down at the table. “We, um,

kind of broke up today.” The chorus of exclamations rounding the table surprised her. She didn’t even bother to sort them out. “It’s been a helluva day.” In oh so many ways.

Cassie tipped her head to the side. “Sweetie. What happened?”

“Savannah.”

“No shit,” Drew muttered.

“Umm hmm. In the stock room. Lucy and I went back to check on a shipment of Arabica and there they were.”

“Son of a bitch,” Lane muttered, though he had no room to talk. Lucy had walked in on him doing exactly the same thing. Not with Savannah, but it hardly mattered. No one mentioned it. But



surely they were all thinking it.

Holt leaned forward, bracing his arms on the table. “So...temporary or permanent?”

“Permanent.” Definitely permanent. Wangdoodles in strange va-jay-jays were kind of a deal breaker for her.

“Good.” Something in Holt’s tight tone snagged her attention. Or maybe it was the way he narrowed in on her, as though he was pinning her, fixing her in his sights. As though he was a hunter and she a hapless deer.

Cam noticed his friend’s heightened attention as well, and stiffened. Well, bristled, really. Kristi gave his leg a little squeeze. Holt was one hot piece of

man flesh, but they all knew of his... proclivities. As attractive as he was, Kristi had never been tempted to so much as encourage him. His appetites were far too dark for her liking.

“Now maybe you can date a *real* man.” This Holt said with a steamy glance. There was no doubt which man he had in mind.

A vision of herself strapped to a St. Andrew’s cross being lashed mercilessly as she called him “Master” and “Sir” flickered through her mind and she laughed. She couldn’t help it.

*As if.*

Playing “pirate captive” was about her kink speed. Holt needed a woman

who could meet him halfway. Maybe more than halfway.

She was not that woman.

“Well, I for one will be delighted to see the north end of Rolf going south,” Bella said. “So will Dad. He was scared to death you’d marry him and end up supporting his lazy ass for the rest of your life.”

Kristi frowned. “I don’t think I would have married him.”

“People tend to drift into relationships. Very few actively *choose*.” Her gaze snapped back to Holt. Why was it everything he said seemed to be a *double entendre*? “You want to be one of the ones who chooses, Kristi.”

Cam's fingers tightened on hers at the way Holt said her name, but she didn't think it was intentional. It was probably annoyance. Holt had said it slow and tender, like a caress.

She had the distinct impression he was seducing her.

Really?

After years in an emotional desert, she was being showered with attention? From two super-hot guys? In the same night?

There was only one she wanted of course.

The one she'd always wanted.

And just had.

She wanted him again.

She glanced at him and smiled slowly, running a thumb over the rough material of his jeans. He moved imperceptibly closer.

Cassie yawned. “Woof, I’m tired as a Dawg.”

“Woof. Woof,” the guys responded, harkening back to their college days. Woof was their code word for *let’s blow this pop stand*.

“Yeah. I’m heading for bed.” Drew stood, triggering a great scraping of chairs as they all followed suit. “It’s been a rough week.”

“Oh?” Bella asked, carrying her glass to the fridge and filling it with water. “Lots of fires?”

Drew snorted. “I wish. At least fighting a fire is exciting. This week we broke in a new recruit. I swear. I don’t know where they dig up some of these guys.”

Lane clapped him on the shoulder. “Ah, the younger generation.”

“Shut the fuck up, you ass. We’re hardly geezers.”

“Aren’t we? It’s not ten o’clock and we’re all going to bed. On a Friday night.” Lane quirked a brow and headed for his room, the only one on the main floor. “Night y’all.”

“Night,” everyone chorused.

While they were all focused on Lane, Cam leaned in and whispered, “Come to

my room tonight.”

Kristi blanched. “I can’t!” she burred. “Cassie and Bella will find out.”

“Wait ‘til they fall asleep. Come on, Kristi. Don’t leave me like this.” He pressed her hand against his erection and surged into her for good measure.

She smirked. “You started it. What were you thinking, teasing me like that? That I’d just sit back and take it?”

“The thought crossed my mind.”

She pursed her lips and repeated his snarky words from earlier. “Well, that’s what you get for thinking.”

He hooted with laughter. He was about to respond when Holt, who’d been

heading for the stairs, called back,  
“Aren’t you coming, Kristi?”

Cam’s teeth came together with an audible click.

“In a minute,” she said and then, just to placate Cam, who looked like he was about to pop a gasket, she added, in an undertone, “I’ll try to come.”

“Try hard,” he growled.

She shot him an impish grin. “You can play with yourself while you wait.”

Judging from his glower, he didn’t appreciate the suggestion in the slightest.



## Chapter Four

It took Cassie and Bella forever to fall asleep.

Just when Kristi thought they'd dropped off, one of them would say something and the other would respond and a muted, sincere conversation would ensue—despite Kristi's deliberate snoring.

How rude of them.

Chattering away as though someone in the next bed wasn't trying very hard to pretend to be asleep.

They finally drifted into silence. Kristi strained to listen to their breathing, only stirring when she was certain they were asleep. She eased off

her covers and tiptoed from the room, glad she'd brought her full-length nightie so she didn't have to flit through the house in her teddy. Although Cam might have enjoyed that.

Of course, when she packed, she had no idea she'd be plotting an illicit tryst. Or she might have tossed the teddy in.

It seemed like every stair creaked as she made her way down to the great room. She winced with each step. The room was dark, cloaked in shadows. While she did enjoy the stillness of the night, she didn't appreciate stubbing her toe on the coffee table. Thankfully she thought to muffle her curse.

Her yelp—when a dark form stirred

and rose from one of the easy chairs—  
was a different matter entirely.

Holt's low chuckle resonated through  
her.

“Shit, Holt. You scared me to death.”

“I was wondering when you'd come  
down.”

She frowned at him through the  
gloom. “What made you think I'd come  
down?”

He stepped closer. “I'm not blind.”

“Blind?”

“Yeah, I saw what was going on  
between you and Cam. I figured you'd  
make your way to his room sometime.”

“And you waited up—why?”

“Isn’t it obvious?”

“No.” It was annoying. That’s what it was. All she wanted was to continue her journey into the bowels of the house and slip into the bed of the man who was waiting for her. And hard for her. And—

“I meant what I said, Kristi. About choosing. But in order to choose, a woman has to know she has a choice.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Us.” The clouds broke just then and a faint shaft of moonlight sighed into the room. The look on his face was alarming. *Hungry.*

Her mouth went dry. “Holt, there *is* no us.”

“There could be. God damn it, if I’d

known you were coming this weekend, that you'd finally given that smarmy ass his walking papers, I'd have been here waiting for you. Instead, Cam got the opening I've been hoping for."

She shook her head. "No, Holt."

"No, what?"

"Just no. It's always been Cam for me. Always. Ever since...well, always." She set her hand on his arm, just to comfort him.

Big mistake.

He caught her wrist in a tight cuff and yanked her against him. He was big and strong and held her in a vise. "Maybe this will change your mind."

His mouth settled on hers, hard and

demanding.

If she'd been any other woman, she would have been moved. She would have been seduced. He knew what he was doing and kissed like the very devil.

But he wasn't Cam.

She let him finish, just so he could tell himself he'd tried. But she didn't respond. Sometimes apathy spoke more powerfully than resistance. When he lifted his head with a hopeful expression she smiled. Sadly. "Nope."

"Shit Kristi...that was a damn good kiss."

"It was very pleasant."

"Pleasant?" he squawked.

She shrugged. "Sorry, buddy." She

probably shouldn't have emphasized the word, but she needed to make a point.

Clearly, he missed it.

“Okay then. How about this?” He kissed her again, this time with a tinge of desperation. He nearly suffocated her with his presence, pressing into her and clutching her and working her lips.

He kissed her and kissed her and kissed her. And he didn't seem inclined to stop anytime soon.

Kristi forbore tapping her toes, but she was getting a little impatient. What she wanted—all she wanted—was to be with Cam. After a while, she tried to gently disengage, but he wouldn't release her. She was on the verge of

wracking him in the balls, which she really hated to do to a friend, when she was ripped from his arms and flung across the room. She landed with an “oof” on the leather sofa.

A sharp crack resounded, along with a feral growl. Something that sounded like, “*Mine.*”

Holt reeled back and collapsed in the lounge.

Cam turned to her with a ferocious glower and whipped her into his arms. His body hummed with tight tension. She suspected he would have tossed her over his shoulder if he'd needed to.

He didn't need to.

She was right where she wanted to



be.

He'd lifted her so effortlessly, it made her feel like a delicate china doll. She wrapped her arms around his neck and snuggled closer as he carried her down to the basement. She loved that he'd stormed to her rescue wearing only his pajama bottoms. His chest was bare and broad and warm.

“My hero,” she whispered into his ear, and he relaxed, but just a bit.

“I was wondering what was taking you so long.”

“Bella kept chatting.”

“Bella's a chatterbox. She needs a man to take her in hand.”

“Mmm. I like the sound of that.” She

toyed with his nipple. He nearly missed a step so she decided not to do any more of that until they were finished with the stairs. “Would you like to take me in hand?”

“I’d like to turn you over my knee.”

She chuckled. “Me? What did I do?”

He gaped at her. “Other than passionately kissing Holt?”

“I wasn’t kissing Holt, and you know it.”

“Really?” He crossed the rumpus room and shouldered into his bedroom and tossed her onto the bed. She bounced. “Then what the hell was that?” He waved at the ceiling.

Kristi straightened her nightgown,

primly covering her bare calves. “*He* was kissing *me*.”

His brows bunched. “Not okay. Do you know what seeing that did to me? God, Kristi. It ripped me up inside. I wanted to *kill* him.”

“He had to know.”

“Know?” He hit a warbling tone that would make America Idol contestants green with envy. “What did he have to know?”

“That I feel nothing for him.”

That shut him up. He stopped, stock-still and stared at her. “Nothing?” This, in a little boy voice.

Other than shock that two of her longtime friends had declared their

intentions in the space of one evening?  
“Not a thing.” She wormed her way off the bed and sashayed toward him, swinging her hips. “Less than nothing, in fact.” She stood on tiptoe to press a kiss on his lips. “It was like kissing my brother. Or my uncle. Or Professor Layhea.”

“Professor Layhea?” Against his will, his lips tweaked. She could tell he was fighting it. His pout was kind of adorable. “Professor Layhea *was* pretty sexy.”

She kissed him again. Made her way along the line of his jaw to his lobe. Dabbed her tongue in his ear. He shuddered.

“I do find nostril-beards *über* sexy. And older men who take their baths in Old Spice—ha cha cha.”

His brow rose. His fingers curved around her waist and he pulled her closer. His cock stirred against her belly. “Did you ever kiss Professor Layhea?”

“Just the once.” She laughed when his eyes boggled at her boldfaced lie. She rubbed against his growing ardor. “I had to. I needed an A.”

“Hussy.” He eased her back onto the mattress pinning her there with his hardness, his heat. He hovered over her, staring at her for a long while. Then he slowly lowered his head and kissed her.

It didn't take long for their teasing mood to completely evaporate. It was replaced by a crackling arousal. His cock pressed into her with an uncomfortable insistence. She wiggled a little bit and he shifted so it pressed against her cleft instead. He rubbed, up and down, like a cat, until she moaned.

“I shouldn't want you again,” he murmured against her lips.

“Of course you should.”

“You drained me completely fucking dry earlier.”

“We forgot to use a condom.”

He nibbled her neck. “You're on the pill.”

She hiked up her nightgown, enough

so she could hook her legs around his butt. Tugged him closer. “I can’t believe how many times you made me come.”

“How many?”

“I lost count.”

“Really? I noticed two.”

“Oh, there were more than two.” She scored his back with her nails; he shivered. “It was probably a fluke though.”

He reared back. “What?”

“You know. On account of the fact I was so horny.”

“How, um, how horny were you?”

“Pretty horny.”

“How long... I mean, how long since

—”

She drew his head back down. “I don’t want to talk about it. Point is, it was probably a fluke.”

“It wasn’t a fluke. I’ll have you know, I’m damn good in bed.”

“We’ll see.”

“What? *We’ll see?*”

“We haven’t done it in a bed.” This, she stated rather prosaically. “We’ll just see if you can do it again. Make me come like that again.”

A slow smile quirked his lips. “That sounds like a challenge.”

“I do believe it was.”

“Well, madam, if there’s one thing Cameron Jackson cannot do, it’s resist a



challenge.” He teased her hem higher and she laughed.

“Yes,” she said. “I know.”

Funny.

Funny and sexy and damn stimulating.

That’s what Kristi was.

Perfect.

She even wiggled out of that prissy nightgown when he rolled to the side, pulling it over her head and tossing it over his shoulder. His breath caught in his throat as her breasts bobbed free.

Glorious.

“Well,” she said with a tiny frown.

“What are you waiting for?”

“I’m not waiting. I’m savoring.” He cupped her firm full mounds. Their weight delighted him. Her nipples perked up, even as he stared at them. He couldn’t resist drawing one, then the other, into his mouth. Delicious.

She squirmed at that, rubbing against his cock.

He pressed her breasts together and did what he’d been yearning to do since he’d seen her in her swimsuit last summer, buried his face between them and drew in her scent. Exquisite. She smelled like summer. Like summer and talcum and woman. A groan hovered at the base of his throat. She was so soft, so pliant. Everything about her was

welcoming.

“Hey, mister,” she muttered. “You’re not pleasing me. You’re pleasing yourself.”

He chuckled and lifted his head. “Oh, I’ll please you. I’ll have you screaming for mercy in a minute.”

“You wish.”

“*You* wish.”

“I guess my challenge wasn’t challenging enough.”

He scooted up, until they were nose to nose, tunneled his fingers through her lush brown hair and held her still as he kissed her. Kissed her as though his life depended upon it. Which he suspected, in one tiny corner of his soul, it did.

He could kiss her forever, he thought. He could nestle in and lap and lick and suckle those lush pink lips. He could crawl inside and explore with his tongue and nibble and nip until eternity came knocking on the door.

His cock had other ideas.

As he seduced her, coaxed her, cajoled her with his mouth, the monster rose, until he was so hard and full he ached. The only way to assuage the nagging hunger was to press against her. Even that wasn't enough.

He wanted to pull down his pajama bottoms and slip into her creamy depths. But she'd issued a challenge. And he was determined to answer it. He wanted

to make her come. Make her so crazy for him she'd beg, plead, howl to be fucked.

He could think of a couple ways to accomplish that. He decided to go for out and out teasing. Slowly, he made his way over her chin to her neck, feasting there until she sighed and cooed and dug her nails into his shoulders. He circled her breasts, placing tiny kisses on the very edge, where the swells just began, ignoring the nipples altogether. He was only half done when she lost her patience.

“Damn it, Cam,” she reached for her nipples herself.

He grabbed her wrists. “Ah, ah ah. Put your hands over your head, missy.”

“What?”

“Go on. Up over your head.” His grin at her expression was, perhaps, a trifle evil.

“But—”

“But nothing. This is the Cam Jackson show. You are a canvas, and I’m painting on you. Come on. Do it.”

With a gusty sigh, she raised her arms.

“Good girl. Leave them there.”

“Get back to work. And quit driving me crazy.”

“I want you crazy.” To prove his point, he went back to work, making sure to go as slow as he could bear. Before long she was twitching restlessly.

As enjoyable as this torment was, he wanted, needed to continue his journey. Every inch of her was a new delight to relish. He made his way over her torso, appreciating the way the rise of her ribcage plunged to a flat belly. He spent a while exploring that creamy expanse before he suckled the rim of her bellybutton and dabbed in his tongue.

She quivered when he shifted downward. Sucked in a breath, held it, as he neared her haven. He loved that her thighs stole apart as he drew closer. That she wailed when he passed on by in favor of sampling the delicious skin of her thigh, the sensitive spot behind her knee and the ticklish arch of her graceful

foot.

He would have spent more time on her toes, but even as she was steeped in anticipation, so was he.

He made his way up the other leg, although this trip was much quicker than the downward journey. He'd lost patience for this teasing game. He wanted to taste her and he wanted it bad.

She whimpered a little when he finally reached the crux of her thighs. He reverently opened her with his thumbs and stared at her beautiful hidden pearl. Then blew. Just blew. One slow, tender exhalation. Her body seized. Even as he watched, a glistening of cream seeped from her. He shuddered at the



knowledge she was ready.

But she wasn't ready enough.

He drew a finger along her slit, intending to make his way to her hard, tight clit. But her heat, her slickness stayed his hand. He glanced up at her, lust searing him.

“What?” she whispered. “What’s wrong?”

“You’re so wet.”

“Of course I’m wet. You’ve been teasing me for hours.”

“Not hours.”

“It feels like hours.”

“I haven’t even done the back.”

She shot up on her elbows and glared

at him. “You’re not doing the back.” And then, “At least not tonight. Come on. Finish it.” She put her palm to his head and tried to push him down, down into her simmering nest.

He pushed back. “Did I say you could move your arms?”

“What?”

“Go on. Lay back down. Arms over your head. Let me do my thing.”

“But—”

“You don’t want me to tie them up there, do you?”

Her eyes widened and she nibbled her lower lip as she considered his threat. And then she said something that sent lust snaking through him. “Not

tonight.” She plopped back down and lifted her arms again, spreading her thighs wider. “Okay. Continue.”

He loved the tremor in her voice.

She was on the edge, but he was right there with her. He didn't make her wait any longer. He lowered his head and drew his tongue lightly along her cleft. Her scent, her taste, sank in, grabbing him with vicious claws. He delved deeper, teasing the opening with his tongue, drinking her in. His nose nudged her clit and she flinched, groaned.

Poor thing. It really needed his attention.

So he returned, tasting his way to the crux of her vulva where that aching

bundle of nerves awaited. He circled it, glorying in her response, her cries, the impatient thrusts of her hips. When he took her between his lips and sucked, she screamed. The sound was muffled. He suspected if he looked up, he would see she'd draped her arm over her mouth to hold in the sound.

But he wasn't looking up. No way. No how.

He was too engrossed. Too fascinated by his discoveries. Too busy experimenting.

Ah. If he licked, just like that, she would thrash and if he nibbled the underside of her clit, she would mewl. When he sucked her in again, she

shuddered and shook.

He eased two fingers into her slick cunt and drew on that button again, and enjoyed the feel of her orgasm around him.

Enjoyed, yes, but he was damn ready for his own release.

Nevertheless, he spent considerable time probing her depths, searching. And he found it. That place, deep inside where the nerves were so raw they couldn't be denied. She seized again—gasping and wailing and quaking—as he stroked it. She clenched him so fiercely he was afraid for his sanity. He could only think of that tight grasp on his cock.

Aw, hell. He couldn't wait. Not a

moment longer.

She'd come at least three times—that he'd counted—that was going to have to do.

He yanked off his pajama bottoms. His cock sprang out, primed and ready for action.

“Are you ready?” he asked, his voice gruff, needy.

“Oh yes, Cam,” she moaned. “Fuck me. Fuck me now.”

She should be annoyed. He'd teased her mercilessly, all while making her keep her arms over her head so she couldn't even participate—or interfere. Couldn't direct him. He'd nearly driven

her mad before he finally let her come, but that last climax had been the most powerful she'd ever known.

She should be annoyed.

She couldn't be. She was too damn desperate for outrage.

Even as he'd brought her to bliss time and time again, he'd kept urging her on. Higher. Higher. Hunger raged in her womb. She ached for the feel of his hard, hot cock. She wanted him, needed him to slide in, deep and full. She needed him to come home.

He levered up on his knees and hooked his arms under her thighs, pulling her forward. His cock stood, high and proud on his belly, though the weight of

it caused a slight sideways droop. It was a perfect cock.

She'd felt him in her, but never seen him before. A sudden urge to taste him overcame her and saliva pooled in her mouth. But as strong as the urge was, she knew this wasn't the time.

This was the time for fucking.

“Do it.”

His nostrils flared as she issued her command. He fisted his cock and seated himself at the mouth of her pussy. The tip kissed her hot skin and he hissed. “God, Kristi.”

“Do it. Please.” She wiggled a little to encourage him. She loved the way the smooth head of his cock felt rubbing



against her slit.

He eased in.

Not hard and hot and fast as she'd hoped, but heavens, slow was even better. It gave her time to luxuriate in each exquisite sensation. He filled her, broached her with a steady, even onslaught. Every nerve in that tight channel sang as he stretched her.

She cried out when he withdrew, but he immediately reversed direction and filled her again, this time more deeply. And out. And in. And again. Each measured plunge went just a fraction of an inch farther.

He was doing it again. Driving her crazy. But she loved it.

She wrapped her legs around his waist and tried to pull him all the way in. It didn't work. He just chuckled and kept up the deliberate torment.

So she decided to torment him right back.

She squeezed.

He flinched. "Don't do that," he growled.

"Why not?"

"Seriously Kristi. Don't. I want to do this right. I want to make you come again."

She tried not to put out a lip, but... really? "Well, you're not doing it right." The look on his face, like an offended little boy, made her laugh. And then he

wincing, because when she laughed, she squeezed again.

His eyes took on an unholy light. His grip on her hips tightened. He pulled out, almost all the way. And plunged in.

Everything within her constricted. Every fiber of her being sang. A glorious bliss rumbled through her in wave upon wave upon wave.

She was barely aware that he was still moving, that he'd found the spot, the one he'd stroked before, the one that sent shards of electricity sizzling up and down her spine. He'd found it and was massaging it, just teasing it, back and forth, while she blossomed around him.

And then he reached his limit as well.

He came to the end of his tether. His patience for teasing ran out.

He set his hips into a frantic, wild rhythm, the hard manic thrusts she craved. Short and hard and deep. His cock kissed her womb and she exploded again, writhing and gasping and fluttering around his length.

He was there, on the verge, she could feel it in the intensity of his crazed lunges, in the tenor of his moans, in the sweat sheening his skin. The scent of arousal, hers and his, twined, creating a heady perfume that clung to the air.

His cock swelled.

His hips churned.

Her body wept.

Sanity fled.

Somewhere in the deep miasma of roiling bliss, she felt the hot rushing tide of his orgasm as he flooded her. She gloried in it. Welcomed it. Jet after jet of scalding passion. All for her.

It seemed to go on forever.

Finally, he slowed and pulled out, but gradually, reluctantly. She certainly didn't want him to withdraw. Not ever. But he took her mouth with his, possessed her with his tongue in a breathy kiss to make up for the loss.

Then he collapsed at her side, gasping.

They said nothing.

Didn't need to.

When he recovered, he pulled her into his arms and held her, gently stroking her skin while she fell asleep. Stroking her, as though he couldn't bear to let her go.

## Chapter Five

Kristi woke up sometime before dawn and gazed at him through the shadows. Cam Jackson. Asleep at her side. Amazing.

He looked so innocent and adorable in his slumber, sprawled out naked, snuffling slightly.

Also, hot.

So hot.

She thought about kissing him awake, teasing him as he'd teased her, but she wanted to get back to her room before Bella and Cassie awoke. So she quietly gathered her nightgown, slipped it over her head and tiptoed from the room.

The great room was empty.

Apparently Holt had survived his bludgeoning. She tried to feel sorry about that, but couldn't. She'd told him no, after all. A man had to listen, no matter how dominating he thought he was.

She made her way into her room, and glanced at the silent lumps in the other two beds. Thank God they were still asleep.

Bella especially.

She didn't know why keeping her affair with Cam from her sister mattered so much. There'd been a day when they'd been close, told each other everything. She'd screwed that up, of course. It had taken years of work to



achieve the fragile comfort they had with each other. But lately something had changed between them. Everything had gone sour again. Kristi had no idea why.

She slipped under her covers, shivering at the kiss of the cool sheets, and closed her eyes. But she didn't sleep. She replayed her amazing tryst with Cam over and over in her head. And she wondered...would they do it again? And when?

She must have drifted off at some point, because when she opened her eyes once more, sunlight was streaming into the room and the smell of brewing coffee teased her nostrils.

The other beds were empty.

She flung off her covers and pulled on a pair of jeans, a funky T-shirt and her boots. Skipping her shower in her haste to see him again, she headed downstairs.

The great room was empty, but she could see Bella standing on the deck staring out at the water, sipping a mug of coffee. Kristi poured herself a cup and, girding her loins, joined her sister at the rail.

It was a beautiful day. The sunlight skipped over the water creating glittering diamond trails. Seagulls wheeled and cawed in the sky. The briny scent of the sea clung to the gentle breeze. In the distance a fin surfaced, followed by the rise of a magnificent

orca's fluke.

Bella glanced at her and then turned back toward the vista. "Morning."

"Good morning." Kristi tried to sound chipper—to balance her sister's morose mood. "How did you sleep?"

"Shitty."

Her heart stuttered. "Really?"

Deep laughter rose from the terraced yard and Kristi glanced down. Holt and Cam were splitting wood on a stump. Lane lounged in a beach chair, holding a beer and supervising.

Of course her attention zeroed in on Cam. He was so hot, dressed in tight jeans and a wool shirt-jacket. With the axe in hand, decked out in plaid, he

could be a hunky lumberjack. A smile curled her lips.

Bella snorted.

The sharp sound caught Kristi's attention. "What?"

She didn't expect Bella to spin on her in a fury. She certainly didn't expect the vitriol and hostility of her words. "I know about the two of you."

Her breath stalled in her throat. She swallowed. *Shit.*

"I was awake when you left the room. And I was awake when you finally came back. I can't believe you. One day. One day after dumping your boyfriend of three years and you're already in some other guy's bed? Un-fucking-

believable.”

Kristi didn't know what to say. Yes, it was true. But was it really so wrong? Did she really deserve such animosity?

She shrugged. “It's just a rebound thing.”

As surprising as Bella's anger had been, the tears surprised her more. “You *knew* I liked him. You knew!”

Kristi blinked. God. No. She hadn't known. “I—”

“Oh, shut up. I don't want to hear it.” She glared at the guys who were stacking wood on the pile. “I should have realized when you mentioned you and Rolf were done. I should have known. I saw the way he ogled you. Like

he wanted to eat you up.”

Bella turned her head away, but Kristi couldn't miss the falling tears. They stained the sleeves of her sister's hoodie with dark spots. And although Bella was prickly at the moment, and probably wouldn't appreciate it, she put her arm around her shoulder. “I'm sorry, Bell. I didn't know you liked him like that. When he made that proposal last night, I just couldn't resist.”

Bella pursed her lips. “Is that what you call it? A proposal? Not what it looked like to me.”

Kristi's brows furrowed. When would Bella have seen them? They'd been so careful to keep their exchanges

private. “What are you talking about?”

But her sister didn't answer. Just then Cassie floated out onto the deck, funneling her fingers through her long black hair. “Morning peeps.” She glanced at Bella and then at Kristi, raising a brow in question. Kristi shook her head. Her telling look said, *don't ask. You don't want to know.*

And Cassie was savvy enough to keep her mouth shut.

But clearly this conversation wasn't finished. Before this weekend was over, she and Bella needed to have a heart to heart.

Cam tossed the last log onto the

woodpile and he and Holt secured the tarp over the wood. He shook the splinters and bark from his gloves and winced as pain shot through his hand. He pulled off the gloves and examined his bruised knuckles.

Holt rubbed his cheek. “Serves you right.”

“Yeah. Sorry about that.” He wasn’t. Not really. He’d do it again in a New York minute if he saw Holt’s lips anywhere near Kristi again. “But you know me. I’m territorial.”

“So am I.”

They faced off, two friends, staring each other down. Holt had to see it. He had to understand. Kristi was his. *His*.



Holt offered a lazy, cocksure grin. “Dude. No need to go all Neanderthal. I was just letting her know she had options.”

“You were eating her face.”

“It was a kiss.”

“She was struggling.”

“Only for a bit.”

Cam’s hackles rose. His fingers flexed.

Holt stepped back. “Relax. No need to pummel me again. I got the message.”

“Did you? And what message was that?”

His friend blew out a grunt. “She’s crazy about you.”

*She was crazy about him.* Something, much like elation, curled in his gut. “Um, what do you mean?”

“The whole time I was plying her with my seductive whiles, she was talking about you. Cam this. Cam that. It’s always been Cam for me.”

“Always been... What?”

“Kind of off-putting. Also, she kisses like a cold fish.”

The hell she did!

Holt grimaced. “Nothing. Not a hint of passion. No tongue, hell, no response at all. I must be losing my touch,” he muttered.

Relief, twined with the trails of aggravation, seeped into Cam’s soul.

“Good.” Fucking good. Fucking great.

“So...” Holt studied him from beneath thick, dark lashes. “Is it serious between you, or just a fling? Because if it’s just a fling, if she’s just fucking you to get it out of her system, I’d like to know.”

Okay. He was going to have to murder his best friend. Awesome.

Holt winced at his expression. “Whoa. Chillaxe, Cam. I was just kidding.”

“Were you? Were you really?”

“Quit snarling.” Holt glanced up at the deck and paled. “They’re watching us.”

“Who?” Cam spun around and froze.

Kristi stood on the deck gazing down at them with Bella and Cassie by her side.

“Don’t want them to see us fight, now do you?”

Cam snorted. “They might find it entertaining to watch me beat your ass.”

“Like you could beat my ass.”

“I could.”

“In your dreams.”

They both laughed. They knew they were evenly matched.

“I don’t know why you’re even interested in Kristi. She’s not your type.” Cam grabbed his axe and headed for the tool shed.

Holt fell in beside him. “She’s gorgeous.”

“But not your *type*.”

“Why do you say it like that?”

Cam raised a brow. “We all know about that club you go to in SoDo. You like submissive women who do what they’re told.” Definitely not Kristi. She never did what he told her.

“Ah, but sometimes it’s more fun when they’re disobedient.”

“Regardless, it takes a certain kind of woman to go for that.”

Holt shrugged. “I got a vibe from her. I thought...maybe...”

Cam gaped at him. “You got a *vibe* from her? *That* vibe?”

“A little bit. Yeah.”

*Holy shit.* “Really?”

“You should try spanking her sometime. See what happens.”

Cam boggled.

“Just sayin’, dude. Just sayin’.

Sometimes a little playful paddling can really heat up the bedroom.”

Cam shook his head. “If I tried that, she’d have me drawn and quartered.”

“Well, you’ll never know unless you give it a shot.”

Cam fit the axe into its holder, tossed his gloves onto the shelf and closed the shed, but his mind was in a whirl. He really wasn’t into hardcore kink, but the thought of Kristi with her hands tied, or her lush body draped over his lap was...

intriguing.

He glanced up at the deck. She sent him a smile and a wave.

Hmm. Maybe they should chat about it.

The idea had merit.

## Chapter Six

Everyone converged on the great room for lunch. It was hard getting Kristi alone with so many people milling around, but when the others were bumping into each other in the kitchen, whipping up some tacos, he caught her in the pantry.

He didn't bother with small talk. He just pulled her into his arms and kissed her.

“God, I missed you,” he whispered, when they were both breathless and trembling. “Where'd you go last night?”

“I had to get back before, well, before they woke up.”

All of a sudden, her obsession with



keeping their relationship from the others stuck in his craw. He wasn't sure why. Maybe because Holt had kissed her. Maybe because he knew Andrew liked her too. Maybe because he just wanted them all to know she was taken.

The certainty of that resolution curled in his gut.

“We should just tell them. Then you can stay as long as you want tonight. All night.” He dipped his head to kiss her again but he missed. She'd ducked away. Shock rippled through his system.

And then he got a glimpse of her face. His blood went cold at her expression.

“What? What is it?”

She stepped back and twined her

fingers, not meeting his eyes.

He wasn't gonna like this. Not in the least.

“I-I just think maybe we should... cool it?”

Something within him howled. His gut clenched into a tight ball and acid tickled at the back of his throat. Heat—maybe anger—prickled his nape. He thought about stepping closer, boxing her in, kissing her again, but instead he took a step back. “You, ah, didn't enjoy it?” How he got those words out, he couldn't fathom. His tongue was like a stone.

Her gaze snapped to him, wide and surprised. “Didn't like it? Hell, Cam. I loved it.” Relief gushed. But then she

frowned. “Did-didn’t you like it?”

“Best fucking night of my life. I’d like to top it tonight. Right now. Why don’t we, I dunno, go for a walk?” He didn’t fancy fucking in the woods, but hell, he needed her again. And the squirrels probably wouldn’t mind.

She shook her head. His mood would have plunged again, but she stepped closer and put her palm on his chest. Her scent curled around him. His pulse kicked up a notch. His body remembered how she’d felt coming to bliss around him. Mr. Happy awoke. With a vengeance. He shot up to full length in a heartbeat.

Softly, she said, “We can’t. We

shouldn't."

"What?" *Why the fuck not?* "Kristi, you better tell me what's going on."

"It's Bella."

*Bella?* What the hell did her sister have to do with this? He shook his head, unable to form the question.

"Did you know she has a thing for you? I didn't either. I was stunned. She knows what's going on between the two of us and she's really upset. I-I just couldn't do that to her. Not after..." She sighed.

"After what?"

Kristi nibbled her lip. "There was this guy in high school she was dating. He dumped her. For me."

“And you dated him?”

She shrugged. “I know it was wrong. But I was a stupid kid. I was flattered by the attention. He eventually dumped me for someone else, but by then it didn’t matter. The damage was done. I don’t ever think she forgave me. It was years before she would even talk to me again. Cam—I can’t do that to her. Not again. I can’t.”

“This is different.”

“Not really.”

“I’m not dating Bella. I’m not interested in dating Bella. Even if there was no you and me, I wouldn’t be dating Bella.” He did it then. Cornered her. Maybe Holt had it right. Maybe the way

to manage a woman was to dominate her. So he backed her up against the shelves of canned goods and took her mouth in a punishing kiss.

She resisted, but not for long. Then she wrapped her arms around his neck and gave as good as she got. Her response enflamed him. He reached down and lifted her leg, wrapping it around his waist, giving him access to her crotch. He rubbed her there, in that tender spot, through her jeans as he fucked her mouth. With his other hand, he held her chin still so he could take what he wanted.

A can of soup fell to the floor. And another. Cam ignored them. He fiddled

with the buttons of her jeans.

She broke away, gasping. “Cam. Not here. They’ll hear.”

“Let them fucking hear.”

“Oh, they can hear.” A deep, amused voice floated into the room. Cam whipped around to see Holt leaning on the doorjamb. Smirking. “It sounds like you’re wrestling with a walrus in here.”

“God.” Kristi buried her face in his chest.

“Don’t worry, Kris,” Holt chirped. “They don’t know what you two are up to. They sent me to find out what the ruckus was.” He glanced at Cam. “But really? In the pantry?”

“It *was* private.”

“Apparently not private enough. Come along you two. Let’s join the others. And do try to behave.” He leaned closer and hissed, “Try not to fuck on the table while we’re eating.”

Kristi smacked his shoulder as she passed, quickly ducking from the room, her cheeks ablaze.

And thank God. Because if she hadn’t hit Holt, Cam was going to for sure.

It bugged him that Kristi deliberately took the seat across and down the table from him at lunch. He’d had it in mind to toy with her the way he had the night before. Hell, she wouldn’t even meet his eye. So he focused on Bella instead.



He'd never had the sense that Bella had a thing for him. In all the years he'd known her, she'd never flirted with him. And she didn't clam up around him, the way some women did when they had a crush. If there was anyone around the table Bella *wasn't* paying any attention to—like at all—it was Holt. She didn't so much as crack a smile at his jokes.

The whole thing baffled him, but he was determined to figure it out. He couldn't let this thing with Kristi just... end. Not before it even really started. The very thought gave him cold chills. He'd wanted her, dreamed about her, fantasized about her for so long, but that had been nothing compared to the

reality. And now, now that he'd had her, he wasn't letting her go. He couldn't.

Drew reached across in front of him grabbing another taco from the platter, interrupting his gloomy reverie. "So Kristi," he said, shoveling some chips into his mouth, "how's everything in the shop?"

Kristi glanced up. Her gaze, on its way to Andrew, clashed with Cam's. He took the opportunity to send her a speaking look. It said: *I want you*. She got the message. A blush crept up her cheeks. "It's, um, fine."

"And Lucy? How's she doing? I hardly ever see the two of you anymore."

Holt grinned. “Why isn’t she here this weekend too?” Holt was an evil bastard. He knew damned well why. This was Lane’s weekend. After that last blow up, he and Lucy had agreed to share the house the way other couples shared their kids. One weekend at a time. Always separate. It was better for everyone.

Kristi took a sip of her water. “One of us has to stay at the store. Besides, she has a date tonight.”

It was comical the way Lane’s head snapped up at that. The clack of his teeth was audible. He swore beneath his breath. A muscle in his cheek bunched. “A date? What kind of date?”

“Oh, you know.” Kristi shrugged.

“The kind of date where a nice, successful guy with an awesome job picks you up at seven and takes you out for a romantic dinner. Maybe a little dancing. A walk on the beach. And then afterwards...” She fluttered her lashes. “Well, you know what happens afterwards.”

Yeah, Kristi could be a little evil too.

Lane hopped up, stormed to the fridge and pulled out a beer. He popped it open, took a long draw and wiped his mouth on his sleeve. “So who is this nice successful guy with an awesome job?” Holy shit. Was that really a snarl? From laidback, easygoing Lane?

“A customer. Pretty cute too.”

“Cute?” Cassie leaned forward. “Do tell.”

“You know. Tall. Dark. Supremely good-looking.” Kristi sighed hugely, focusing all her attention on Lane.

Cam bit back his snicker. Definitely evil.

Lane grimaced. “Is it serious?”

Kristi sighed. “Lane. It’s a date. It’s dinner. I didn’t mean to infer anything more was—”

“Maybe I should stop by. Check this dude out. Who knows what his real motives are.”

“Dating a scorching hot chick with bags of cash?” This from Drew. His

smirk wilted in the face of Lane's fierce glower.

“Are you saying my ex is a hot chick?” A growl.

“She is beautiful.” Cassie said in a soothing voice. She set her hand on Lane's arm. “Calm down. You and Lucy are divorced. It's been over a year. It's only natural for the two of you to start dating again.”

Holt grinned. “And aren't you seeing that... What's her name?” He snapped his fingers several times. “Chesty McChesterson?”

“Delilah.” Lane crossed his arms over his chest.

“Right. Delilah. No man tapping that

well has a right to complain he's thirsty."

A laugh bubbled in Cam's throat. "Tapping that well?"

Holt shrugged. "What can I say? When I think of Delilah's boobs, I just wax poetic-like."

Drew's gray eyes took on a mischievous light. "She is blessed."

"Oh, right," Bella wrinkled her nose. "As if *those* were a gift from God."

"I know!" Cassie dropped her voice to a whisper, the way women did when they were about to dish the dirt. "Did you see the way they poked up in her bikini? All that weight and they just hovered there like she had some kind of

anti-gravity device in her bra?”

Kristi shook her head. “Totally not natural.”

“Totally,” Bella grunted.

Lane frowned at them and upended his beer. “Well, I don’t care if they’re natural or not. I like them. I like her. She’s fun to be around and she doesn’t nag me and she doesn’t go all prickly when I talk to another woman.”

“Really, Lane?” Bella quirked a brow. “Using *that* word to describe Lucy? Because when I hear prickly in the context of you and other women, Lucy’s not the one who comes to mind.”

“Whoa! Score.” Drew stood to high-five Bella as hoots and hollers rounded



the table. The reason their favorite couple had split was hardly a secret. Everyone knew.

Lane sat back, chastened. He scrubbed his brow with his palm. “I probably should stop by and see how she’s doing.”

“She’s fine, Lane,” Kristi said. “She’s just moving on, that’s all.”

A stricken look crossed his face. “Moving on?”

“It has to happen.”

“I know. But it’s weird. We’ve been together since...forever. It’s just...weird.”

“Well, come by the shop next week. Say hi. I know things got kind of choppy

during the divorce, what with the lawyers and all—”

“What did she tell you?”

Kristi threw up her hands. “We’re housemates, Lane. We own a shop together. She told me everything.”

“Everything?”

Kristi pinned him with a sharp gaze and mouthed the word, “*Everything.*”

“Shit.”

“My point is, there’s no reason you two can’t still be cordial. None of us want to have to choose between you. So you should at least man up and try to get along. You know, for the sake of us kids.”

He scowled. “Did you tell *her* that?”

“She doesn’t have anything against you. You’re the one who’s bitter about it.”

Lane shot to his feet. “She *divorced* me.”

Kristi mimicked his action, facing him, taking him on, toe to toe. “You fucked her cousin!”

Silence crackled through the room, turning on spits of tension.

“See, I’ve been wondering about that.” Drew, as usual, forged into the cavernous breach with an attempt at humor. “Was it the crazy cousin, or the one with the lisp? What?” He glanced around the table as everyone tossed balled up napkins at him. “I was just

wondering. Because nobody ever said.”

“Aw, fuck off,” Lane muttered, though the words held no heat. He stormed down the hall to his room and closed the door. But he closed it very, very gently.

“Well,” Cam said. “That was interesting.” He could tell the encounter had upset Kristi. He longed to pull her into his arms and hold her. He loved that she was courageous enough to stand up to Lane, but it had taken every ounce of self-control not to leap to her defense.

“Do you think he still has feelings for her?” Cassie asked.

Bella nodded. “He must. That wasn’t your typical gay divorcee reaction.”

“He’s gay?” Yup. Drew again.

Everyone was out of napkins, so they threw empty pop cans. As one, they all rose and left the table. “Hey! Where are you going?” Drew called as they tromped out onto the deck. “I’m not going to clean this up!”

But he was. He knew he was.

Last one to leave the table cleaned up the mess.

That was the rule.

Especially when he was the one who got “showered.”

That was why Cam made it a point to never be the last to leave the table.

He shot Drew an evil grin as he made his escape.

## Chapter Seven

After lunch they went down to the beach and the girls hunted for driftwood while Holt and Cam pulled the kayaks out of the boathouse. It was a beautiful spring day, but still far too cold to go swimming. Drew joined them, grumbling about being left with the mess.

Holt turned to Cam as he handed out the life vests. “You coming?”

Cam’s gaze swung to the dock where Bella sat, soaking in the rare shafts of sun, reading a book. “Nah. I think I’ll just hang out.” Kristi shot him a frown and he quirked a brow in response. She looked adorable with the orange vest nudging her chin, but he was bound and

determined to talk to her sister, no matter how nervous she was about it. “You all have fun. I think the whales are out.”

Cassie nodded, “We saw one this morning. I wish I brought my camera.”

They all piled in the kayaks—Holt and Kristi in one and Cassie and Drew in the other—and even though Holt and Kristi were in the same boat, Cam didn’t care. He had business to take care of and this would probably be his only opportunity to get Bella alone. He watched as they paddled past the gentle surf into the open water. Drawing in a deep breath, he turned and headed for the dock.

It was a floater, anchored to the shore

by pylons sunk into the sand. It swayed a little as he walked to where Bella sat at the end. She glanced up as he took the lounge chair next to her. But he didn't lounge. He perched on the side, and studied her until her face puckered up.

“What?”

“Can we talk?”

She dropped her book onto her chest.

“Sure.”

Crap. He should have planned this better. He didn't know what to say. He decided to just dive in. “I was just wondering how long?”

She shook her head. “How long? How long what?”

“How long have you had a thing for



me?”

Her mouth fell open. She gaped at him. “Wh-what?”

“You know. How long have you had this crush on me?”

She sat up then, facing him, knee to knee. “What makes you think I have a crush on you?”

“You don’t?”

Her snort was a dead giveaway. That and her laugh.

Really? Was the prospect so hilarious?

“Cam Jackson, you are so full of yourself.”

He put out a lip. “I am not. It’s just, Kristi said—”

“Kristi said what? What? What did Kristi say?”

“You know.” He raked his fingers through his hair all the way to his nape.

“Uh, no. I don’t know.”

“She said we couldn’t...”

“Couldn’t what?”

“Continue.” There. Surely that was clear enough.

“Continue?” Hell. Apparently not.

“Continue what?”

“Our...” He made a motion that should have been more than illustrative. She blinked. Like an owl. “You know. Our thing. Because you had these feelings and she didn’t want to hurt you.”

Why this annoyed Bella, Cam had no clue. “Are you serious?” She leaped to her feet and stormed to the edge of the dock and stared out at the kayaks in the distance. “She *told* you?” And then she spun around. “Wait. She said she couldn’t continue her thing with you...or her thing with Holt?”

Now he bounced up. “She doesn’t have a thing with Holt.” At least she’d better not. “Did she say she had a thing with Holt?” Unease trickled through him. Kristi told him there was nothing. She’d *convinced* him there was nothing. Had she been telling the truth, or just playing him? No. He couldn’t bear that thought

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“I saw them kissing last night.”

Oh. *That*. His tension released.

“I saw them, Cam.” Bitterness bubbled in her voice. “Why does it always work out like that? Why do they always fall for her? Am I not pretty?”

Aw, shit. Tears. He hated tears.

“You’re very pretty. Really Bella, any guy would be lucky to have you.” Based on her expression, she wasn’t buying it. He decided to get to the point. “What you saw last night? It’s not what you think it was.”

“My sister? In a passionate embrace with the man I—with a man?” She crossed her arms over her chest and scowled at him. “What else could it

be?” Bella froze. “Wait... You said she didn’t want to continue this affair with you because *I* had a thing for you? Is she fucking you both?” she asked gloomily.

“No.” In fact, hell to the no. “It’s Kristi and me. Not Holt. At all. Like even a little bit. Not ever. Never.” He emphasized this point with a slash of his hand and then added a couple more “evers” just for good measure.

“She’s having an affair with you?” She narrowed her eyes. “Are you—are you sure?”

“Yup. Pretty sure.” Pretty damn fucking sure.

“So you’re the one she was with all last night?”

“All night long.” Holt probably spent the night in his room nursing a bruised jaw. “He did kiss her, but only to test the waters. She told him to get lost.” Or at least, something like that.

“So...it’s you and Kristi?”

“Yep.”

“Oh.” Her expression cleared. “Well. That’s okay then.” She shot him a perky grin and plopped back down in her lounge and picked up her book.

But they weren’t done. Not by a long shot. He shifted her legs over and sat at her side. She frowned.

“So I have your blessing?”

“My what?”

“Your blessing. To date your sister.

Because it's important to her. And Bella, I really care—I mean, I really, really care.”

“Mercy.” She sighed and patted his cheek. “You are kind of adorable, I suppose. Yes. You have my blessing.” But then her smile morphed into another fierce glower. The tiny diamond in her nose winked. “But I swear unto God in heaven above, if you so much as breathe a hint about my feelings for Holt to anyone—*anyone*—I'll have your guts for garters. Do you hear me?”

“Yes ma'am.”

“Well, okay then. Get off my chair.”

He did. He sat on the end of his lounge with his elbows on his knees

and his fingers linked, and stared out at the tiny kayaks bobbing in the water in the distance trying to tame the elation rioting in his gut.

The road was clear. Kristi was his. Tonight, he'd have her again. And the night after that. And, hopefully, all the nights after that.

Little did she know it, but Bella was going to be his sister-in-law some day. Hopefully someday soon.

“So,” he said as a gentle breeze lifted his hair. He closed his eyes and turned his face up to the sun. “What’s the deal with you and Holt?”

He chuckled when her book hit his back.



The kayak scraped the shore and Kristi sighed. “That was great.”

“It was.” Holt’s voice rumbled behind her. Something in the timbre of his voice snagged her attention and she glanced back. He was glaring at the dock. She swung around to follow his gaze and saw Cam and Bella hugging. It was a quick hug, nothing that should cause those shards of jealousy to stab her belly. But then he kissed her. Only her cheek. But still...

Fury snarled in her breast.

“What the hell is that all about?” Holt grumbled. He hopped out of the boat into the water with no care for his expensive

boots. Kristi stood, but plopped down again when he yanked the boat further onto the shore, his attention trained on the dock.

“She has a thing for him, I guess.”

His head whipped around. “She does?”

“I guess.”

Belatedly, he thrust out his hand and helped her from the boat. “I thought you and he...”

“So did I.” She collected their life vests and paddles. “I’m going to put these away and then have a chat with him. Can you and Drew get the boats?”

But Holt wasn’t paying attention. He was staring at the dock, scrubbing his

chin with his palm.

Cam found her in the boathouse hanging up the life vests. “Hey you. How was your trip?”

She didn’t look at him. “Fine.”

“See any whales?”

“Not today.”

“Bummer.” Silence crackled. He broke it. “I, uh, had a chat with Bella.”

“I noticed.”

“Did you?” Why was there amusement threading through his tone? She turned to glare at him. Yup. A big old smile plastered on his handsome face.

“I saw you hugging her.”

“Why wouldn’t I hug her? She’s my friend. Your sister and...we worked everything out.” Clearly he was pleased with himself.

“You worked it all out?”

“Yep. Apparently it was just a misunderstanding. I’m not the dude she has a thing for.”

Her brow rumped. “You’re not? Who is?”

“I can’t say.”

“Can’t, or won’t?”

“Both. Your sister is a little scary when she’s adamant.”

“Hmm.” She crossed her arms over

her chest.

“Point is, no more problem with Bella. We’re home free.”

“Home free?”

“To continue...this.”

“This rebound thing?” She didn’t mean to snarl, it just came out that way.

“Kristi, honey, why are you angry?”

“I don’t know.” She didn’t. Was it because he’d hugged Bella? Honestly, it hadn’t been much of a hug. And the kiss had been a peck. Maybe she was upset because of the feelings the scene had engendered—a roaring tide of jealousy and hunger and pain. That, and the fact they’d agreed to only rebound sex.

And maybe she wanted more.

And maybe she wasn't really sure what he wanted.

A weekend of torrid sex? Or more?  
Or not?

She was too afraid of what the answer might be to simply ask.

She shivered. "Let's go up to the house. I'm cold."

He put his arm around her and she let him. Only because she was cold and he was warm. And it was comforting.

## Chapter Eight

It was a long walk up to the house, but only because Kristi's mind was in a whirl.

On the one hand, she was over the moon to know Cam wasn't Bella's secret crush. She had a strong suspicion who was. Obviously her sister had witnessed Holt's doomed attempt at seduction and assumed they were having an affair. Bella and Holt would be great together and Kristi would give anything to see her sister happy.

The other thought clogging her consciousness was this blooming relationship with Cam. He'd obviously cared enough to confront Bella to clear

things up. Could it be that he, like she, wanted more?

Without coming right out and asking him—which she didn't have the nerve to do—she couldn't know.

But she could tip the scales in her favor.

And try something she'd been aching to do since she'd caught sight of his beautiful cock last night.

So she paused when they reached the steps to the deck on the main floor, not following the others as they made their way up. He stopped too, perforce, as she was holding his hand.

He turned and quirked a brow.  
“Kristi?”



“I think we need to have a chat.”

He swallowed. Paled. “Oookay.”

She steered him to the stone patio in the shadow of the overhang of the deck with the basement windows to their backs and the vista of the deserted beach before them. It was hardly a private spot for what she had in mind, but the naughty minx dancing in her soul didn't care. It was private enough.

And she had a powerful hunger to taste him.

When she pushed him into one of the metal chairs, he didn't resist.

“What's up?”

She glanced at his crotch. “Nothing.”

Oh, but it rose when she kneeled

before him. When she kneeled before him and insinuated herself between his knees and ran her palms up his hard thighs.

“K-Kristi?”

“Shut up. There’s something I need to do.”

“N-need?” She loved that he stuttered—because she was unsnapping his jeans.

“Did I ever mention how much I dig a manly man?”

“Um, no?”

“That plaid shirt is a definite turn on.”

He licked his lips as she eased his zipper down. “I’ll, um, never take it off.” He shifted as she splayed the

opening she'd created and toyed with the band of his briefs. "Kristi?"

"Hmm?"

"What-what are you doing?"

She eased his underwear down, just a bit. Just until the head of his cock was visible. "What do you think?" A hoarse whisper. Damn, but he was beautiful. She wanted to see all of him. And now.

She tugged his briefs lower.

He grabbed her wrist. "Kristi! Christ. Here? On the patio?"

"Mmm hmm."

He probably would have protested a little more, but she dipped her head and drew in his essence. His scent curled through her, musky and male. Her mouth

watered. She blew a hot breath along the length of his encased cock and he hissed. Then she dabbed her tongue into the little eye, just a tiny flick, lapping up a beading tear. That slightly salty, eminently sweet flavor infused her soul, sending swirls of desire dancing through her.

He made a harsh sound. “Jesus. Anyone could see.”

“They’re all upstairs. Besides,” she raised her head to smirk. “This won’t take long.”

Without further ado, she pulled his briefs all the way down and fisted his cock, measuring the weight of it, his girth, in her palm. So firm. So bold. So

damned insistent.

She couldn't wait. Not a moment longer.

She engulfed him. Sucked him in a slow rhythmic cadence. He wriggled. Urged his hips forward. Clung to the arm of the chair, his knuckles white.

“Jesus. Jesus.” As though he couldn't manage any other word, any utterance, any thought.

“Hush. I don't like to be interrupted.”

“Kristi—” His growl morphed into a little warble as she nestled deeper and licked the base of his cock, tickling the balls still trapped in denim. He pushed her away—but before she had time to pout, he stood, yanked down his jeans

and his briefs and sat back down, threaded his fingers into her hair and guided her back. “More. More. Jesus. More.”

She glanced up at him with a smile.

Oh, she'd give him more. More than he could bear, if she had her way.

*Strap in, Cam Jackson, she thought. You're in for the ride of your life.*

He couldn't believe it.

He couldn't fucking believe it.

Kristi Cross on her knees before him, stroking his cock, sucking, nibbling, drawing the most delicious torture upon him he'd ever been lucky enough to endure. Her mouth was incredible.

Velvety soft and wet and warm. And she knew what she was doing. He couldn't bear to think on how she'd gained such expertise, so he didn't. He just luxuriated in wave after wave of exquisite pleasure.

When she changed her position and sheathed him in her clutching throat, all the way to the hilt, his entire body clenched. His grip tightened in her hair. He loved the way she responded to his every cue. Moving just the way he needed, stroking with just the right amount of pressure, lightening up and then constricting with flawless instinct.

They were perfect together. A perfect match.

And then he discovered an awful truth.

Kristi Cross was a tease.

He should have known. Should have seen that evil light in her eye when she peeped up at him, his cock nested in her mouth, her cheeks plump, her lips—even wrapped around him—canted in a wicked grin.

He should have foreseen what was coming.

She hummed around him. A moan, a murmur. The vibration sent agonizing skewers through his bowels. He thrust into her. Couldn't help it. It was pure, unbridled impulse. Raw, ragged need.

To his horror, she released him and



shook a finger at him. “Ah ah ah. Hold still.”

“I can’t.” A harsh whisper.

“Hold still and let me work. You are a canvas, and I’m painting on you.”

He recognized his own words from the night before and his heart stopped—then set up a manic tattoo. Hell no. She wasn’t going to torment him. Not like he’d tormented her.

But she was.

Instead of taking him back in her mouth, she kissed his cock, kissed it and stroked it with a feather-light touch that about drove him insane. Then she veered off course and started nuzzling his belly, the curve of his hip, the top of his thigh.

He squirmed a little, trying to guide her exploration back where he wanted it.

She chuckled. “I told you to hold still.”

“Jesus, Kristi. You’re driving me wild.”

“You drove me wild last night. Turnabout is fair play.”

Aw, shit. She was. She was getting him back for teasing her. “Let’s go inside. To my room and... finish this conversation there.” He’d fucking tie her down—as Holt suggested. Tie her down and dominate her with his cock...

“I want to finish it here.”

He opened his mouth to protest, but then flinched as he heard the slider open

overhead, then footsteps and the chatter of conversation as Bella and Cassie floated onto the deck. He could see their shadows flitting through the cracks of the boards. And then the dreaded slide of chairs as they seated themselves at the table. *Right over his head.* His lips parted. He stared at Kristi and madly shook his head, reaching for his jeans.

She didn't allow it.

She grabbed his cock again and squeezed it tight, stroking with a slow, excruciating caress. Her lips curved. She edged closer and whispered, "Be sure to be quiet. We don't want them to hear. Do we?" And then she drew him into heaven once more, in a determined

manner, one that made clear her intentions.

She wanted to make him come, with her sister and friend—chatting about classical music and kinky boutiques—mere feet away.

He should have stopped her. He should have put his foot down and stopped her and dragged her somewhere private and fucked her 'til she howled. But he couldn't move. Couldn't breathe. Couldn't even think.

She'd started some kind of double action thing, milking his hard cock with her hand as she sucked on the tip, drawing him deeper and deeper with each pass until he was buried in her

throat once more.

And she started to hum.

*Hum.*

She played with his balls, stroking them and teasing them. He shifted restlessly, and her agonizing touch slipped farther back, teasing that sensitive spot between his cock and his ass.

Need curled at the base of his spine. Scorching excitement lashed him.

They could be discovered any second. One wrong move, one escaped groan, and Cassie and Bella would come hurtling downstairs and see them. Find them. Catch them.

It was probably the panic, the tension,

the exhilaration that sent him over the edge. The knowledge that others were so very near. That he shouldn't be doing this. Not here. Not now.

But he was. And she was. And it was thrilling.

It was either all the churning emotion and thrashing pleasure—or her finger, worming into his ass.

He couldn't hold back the muffled growl as his cum, boiling and roiling and snarling to escape, shot from him in a torrent, flooding her mouth. She took it all. Swallowing it in great silent gulps.

Even when he was done, she continued to torment him, tiny, gentle sips that elicited shudder after shudder,

along with every drop of his seed.

She was still milking him dry, sucking the sanity right out of him, when one of the chairs on the upper deck scraped against the wood with a screech. “Did you hear something?” Bella asked.

“Hmm? Hear what?”

*Footsteps. Heading toward the rail.*

Cam and Kristi both froze.

“I dunno. A howl? Sounded like a coyote or a wolf or something.”

“I don’t think there are any wild animals on the island.”

“No? I could have sworn I heard something.”

Cassie grunted. “Probably the wind.”  
Silence trickled. “Hey. Do you want a

margarita?”

“You making?”

“Sure.”

“Absolutely.”

To Cam’s relief, they both headed into the house. He didn’t relax his muscles until he heard the slider close. “Shit.”

Kristi leaned back on her heels and grinned, licking her lips.

He couldn’t help it. He bent down and kissed her, long and hard. He tasted himself on her tongue.

She didn’t draw back. Rather, she murmured against his lips, “Did you enjoy that?”



“It was hell. Every minute of it.” He stroked her cheek with his thumb. “When can we do it again?” He swallowed her laugh.

“Maybe tonight.”

He put out a lip. “I have to wait that long?”

She tipped her head and smiled at him. Just smiled. The promise in her eyes left him speechless.

Because he knew. Just knew. Beyond a shadow of a doubt.

He was in love with her. Loved her incontrovertibly. With everything in him.

And he would never let her go.

Also, she'd pay for this.

Oh, she'd pay.

The thought of how she'd pay made him want to chortle. Instead, he just grinned right back.

“You'd better get dressed,” she said, tugging his pants up his legs.

“Sure, now you're all modesty and propriety. Where was that a few minutes ago?”

“A few minutes ago I was...hungry.”

He stood and fastened his jeans and pulled her close to his side, where she belonged. “And now you're sated?”

“Not quite.”

He frowned at her. “Not quite?”

“Nope.” She shot him a impish look.

“Now I want a margarita.” They headed toward the stairs together, arms linked. “Later,” she said. “Later you can sate me.”

Yeah. He would. And then some.

## Chapter Nine

When they came through the slider, Cassie already had the blender going. She had a secret recipe for knock-you-naked margaritas, which were absolutely divine. Bella and Kristi joined her in the kitchen to whip up some nachos while the guys all clomped down to the basement to watch the Mariners. As far as Kristi could tell, Lane was still in his room.

“Maybe we should check on him.” She glanced at his door.

Cassie shook her head. “I’m sure he’s fine. No doubt he’ll come out when he smells the food.” But he didn’t. The guys surfaced from the basement, though.

Apparently the game had been lame. They all swarmed around the table and sucked down margaritas and inhaled nachos, laughing and joking and brutally teasing Drew about his new tattoo.

Bella started it all when he pulled up his shirtsleeve to show it—and his bulging biceps—off. She snorted.

Drew frowned at her. “What?”

Bella shrugged. “I didn’t think firemen were allowed to get tattoos.”

Drew made a face. “We’re firemen. Not slaves.”

“Civil servants,” Holt muttered. “Close enough.”

“I can’t believe you got a puppy.” Bella grinned. “Of all the tattoos in all

the world. You got a puppy.”

“I like dogs.”

Bella ignored him. “Not a bulldog or a Rottweiler or a pit bull. A *puppy*.”

“It’s a Dalmatian. I’m a fireman. It makes sense.”

Cassie leaned closer. “I think it’s cute.”

“Me too.” Holt smirked. “C’mon baby, come to papa, I’ll kiss your fuckin’ Dalmatian.”

This, of course, was followed by a chorus of “Come out to the cooooast, we’ll get togeeeether, have a few laaaaughs...” because none of them could resist. Movie quotes were kind of a thing with them. They loved watching the

classics over and over again, competing to see who remembered the most lines. They loved it almost as much as they all loved football.

But not quite as much.

Because, after all... Football.

A knock at the back door surprised them. The neighbors rarely visited.

Cassie was closest, so she hopped up to answer it. Lane opened his door as she passed. He looked like hell with red eyes and hair all matted to his head. There was a pillow streak on his cheek.

Kristi heard the rumble of voices but couldn't make out any words, but then her belly lurched. She knew who it was.

She leaped to her feet as Rolf pushed

past Cassie and Lane. His gaze rounded the room and settled on her. Every man around the table rose as well. When Rolf stepped closer, they all bristled. His intense expression morphed into that charming mien she'd once found so irresistible. "There you are, baby. I've been hunting all over for you."

"Here I am." It was funny how her body reacted to him, especially now. There was no excitement. No thrill at the sight of him—not like she felt with Cam. Only a vague unease.

At the beginning, she'd thought his moodiness sexy, but it had gotten old quick. And though they'd been together for three years, the magic had



evaporated long ago. Kristi didn't know why they'd stayed together. Probably just habit.

A bad reason to remain in a relationship with someone you didn't love to the depth of your being.

Rolf stepped closer. His voice dropped an octave. "Kristi. We need to talk."

"There's nothing to talk about."

"Yes. There is. Please. Five minutes." He glared around the room again. "In private."

In private? No way. She waved toward the deck. "Outside."

"Okay."

She led the way through the slider and

turned to face him.

He closed the door. “Kristi. Honey. It wasn’t what it looked like.”

She crossed her arms over her chest. “Really? It looked like your white ass going to town on Savannah.”

“Okay. I screwed up. It won’t happen again.”

Wouldn’t it? She wasn’t so sure. “Has it ever happened before?”

“What?” The flicker of guilt in his eyes was a dead giveaway.

“How many women, Rolf? How many women have you screwed since we’ve been together?”

He shrugged. “Not that many.”

*“Not that many?”* Mortification

washed through her. She'd been a fool to stay with him. To be with him.

A red tide rose on his cheeks. "None. None, baby." And at her glower, "Okay. Just the one. Just that one time."

"Right."

"Come on, Kristi. Give me another chance."

Certainty, unlike any certainty she'd ever known, settled in her gut. "It's over Rolf."

"Sweetheart..." He stepped closer and made a move to pull her into his arms. She evaded him.

A movement to her left, through the wall of windows, caught her attention. She glanced over to see Lane, Drew,

Holt and Cam standing, in formation, tracking Rolf's every move, like ancient warriors surveying the field of a coming battle.

Love swelled in her chest. For all of them. One in particular. They would always be there for her. Always keep her safe. Her Dawgs.

Rolf followed her gaze and frowned. "I've always hated those guys."

She shook her head. "Don't you see? That's the problem here. Not Savannah...or any other woman. We simply aren't a good fit." Hardly a new revelation. For her at least.

Rolf gaped at her. "What are you talking about? We're perfect together."

“No. We aren’t.” Not even close. For one thing, he didn’t like any of her friends. And he didn’t like *football*. She should have known...

“Aw, come on, baby. Don’t be like this.” His voice took on a wheedling quality. He tipped his head to the side and sent her a cajoling smile. “We can work it out.”

“There’s nothing to work out, Rolf. I’m sorry. It’s over.”

He scratched his head and blew out a sigh. “Okay. Listen. I’ve been thinking. Maybe it’s time to take our relationship to the next level.”

“The next—what?”

“You know. I want you to move in

with me.”

This he said, just as the slider opened. So those were the words Cam heard.

“The fuck she will!” he bellowed.

A tiny glow lit in her chest. She liked the way his fury felt. At least, about this.

Rolf’s cajoling expression morphed into a sneer. He propped his hands on his hips and gave Cam an insolent once-over. “Fuck off, douche wad. This isn’t any of your business.”

“The hell it’s not. She’s not moving in with you. She’s moving in with me.”

“I am?” Oh. This was news to her.

Cam winced and shot her an apologetic grin. “I was going to ask you

in a week or so. Maybe after our third date.”

“We’re having a third date?”

“It’s on the schedule.”

“The schedule?”

A flush crawled up his cheeks. “The schedule in my head. I have it all worked out. I told you I’ve been thinking about you for a while.”

Rolf went ape-shit. “What. The. Fuck,” he snarled. Have you been making moves on my girl all this time?” He poked Cam’s chest with a belligerent finger.

Stupid move. It brought him back to Cam’s attention. That sweet, adorable face went all Highlander.

“She’s not your girl,” he snapped.  
“She’s mine.”

“Since when?” Rolf shoved Cam’s shoulder. He wheeled on Kristi. “Are you fucking him, you whore?”

Uh oh.

Dumb.

Dumb de dumb dumb.

Before she could say a word to defend herself—as though she would even bother—Cam’s fist smashed into Rolf’s cheek and he went reeling. He collapsed against the railing and slumped onto the deck.

“Dude,” Holt said from the door, “you’re gonna have to stop hitting people.”



Cam shook out his hand and shot his friend a dark look. “I only hit them when they really need hitting.”

“Yeah.” Holt cleared his throat. “I’ll remember that.” With a glance at Rolf, he stepped back inside and slid the door shut.

Cam pulled Kristi into his arms. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” she laughed. She was better than okay. “But what about you?” She kissed his knuckles. “That had to hurt.”

“It hurt so good.” He glowered at Rolf and Rolf’s eyes widened. He skittered out of reach like a crab and then leaped to his feet and escaped

around the corner of the house.

No one was following.

Because finally, they were alone.

Kristi grinned and turned her attention back to Cam. “Did you mean what you said?”

“About what?”

“About a future? For us?”

“Shit, Kristi. Of course I meant it. Didn't I make myself clear last night?”

“Not really. We agreed on rebound.”

“That was just a ploy!”

“A what?”

He cringed at her screech. “You know. A ploy? To get you in bed?”

She smacked his shoulder. “You. Did.

Not.”

“Kinda.”

His expression was sheepish. And adorable. And she loved it.

“I’m serious about dating you, Kristi. Really dating. And when you’re ready we can move in together and...”

“And?”

“More. If, you know, we both want more.”

She had a suspicion *she* would want more. “I’d like that.”

“Would you?”

“Definitely.”

He stared at her for a long moment. “Holt said something that intrigued me.”

“Forget about Holt.”

He chuckled. “I can’t forget about this.”

“All right.” She looped her arms around his neck and leaned against him. “What did Holt say that was so intriguing?”

“He said a spanking can really spice up a sex life.”

“Umm hmm,” she said. “Sounds like Holt.”

“Well. What do you think? Is that something you...might be interested in?”

She focused on the hairs erupting in the vee of his shirt. Stroked them with a fingertip. “I dunno. Maybe.”

“Maybe?”

“If *you're* interested.”

“Oh, I am. At least I think I am. We could, you know, explore. I bet Bella's store has some interesting stuff we could play with.”

“Right. Like I want to do my sex shopping at my sister's boutique?”

He leaned in and kissed her. “We'll go by when she's not there. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“And that spanking?” Damn, he was insistent. “Are you up for it tonight?”

“Tonight? Really?”

“Umm hmm.” He silenced her with a long, leisurely kiss.

When he pulled away she was

breathless. “Okay, Mr. Jackson. You’ve convinced me. We’ll try a little spanking tonight.” She shot him a fiendish grin. “But I sure hope your ass can take it.”

The look on his face was priceless.

Next Up:

**Dragonfly Kisses by Sabrina York**

*A Tryst Island Erotic Romance*

Dylan Deveney has no interest in a wild fling. He simply wants a quiet place where he can try to forget a painful past and, barring that, drink himself to death. But when he catches a glimpse of his exquisite neighbor—in the buff—his passion for life reignites.

Cassie French can't resist Dylan's allure. From his scruffy beard to his earring to his intriguing dragonfly tattoo, she's crazy about him. And sex between them is scorching. Everything seems

perfect...until a tragedy from Dylan's past threatens to ruin everything.

*An Excerpt from Dragonfly Kisses*

When they finished eating and bantering, a crackling silence fell. Cassie licked her finger and blotted up her crumbs. "Well," she said. "I should probably be going." She moved to stand. "Don't."

One word, sharp, with a tinge of panic, froze her in place. She glanced at him.

"Please stay. I've...enjoyed talking to you."

She forced a smile. "Lucy will be worried."



“About me?”

She laughed. “About me. Poaching. We have rules about poaching, you see.”

“Poaching only counts on things you own. Lucy doesn’t own me.”

Cassie cleared her throat. “She wants to. And she has dibbs.”

He snorted a laugh. “Sounds like third grade. And, by the way, I thought Bella had dibbs.”

“They’re dueling over you.”

His expression sobered. “Do I get a say in this?”

She tipped her head to the side. “Have you met them? They can be rather...adamant.”

“So can I. When I want something.”

Her heart flipped. “You, ah, want something?”

“You know I do.”

Holy heaven. His gaze was steamy. It left no doubt about exactly what he wanted. But she had to ask. “W-what?”

He stood, balancing on one foot. “Come here.”

The thread of command, of yearning, in his tone snared her. She couldn't ignore it. She rounded the table and looked up at him. This close, he was even more mesmerizing. And he smelled...he smelled delicious. His cologne teased her nostrils. Musky and woodsy and manly.

She stilled as he threaded his fingers through her hair and cupped her cheeks. And then his head descended.

His lips brushed hers. Just a soft, sweet buss, but it held a skein of promise, a hint of hunger and a tinge of desperation.

At her moan, he deepened the kiss, opening his mouth, pressing against her, consuming her. His taste, his essence, flooded her. Desire, wild and wonton, lashed her. Unbidden, a moan rose in her throat. He took it, swallowed it, gave it back.

He pulled her closer, flush against him. His body was hard and hot. Demanding. A trill of excitement rippled

through her as she nudged the thick wedge of his erection.

Oh, she shouldn't be doing this, kissing, consuming a man she barely knew like a lust-crazed wanton, but she couldn't stop. And she kind of was. A lust-crazed wanton.

Something about this man curled around her sanity, her core, and sank in with needy claws. She'd kissed a lot of men in her life. But never a kiss like this.

He slanted his lips and took her from a new direction, molding his mouth over hers, teasing, nibbling, licking. She shuddered as his tongue dipped in. She met it with her own, then, unable to resist, gently sucked.

He reared back and stared at her. His eyes were rimmed with red, burned with desire. “God, Cassie,” he groaned, but didn’t finish the thought. As though he couldn’t resist, he kissed her again, but this time with a fiercer passion, one that made her muscles lock, her heart thud, her body melt.

She wrapped her arms around his neck, stroked his hair, then scored his scalp in a rake of need.

His fingers began to rove over her back, up to her nape, down her flank. He squeezed her buttocks. The pressure sent shudders through her.

And then, as he held her tight with one hand, the other skated to her breast,

gauging her reaction as he gently cupped her. When she didn't resist, when she wriggled impatiently in his embrace, he swept a thumb over her nipple.

Her body seized. Rivulets of pleasure washed through her, sending pings of absolute delight straight to her tingling clit. She couldn't help it. She ground that nub against his hardness.

He growled.

Like the Highlander he was, he growled.

## About Sabrina York

Sabrina is an award winning author of erotic romance with nearly a [dozen titles](#) available, ranging from sweet & sexy erotic romance to BDSM to erotic horror. Connect with her on twitter [@sabrina\\_york](#) or [Facebook](#).

Check out Sabrina's books and read an excerpt on her [webpage](#) ([www.sabrinayork.com](http://www.sabrinayork.com)) or explore on [Amazon](#) or at [Ellora's Cave](#).

## **Other Books by Sabrina York**

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[Dark Fancy \(Erotic Regency, Ellora's Cave\)](#)

[Extreme Couponing \(Erotic Contemporary, Ellora's Cave\)](#)

Five Alarm Fire (Erotic Contemporary for the High Octane Heroes Anthology, Cleis Press)—coming soon

[Folly \(Erotic Regency, Ellora's Cave\)](#)

Lust Eternal (Erotic Fantasy, Ellora's Cave) —coming soon

[Pushing Her Buttons \(Erotic Contemporary, Ellora's Cave\)](#)



Making Over Maris (Erotic Contemporary, Ellora's Cave) —coming soon

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Line)

Tristan's Temptation (Erotic  
Contemporary, Ellora's Cave)

# Table of Contents

Copyright

Dedication

Acknowledgements

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Dragonfly Kisses

About Sabrina York

Other Books by Sabrina York