

CHAPTER ONE

He sat silently slumped over, his head in his hands. His fingers tightened around his skull and he squeezed. He was in a predicament and quite unsure about what to do next, how to proceed. He was oddly aware of his heart beating in his chest and took a deep breath. Funny he should be conscious of that since it was his heart he was worried about. Nearly six months ago he fell in love with a woman and there was absolutely nothing wrong with that except for the fact that he was engaged to someone else and going to be married. He closed his eyes and breathed evenly through his nose. Finally he sat up and ran his fingers into his long, auburn, curly hair. He scratched his head vigorously and then sighed. The woman he was engaged to was beautiful; loved and wanted by many men. She was an actress in Hollywood and made movies with big stars such as Jack Nicholson, Brad Pitt, and Matthew McConaughey. He supposed he was lucky to have her at all. They had been dating for about two years now and though he wasn't keen on the idea, many people suggested that marriage was the next step. He had thought about it and even went so far as to make a list of pros and cons; he had more cons than pros on the list but he was advised that it would be the best for his own career that he marry her. He proposed the next week. Now the wedding was coming up. It wasn't that he didn't love her; he did ... it was just that he had this nagging problem with being hopelessly in love with someone else. And there was a huge difference between loving someone and being in love ... right? He hadn't planned on falling in love with the other woman. He was sure it was her fault that he had anyway so if anyone was to blame for this mishap if you will, it would be her. She was enchanting and had obviously cast a spell on him. The worst thing about it all was that she was his fiancée's best friend so he'd known her for quite some time as well but being as he was a singer and away on tour most of the duration of his relationship with said actress he hadn't really gotten to know the best friend very well until he was finally off tour and his fiancée was finished filming for the time being and they were able to spend some quality time together. After being away from each other so long they spent the first two weeks together in a hotel in Mexico making love like animals. He didn't even know why he bothered to take her someplace as beautiful and scenic as Mexico when they spent the whole time inside of a small room. They ate very little and pawed at each other a whole lot. After two weeks he was exhausted and glad to be getting back to real life again. Thirsty for excitement and not necessarily the kind you got in the bedroom under the

covers either, he needed something to do, something fun. Enter the best friend and after spending a week with his fiancée and her best friend he discovered that he had feelings for the best friend. Sure, he suppressed it for a while, telling himself it was a childish crush, a passing phase - and when it didn't dissipate right away like it should have, like he wished it had, he reasoned that it had to be cold feet. *Cold feet, huh?* He said to himself but out loud. The sound of his own voice amidst the silence startled him and made him jump. He pushed himself up off the couch and began to pace the condo. Looking around he sighed sadly. In a few weeks he would be a married man and his fiancée would become a permanent resident here. She'd clutter his walls with photos and paintings, apply her female touch and in the blink of an eye there would be vases of flowers everywhere. He sighed. And it wasn't even the fact that she would 'pretty up' the place because any woman he married would do the same, he was just depressed about having to marry her, knowing he had to marry her while his heart was the possession of someone else. Someone else who had absolutely no idea she held something so fragile, so precious.

Jake went to the kitchen and stuck his head inside the refrigerator looking for something, anything, he didn't know what. He spied a can of beer, grabbed it, cracked it open then took a gulp. It tasted wonderful. He took another. While he was on tour he wasn't allowed to drink alcohol. It could potentially ruin his voice so he just abstained. He'd worked too long and too hard to get where he was to ruin it with something as transient as an alcohol buzz. After a while he didn't even miss it. But now, as he downed another swig he remembered how much he enjoyed a beer now and then. Beer wasn't even as good when you were drinking it as it was when you'd finished and you were left with that malted, whole grain taste on your palate and your tongue says, hey, that was so good I'd like to have another. He finished the can of beer then fished around for another. He opened that one too and took another swig then headed back into the living room and plopped back down on the couch where he'd been most of the day. He had to decide to do something but he was at a loss to what. He sighed and found himself staring off into space, thinking of her. He could see her clearly as if she was standing right in front of him, her slender, pixie face, cute little upturned nose, bright blue eyes - she had long, blonde hair that hung down her back in loose waves. Her lips were plump and pink and even more delectable when she smeared sparkly lip gloss on them. More than once he fought off an urge to run his

tongue over them and see what they taste like. Over time it had gotten harder and harder to be around her - as soon as she'd enter the room or call on the phone his body responded and well, he didn't want to brag but he considered himself somewhat well endowed and when he became aroused it was fairly apparent. You didn't even have to look hard to notice. Yeah, it had gotten to be a problem. Add to that the fact that she was a novelist - and the novels she wrote; erotic fiction. That certainly didn't help matters at all. Bored one day while fiancée and best friend were out shopping he picked up one of her novels that his fiancée had left by the bedside and began to read. After a few paragraphs he was riveted; he'd never read anything more sensual in all his life. He ended up with the book in the bathroom that day and then a few times after that. He'd picture the heroine in the story as the best friend and the male seducer as himself. He sat back and felt himself stiffen. He rolled his eyes, disgusted at himself that she had that power over him. She was only a woman after all ... a very beautiful woman, who had a sweet, seductive laugh, an alluring smile, a desirable body, and a bewitching smile. He groaned as he grew larger. He rested his hand on it and then adjusted himself until he was in a more comfortable position. He picked up his cell phone that sat next to the couch on an end table and flipped it open. Scrolling through the names and numbers he had stored he stopped at her name and stared at it. Alexandra Portico. Alex to her friends. *Allie to him*. Jake smiled. What he wouldn't give for a good excuse to call her right then. Just to hear her voice, hear her giggle into his ear. If he was a real man he would just come right out and tell her how he felt about her. He frowned. Well he was a real man but sadly there was also another piece to the puzzle and that piece was Allie's own fiancé, Derek. He hated thinking of him and the fact that in one week she would be his property. He clenched his teeth and began to bite his lip. She hadn't been dating this guy long, certainly not as long and he and his fiancée Jovie had been dating but it was apparent that he loved her because four months into the relationship he gave her a gaudy diamond and asked her to marry him. Jake thought he was going to die a slow death when Allie proudly showed off her ring and her fiancé, also a singer, slipped his arm around her shoulder and grinned victoriously. It was as if he was flaunting a prized trophy. Jake had forced himself to smile and give him a congratulatory handshake but then he turned to Allie and pulled her into him for a hug. He would never forget that moment as she slipped her arms around his waist and pressed herself to him. His body reacted instantly but he didn't pull away, instead he whispered softly into her ear, "Congratulations. I hope you'll be happy." He breathed in deeply the sweet

scent of her perfume, a combination of lavender and vanilla and closed his eyes. She pulled away blushing a moment later. He stood up now and stalked off to the kitchen, frustrated and dejected and tossed his can of beer into the sink. "Dammit." He sputtered, grabbed his jacket and headed out the door for a long walk; he needed to work off some of the angry energy that consumed him before he would explode.

CHAPTER TWO

This was supposed to be the happiest day of her life, wasn't it? Well it certainly had become memorable already and the wedding ceremony hadn't even started yet, but happy? The jury was still out on that one ... Alexandra stood in the women's bathroom in the lobby of one of the fanciest, most expensive hotels in Las Vegas and stared at her own reflection in the mirror. She was getting married to a wonderful, handsome man not too long from then in the largest banquet hall in the hotel. She was resplendent in her princess bridal gown. Her hair was perfectly coiffed upwards into a pony tail that cascaded down through the diamond encrusted tiara she wore and down to her shoulders then pooled onto her bare back just under her shoulder blades. Her makeup had been applied to perfection; her cheeks rosy, her eyes bright blue and sparkling. She glanced at the clock behind her on the wall; the ceremony was to begin any moment and her handsome pop star husband-to-be would be waiting nervously at the altar ... So why was she staring at the reflection of someone who's heart had just been torn in two instead of waiting for her cue to begin walking up the aisle? The heartbreak started only 10 minutes before when she left the safety of the bride's room to rush down the hall for a last minute bathroom break when she was greeted by a handsome friend of hers Jake Conroy.

"Where are you headed?" He asked as he met her in the hallway, her dress billowing around her as she tried to breeze swiftly down the hall for a quick tinkle before the ceremony was to start.

"Bathroom." She said. He laughed softly.

"Nervous bladder?" He teased. She sighed and nodded.

"Nervous everything." She said and eyed the door to the women's room only 500 feet away.

"Hey, can I tell you something?" He asked, his hands clasped together in front of his chest. He was dressed formally in a three piece dark blue suit, tie, and crisp, white shirt. His dark, curly hair was combed to perfection, but his usual warm, generous eyes were distant, nervous. Alex dropped the hem of her dress, her arm was getting tired of holding it up and her hands were sweating in the satin gloves that covered her arms up to her elbows.

"Of course you can. Is something wrong?" She asked cautiously. Jake and his fiancée, also Alex's best friend Jovie Jensen were scheduled to be married in the same banquet room of the same hotel the very next week and the way he fidgeted in front of her now she had an awful feeling what he had to tell her may have something to do with that. He now ran a hand through his curls, took a deep breath and exhaled slowly through pursed lips. "What is it, Jake?" She asked urgently, not only did she have to pee but the wedding was to start any minute now.

"Ummm ..." he looked at her then looked away. Forcing himself to look at her again their eyes met and he held her there. "I, uhh, I ... I don't know how to say this."

"Just spit it out." She said anxiously.

"I ... I love you." He said suddenly and so quietly she wasn't sure she'd actually heard what she thought she did.

"You what?" She said, confused. His eyes bore into her and for a moment she was sure he could see right through her and beyond.

"I love you, Allie. I want you so badly that it hurts." She sighed and looked down at the floor.

"Jake ..." She said in desperation. He slid his hands around the sides of her head and after glancing up and down the hallway making sure no one was looking he turned her head up to his.

"I can't help it, its how I feel."

"How long have you felt like this?" She asked, her eyes searching his for answers.

"A long time." He whispered.

"How long?"

"Does it matter? What matters is that I want you. I want to kiss you. Can I kiss you? Just once before you marry him." She closed her eyes as his mouth descended upon hers, his lips first brushing hers sending shivers up and down her spine then he pressed them more urgently against hers. Her arms were pinned to her sides by fright though she had an urge to slip them around his waist. Her whole being was paralyzed by his kiss and a fear of being caught. After

an endless moment he pulled back slightly. "You are so beautiful. Tell me that kiss didn't mean something to you?" Alex said nothing, just kept her eyes closed breathing heavily into his face. "Would you like to sneak away and have a moment before the ceremony?" He whispered. Her eyes popped open and she frowned. "Okay, forget that. I know you have to go but this is far from over Allie. Just don't forget how I feel about you." He pressed his mouth to hers once more for a deep seated kiss that included his tongue wiggling its way between her lips and mingling briefly with hers. He dropped his hands from her head and took a step backwards. Alex swooned. Jake reached out and held her by the shoulders. "Are you going to be okay?" He asked. She cleared her throat and swallowed hard.

"Umm yeah. I think so." She said softly before turning and literally sprinting to the women's room, pushing the door open and slipping inside.

The wedding went off as planned and Alexandra did her best to put the recent declaration of love from Jake in the back of her mind during the ceremony but there he was, in the corner of her eye, watching, waiting. During the reception she was on guard ... he was bound to corner her and though she expected it, she was apprehensive so whenever she needed to go to the bathroom she always made sure she dragged someone with her. First it was her mother, and then it was Jovie. Next, her cousin Sally. In any case, it worked. The only time she was alone with Jake was when he asked her to dance. Reluctantly she obliged. He slipped his arm around her and pulled her out onto the dance floor.

"You're avoiding me." He said as the music played and their bodies swayed slowly to the tempo. Alex cleared her throat and glanced up at him.

"No, Jake, no I'm not." He laughed softly.

"You are too." She smiled demurely, her lips glistening in the dim light. He ached to lean down and kiss her again. Once was definitely not enough. "So what will you do with the information I provided a few hours ago?" She shrugged.

"I don't know Jake, what should I do with it?" Her indigo eyes peered up at his and he was enchanted once more by her.

"Well ..." he rolled his tongue around inside his mouth. "You could sneak away with me tonight, we could just disappear the two of us." He said it as joke outwardly but inwardly he

hoped she would take him up on it. And he would really do it if she said yes. Instead she tipped her head back and laughed.

“I don’t think so.” She mused. He smiled. “I happen to love my husband.” Her words hit him like a punch in the chest and his breath caught in his throat. He coughed slightly.

“Well I happen to love you.” He whispered and watched as her cheeks flushed pink.

“You don’t love Jovie?” She asked through gritted teeth. It was his turn to blush.

“Well, yeah. Did I say I didn’t?” Her eyes flashed angrily.

“All this stuff about me gives me the idea that you don’t.” He shook his head. It was on the chopping block right at that moment and it wasn’t very comfortable. He tightened his grip around her waist as though she would disappear into thin air and he would be left standing foolishly alone.

“That’s not true. I do love her. It’s just that ...” He looked down at her. Her eyes captured his gaze and held him there. He was dumbfounded and felt a whole new wave of emotion wash over him, tears collected on his lower lid and he blinked them away.

“It’s just that what? I’m waiting for your answer.” He shook his head and looked away. “Just as I thought. You don’t love her. Then why are you marrying her?” He had already revealed that, bared his soul to her in the hallway, kissed her and risked being caught ... why was she asking again when she said she didn’t want to hear it?

“I already explained that to you.” She sighed and looked over his shoulder at her new husband who was perched on the end of the bridal table; his tie loosened and turned to one side as he chatted with Jovie who was brilliant in her cobalt blue maid of honor dress. Her heart ached for Derek. What would he say if he knew the conversation she was having at that very moment, at their wedding reception of all places with Jake? She couldn’t risk losing him.

“Jake ... I appreciate the fact that you came to me and told me how you feel but I ...” she hesitated and looked up at him. He was so handsome in his suit and tie, his eyes bright and glistening, attentive and waiting to hear what she had to say. His hair swirled around his head in dark waves; the light shining over his head filtered through the curls and lit them up. He looked like an angel right then and there and she sighed again. She was torn between telling him to back off and not wanting to hurt his feelings either. It was a brave thing he did earlier that day by confessing his feelings about her and the courage it must have taken had to have been called up from the deepest recesses of his inner self but she couldn’t let him come between her and her

new husband. “This just can’t go any further. Marry Jovie, have babies, be happy.” He stared at her emotionless. It was getting too difficult to talk about it any more. He had to get away before he said something or did something he would regret. He stopped moving and released her.

“Well I can marry her and we could possibly have babies ... but without you the last thing you said can’t and won’t happen.” She took a deep breath but before she could say anything he brushed past her and out the door.

Alex looked over at Derek and smiled when she felt his hand slip inside hers. She had been staring out the window of the airplane as they hovered over the clouds on their way to Hawaii for their honeymoon.

“Everything okay?” He asked with an obvious Australian intonation. He was born and raised there but had moved to California not too long ago and luckily for her hadn’t lost that sexy inflection. She nodded.

“Yeah, I’m great, you?” He sighed and kissed her fingers.

“I am now that the wedding is over with. Boy was I nervous.” She laughed softly. She was nervous too, but for a different reason the he had been.

“I know what you mean. I couldn’t breathe halfway through it.” He nodded.

“Hey, I was thinking that we should look for a house now. What do you think?” She frowned thoughtfully.

“You think we should get into a house? Right away?” He smiled and nodded, his thick luscious lips pushing back and baring his bright, white, Hollywood teeth. She raised her eyebrows and shrugged.

“Well, I guess so.” He winked one twinkling blue eye at her.

“Excellent.” He pulled his hand from hers and slipped it around her shoulder. “I love you, Alex.” He said softly and then leaned down for a kiss. She tilted her head and met his lips with her own. They were warm and soft. He pulled her closer as his kisses became inflamed. She reached up and slid her fingers into his tight, blonde curls. “God, I can’t wait to get to the hotel and make love to my wife.” He whispered and shifted uncomfortably in his seat. She grinned.

“I can’t wait either.” She said and rested her head on his chest.

“Look at this Derek!” She gushed pushing open the white sheers that covered the sliding glass door in the hotel room.

“What?” He asked setting down their suitcases and coming up behind her. He placed his hands on her shoulders and leaned down so that his head was even with hers as he peered out at what she was looking. “It’s marvelous.” He breathed. Their room was right on the beach overlooking the ocean. There was a cape not far away. The green grass tumbled slightly over the edge of it changing to black volcanic rock. As the ocean crashed against them it left an austere white foam that evaporated quickly.

“I can’t wait to get out there!” She squealed. He turned her around and slid his fingers around her neck and traced the outline of her jaw with his thumbs lightly.

“Do you want to consummate this marriage first ...” he whispered and kissed her pouting lips lightly a few times. “Or would you like to change into your suit and head out to the beach?” She held her breath as his lips brushed against hers then kissed down her chin and back up. She ran her hands up the back of his loose, button-down Hawaiian print shirt and raked her nails along his taught back. Her mouth pressed against his feverishly as she traced the outline of his muscles with the tips of her fingers then worked their way around to his chest where she slid them into the hair that matted it.

“How about we look at the beach later?” She whispered and trailed her hands down to waistband of his jean shorts then fiddled with the zipper. He pulled her shirt over her head and tossed it aside as she pushed his shorts down freeing his already hard manhood. “Oh, Derek ...” she sighed and took him into her hands. He gasped at the stark contrast in the temperature of her cool fingers against the heat of his shaft. He unhooked her bra and pulled it off her dipping his head first to one firm nipple then the other. Her head dropped back and she moaned. He ran his hands down her back and as he held her pushed her backwards so he could gain better access to her. He sucked the nipple between his lips and flicked his tongue against it before kissing downwards towards her belly button. In one swift motion he scooped her into his arms and carried her to the massive king-sized bed and laid her gently upon it.

“I think these are in the way ...” he said with a wink and slid her shorts down her hips and tossed them away taking her panties with them. Without bothering to unbutton the shirt he pulled it up and over his head then crawled on top of her. “Well, Mrs. Harris,” he began leaning down and kissing her with devotion. “Looks like I’ve got you where I want you.” He winked

and began to kiss her all over starting with her neck then working his way down her body slowly, teasingly leaving tiny wet pucker marks all over her skin like a snail trail. She shivered and burst out in goose bumps. When he finally got to her hips she was panting. He kissed down and around her trimmed, furry patch then pushed her thighs apart and began to lick them.

“Oh God, Derek, you are such a tease!” She gushed as his tongue lapped on the inside of her thigh right where her leg and her torso met. He settled himself down on the bed and with a finger traced the outline of the lips between her legs spreading her wetness all around.

“And it’s quite obvious that you like it.” He whispered as his fingers slipped just inside and brushed against her clitoris. She gasped. “Oh that’s the spot is it?” He said, tantalizing her by removing the finger and pressing his tongue against it. He moved it ever so slightly. She closed her eyes and moaned.

“Don’t stop.” She breathed heavily and reached down to his head sliding her fingers into his hair.

“Don’t stop?” He asked pulling back and smiling.

“Derek!” She snapped. He chuckled and slipped his tongue inside her once more. Once he was finished playing he set his tongue to work licking, flicking against her and then finally lapping at a steady pace against her now hardened and throbbing clitoris.

“God, that feels fantastic.” She sighed as he worked at it. She closed her eyes and tried to relax but all she could see behind her lids was Jake, hurt and annoyed stomping off after their dance ended. She fought desperately to put the vision out of her mind but it kept resurfacing, agitating her and preventing her from being calm enough to let herself go. Until she did there would be no release. She took a deep breath and pictured nothing in her head ... Derek ... she said loudly in her mind. Think about Derek ... not long after that she felt her body respond and a huge wave of pleasure crashed over her. Her fingers tightened into his curls as an automatic response and once she had relaxed Derek let her go and crawled up on top of her. He pushed her thighs apart with his knees and entered her slowly.

“How’s that baby?” He asked giving her more until he was buried to the hilt. She groaned.

“Oh Derek, that’s good.” She said. Pleased at hearing it he began to make love to her slowly then quickly then slowing it down some. As his own pleasure built up he closed his eyes and pressed his mouth against hers. She consumed his mouth in feverish kisses and within moments his orgasm peaked and he released inside her in hot, shooting spurts. “Oh baby ...”

She moaned as he bucked with every throb. Once he had settled he rolled off and sighed. She curled into him and he wrapped an arm around her.

“Now we’re properly man and wife.” He said and blew air out of his mouth. She grasped his left hand and turned his wedding ring around and around on his finger.

“Yes we are.” She said softly and closed her eyes.

Alexandra awoke with a start and ran a hand through her hair. It was damp. It was then that she found her nightshirt soaked around the neckline and clinging to her body. It was still dark and she could see the outline of the full moon through the sheers that covered the sliding glass door. Glancing towards the other side of the bed her husband was sleeping peacefully, his back to her. Pushing back the covers she slipped out of bed quietly not wanting to wake him and crept out the door to stand on the wooden deck. There was a strong, warm breeze that blew past her whipping her hair around her head and flattening her nightshirt against her body. She leaned her elbows down on the railing and closed her eyes feeling the wind wash over her face. She breathed in the scent of the ocean, a pungent salty smell. She would miss this in a few days when they were gone. A volcano puffed lightly in the distance. She had been dreaming moments ago that she was making love with someone she presumed to be Derek and then in light she saw that was Jake. Her fingers were wrapped in his soft, chestnut hair, his mouth was on hers, his body pumping against her. She moaned. Why wouldn’t he leave her alone? She slipped her fingers into her hair and pressed them against her damp scalp. She let go and looked up at the bright moon. Because she had always been infatuated with him, from the day she met him ... he had a charm and wit that she was magnetically attracted to not to mention his soft features, large, brown dusky eyes, pouting lips and compact, sexy ass. She had been jealous of Jovie since they had begun dating but once she met Derek she thought she was over him. And her resolve had been strong, feelings kept in tact ... until the day of her wedding when he came out and told her how he felt about her. Why couldn’t he have said something long before now ... she asked herself and sighed heavily. Just then the door behind her opened and Derek stepped out naked onto the deck. Alex glanced around nervously but there was no one else within miles. He came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her tightly.

“I couldn’t sleep.” She said softly as he nuzzled his stubbled face into her neck. “I had a bad dream.” He nodded.

“I know you did, you were tossing and turning.” She turned to glance at him.

“I was?” She asked. He nodded again.

“And moaning.” Her heart thudded in her chest.

“Was I saying anything?” She asked nervously. He ran his hands down the front of her gown and then back up underneath it.

“No ...” he said as he slid his smallish hands up her thighs and then between them. “Come back to bed.” He whispered into her ear and penetrated her with his fingers. She moaned. “On second thought ...” He lifted the back of her nightshirt and she opened herself to him. He took her right there on the deck with the ocean lapping at the shore in front of them, the moon shining brightly in the night sky and the breeze caressing their sweat-lined bodies, carrying their voices high into the darkness. By the time they crawled back into bed Alex was fatigued enough that she went right back to sleep, her husband curled up around her back.

CHAPTER THREE

Dave the doorman held the front door of the condo open to Alex and she breezed through.

"Hey Dave. Are they home?" She asked referring to Jake and Jovie. They should have been home from their honeymoon two days ago but she was afraid to call. She wasn't sure she could pull off acting like nothing had transpired between her and Jake not only at her wedding but his. She was dancing with her husband of one week when Jake asked if he could cut in. Derek kissed her on the cheek and went to mingle with the other guests as the groom took her into his arms and pulled her close. She looked up at him, her eyes fearful and guarded. He smiled handsomely. She'd never seen him looking so becoming.

“You look gorgeous.” He said as she gazed into his eyes. Embarrassed she looked away. “Did you have a nice honeymoon?” She nodded slowly.

“Yes. Thank you, it was wonderful.” His fingers lightly played against her back as they danced.

“I want to kiss you right now.” She looked up at him quickly and frowned.

“It’s your wedding day!” She chastised. He laughed softly.

“I can’t help it. If you were a hideous beast with an awful personality it would make things a lot easier you know.” She looked down. “Don’t worry, I won’t kiss you at my own wedding

reception but after today all bets are off.” It had been a terribly uncomfortable situation and one that she would have to work out in her head. When Jo had left three messages on her cell phone Alex decided she'd better make an appearance or Jo might begin to suspect something was wrong.

"Yes Ms. Portico, they've been back for a few days now." Dave said pressing the elevator button for her, tipping his cap and then returning to his place at the front door. The elevator arrived and Alex stepped in. As she went to press the button for the fourth floor she noticed her hand trembling. She sighed disgustedly, pressed the button and then held it in her other one.

"Get a grip Alexandra ..." she muttered to herself as the lift ascended. She stood staring at the large foreboding wooden door before getting up the courage to knock. The door swung open and she was greeted by first the surprised face and then the smiling face of Jake. Alex felt her insides turn to mush. He leaned on the edge of the door.

"Well, hello ..." He said in a low voice. Nervously Alex tucked her hair behind her ear.

"Is your wife home?" She said, accentuating the 'wife' part. He opened the door all the way and swept his arm down the hallway indicating she should enter. Alex brushed past him and entered the condo. She waited while he closed the door before meeting her in the hallway that led to the dining room.

"She's not home." He said with a shrug.

"Where is she?" Alex asked glancing around the house.

"She went shopping." He said with a smile. Alex nodded.

"Well would you tell her I stopped by?" She asked. Jake nodded.

"Yes I will. But tell me you're not just going to run away ..." She blushed.

"I suppose we should probably talk about ... umm ... things since she's not here." She said. He nodded again.

"Yes, we should ..." She took a deep breath and just came right out with it.

"Jake, this is just wrong, you and I. If you loved me as much as you say you do then you never should have married Jo. We can't go on like this. As it is I'm afraid to be alone with you." He reached forward, grabbed her hand and pulled her to him.

"I had to marry her, Allie, just like you had to marry Derek. Everything had already been set in motion months ago and by the time I realized how attracted I was to you the invites had been sent out. What was I going to do?" She trembled nervously as she stood there in his arms

in the dining room of her best friend's house. Jovie could burst through the door at any minute and catch them there...

"No, Jake, this is wrong on many levels." He kissed her softly. "Jake ..." she protested but before she could say anything else his pressed his mouth on hers again.

"But it's right on many levels too, Allie. Tell me you don't feel something between us ... tell me my kisses don't affect you ..." His lips slid effortless across hers, tickling and as his kisses deepened she fell into him, drunk with a momentary wave of desire. He slipped his tongue between her lips and slid it against hers. She moaned softly and then pressed at his chest.

"Jake, please ..." She begged.

"You want me too, oh God, Allie ... it's there! I felt it." She felt tears stinging beneath her lids and she closed her eyes.

"Can you feel how much I want you?" He pressed his hand against her behind and pushed his hips against her. She felt a large knot safely tucked away under the fabric of his tight jeans. Her heart thumped wildly in her chest as her passion manifested itself between her legs in the form of a warm wetness that was now becoming uncomfortable.

"I can't do this." She said and detached herself from him.

"You can." He said reaching for her. "I've read your novels ..." He pulled her into his arms again. "I know that stuff you write is about me." Her eyes opened wide and her mouth dropped open in surprise.

"What?" She gasped incredulously. He smiled and dipped his head to her ear.

"It's quite obvious. At least to me." She laughed.

"You are delusional." He searched her eyes.

"Am I?" He pressed his lips against hers and for a moment she accepted the kiss but coming to her senses pushed him away.

"You've got to stop doing that!" She said touching her lips gently with the tips of her fingers as if they had just been burned by something very hot.

"Why? Because you enjoy it? Because you want me as much as I want you?" She clicked her tongue and sighed.

"No! Because all of this is wrong, Jake, if Jo and Derek knew they would be so hurt."

"Well I'm certainly not going to tell them. How would they know? It's just you and me here right now." She glanced around uncomfortably.

"I have to get going. I-I can't be here alone with you." He moved forward slowly as she backed away and before she knew it she was pressed up against the wall that separated the dining room from the front hallway. Her breath was coming in short gasps and her hands trembled at her sides. Jake ran his hands up her arms to her shoulders and then tickled her neck lightly before sliding them into her hair.

"You are so beautiful." He whispered. "I've never felt this way about anyone before. Ever." She looked into his eyes and licked her lips. Her desire for him was overwhelming and leaving her breathless. "It's there Allie ... I see it. You are fighting it. Why don't you stop fighting me?" He leaned forward to kiss her but she turned her head. Instead he kissed the side of her face down to her ear and then planted tiny, wet kisses on her neck.

"I-I'm fighting because it's wrong! You have to know it's wrong! We're married!" She stammered then slipped away from him. "I really have to go! Please tell Jo I stopped by." She said as she headed quickly for the door.

"Allie, wait!" He called as she pulled open the front door and escaped. The door slammed and then she was gone. Jake sighed and pinched his lips together. She had been wearing some sort of flavored lipstick, it was grape ... it tasted good. He frowned. She would come to her senses, he thought to himself. Hopefully. She wanted him as badly as he wanted her - he was sure of it; he felt it in the way she kissed him back, her soft moan ... she was denying her attraction but she would come around ... eventually. And he decided he would wait however long it took. He was a patient man. He'd never been this enraptured by anyone in his life and he wasn't about to let it go easily. It would just take some convincing on his part. Was he up to the challenge? He smiled. He sure was!

Alex sat in the driver's seat shaking uncontrollably and rested her head on the steering wheel. Her encounter with Jake was more than she'd bargained for and obviously couldn't handle. She felt tears welling up inside her but they wouldn't come. She felt a lump in her throat and swallowed hard trying to disperse it. Her breathing was coming in fast and short spurts and before long she began to feel dizzy and lightheaded. She sat up and took a deep breath of air expanding her lungs and drinking in oxygen. "Oh my God ..." she sighed. "He's trying to kill me, I'm sure of that now." She looked around and after not seeing anyone recognizable she began to sob. Grabbing tissues from the tissue box holder in her center console she blew her

nose and dabbed at her wet eyes careful not to smear the mascara around her eyes making her look like a drunken raccoon. She breathed in deeply through her nose ... she could still smell his spicy cologne, the feeling of his hands on her, his mouth ... She shook her head violently trying to banish the thoughts that were washing over her, making her warm with desire. "Get a grip, Alex." She said to herself. She had promised herself she wouldn't react to his advances no matter how bad it got. And it had gotten pretty bad in there; if she hadn't fled when she did they would have ended up in bed and probably caught. She couldn't risk that. I am a married woman, I am a married woman ... she said it over and over trying to convince herself more than anything else. She started the car and pulled away from the curb. She thought about Derek ... he was the sweetest, kindest, most soft-spoken man she'd ever known. And he loved her, really loved her. He loved her before they had sex for the first time. He loved her when she first got up in the morning, her hair kinked from sleep, eyes tired and red, and without makeup on. Her heart ached for him now. It wasn't a long drive from Jake and Jovie's to her own condo where she and Derek had taken up residence and before long she pulled into the private parking garage and then headed towards the elevator. She let herself into the house and tossed her keys and purse down on the credenza by the door.

"Derek?" She called. She heard him playing the guitar in the study and burst in. He jumped at the noise.

"What? What is it?" He asked, a worried look had crossed over his handsome face. Setting down the guitar quickly he was ready when she leapt into his arms. He held her tightly then pulled back and looked at her quizzically. "Are you going to tell me what's wrong or do I have to guess?" She smiled and kissed him passionately. "Forget it, I don't want to know. Just kiss me again like that." She pressed her mouth against his, her tongue running along his bottom lip. He sucked it into his mouth and pressed his own against hers. She crawled into his lap and ran her hands through his hair. He undressed her quickly and took her right there on the floor in the den and afterwards she lay across his chest and toyed with the light curls that matted it.

"What got you so riled up that you had to jump me when you got home?" He asked after some time. She shrugged and ran her fingers up his chest to his shoulder then up his neck to his chin.

"I just missed you." She said and rubbed her finger across the blonde stubble that he'd been cultivating for a few days. He sighed and pinched her nose.

“Well I missed you too. How’s Jo?” He asked. She felt a sharp pain in her belly that caused her to flinch. She covered it up by scratching her side.

“She wasn’t home.”

“I’m sorry.” He said.

“What are you sorry for?” She asked lifting her head and peering up at him. He pulled her up and on top of him.

“That you went all that way for nothing.” He said softly and then kissed her nose. She smiled.

“Yeah, but look what it got you!” He laughed and tucked her head into his shoulder.

“That’s true. You should go out more often.” She uttered a small laugh. On the outside she was laughing but on the inside, her heart ached.

“So how was your honeymoon?” Alex asked Jovie.

“It was wonderful! We lay on the beach, rode bikes, drank lots and lots of strawberry margaritas. I have a fantastic tan! You should see it! Oh that’s right, you would have but you came over when I wasn’t home!” Alex felt a pang of guilt take hold of her and for a moment was silent. “You know I got home right after you left. I saw you pull away.”

“You’re kidding?” Alex said, feigning surprise. “So why did it take you two days to call me back then?”

“Well, I’ve been busy ...” she sighed. “I’ve been meeting with my agent and going over some scripts. There are a few movies I can do, I just have to choose one.”

“That’s pretty cool.”

“Are you writing?” Alex nodded though Jo couldn’t see her through the phone.

“Yeah, I’m trying. It’s hard though with Derek around all the time. He’s just a bit distracting.” She said and then smiled. She giggled.

“I’ll bet. Are you still on your honeymoon? You know ... that way?” She asked indicating about newlywed sex.

“Oh God yes, he’s insatiable.” She sighed dreamily. Alex wanted to ask her the same question but was afraid of the answer.

“Jake used to be.” She said. “He’s been very distant lately. I think he’s totally brain dumped since he came off tour. He doesn’t want to do anything. He just sits in front of the TV.

It's getting a little annoying." Alex blushed guiltily and was glad she was talking to Jo over the phone and not in person.

"Don't worry, Derek's appetite will wear off I'm sure and Jake's will increase once he's settled."

"Do you think so?" Alex sighed to herself. She certainly hoped so. Perhaps if she continued to spurn his advances he would eventually tire of the game and go back to Jovie.

"Yeah, I think so."

"So when are we going out?" Jo asked.

"I don't know, when do you want to go?"

"How about tonight?"

"Tonight?" Alex asked, confused. She thought Jovie had meant just the two of them but obviously she didn't ...

"Yes, how about the four of us go downtown and have dinner?" Alex felt her body tense at the suggestion.

"No, not tonight." She said trying to think quickly of an excuse. "Derek's working really hard on his new stuff, I just don't think he's up to it." Jovie sighed.

"Put him on the phone, I'll ask him myself." Alex glanced towards the den where Derek was still working on perfecting his guitar riffs.

"He's really engrossed."

"Dammit, Alex, I'm bored to shit. I went shopping again this morning, found nothing, came home the same shit I've been doing for two days and now you don't even want to get together for dinner." Jovie whined. Alex bit the nail on her thumb.

"I'm sorry." She said softly.

"Please?" Jo asked in a little girl voice. Alex sighed. She didn't know if she could stand to see Jake again today. She felt the awful burden of guilt and she hadn't really done anything to be ashamed of. Reluctantly she gave in.

"Fine. I'll ask Derek but I can't promise anything."

"Thank you!" Jovie gushed. Alex said she would call her back and hung up the phone.

Jovie knelt down on the floor in front of the couch and stuck her head up in front of Jake's face to get his attention. He looked around her and changed the channel on the TV. She made a face and crossed her eyes. He chuckled softly and put his hand over her eyes.

"That really looks weird, you shouldn't do that." He said stopping on The Discovery Channel.

"Hey, babe ..." She said pushing her way into his arms. He stopped what he was doing and looked at her.

"What?" He asked, somewhat impatiently.

"What do you want to do tonight?" She asked leaning her head against his chest. He wrapped one arm around her and changed the channels on the TV with the other.

"Not a damned thing." She sighed.

"Why not?" He took a deep breath before speaking. Why not? Because I've had a rough day, that's why not. Thanks to you Allie won't give me the time of day, is that a good enough reason for you ... he thought, his jaws clenched.

"I'm tired, Jo. I don't feel like going anywhere."

"I thought maybe you, me, Alex, and Derek could have dinner somewhere then maybe walk along the beach ..." She said softly. He perked up at the sound of Alex's name.

"Did you ask Alex already?" He asked, careful to calm his voice when he spoke about her. She nodded against him. "And what did she say? Do they want to?"

"Alex is going to check with Derek and call me back." She pulled her head away from him and eyed him suspiciously. "You have all this energy all of a sudden ..." she said flatly. He pulled her to him and stroked her hair lightly.

"Well it's just more fun going out with another couple then when it's just us sometimes, you know?" She sighed and nodded.

"I know. I hate to admit it but I know." Just then her phone rang. She got up and sprinted across the living room to retrieve it from where she'd left it. She answered it right before it went to voice mail. "You will?" She said excitedly when Alex told her that they would go out with them. "I'm glad. Jake is glad too. We'll get ready and come over to your place then we'll all go out." She hung up the phone and walked back into the living room. Jake was already up off the couch and in the bedroom changing. Jovie joined him.

Derek opened the door to the condo and welcomed Jake and Jovie into their “humble abode.” He hugged Jovie and shook Jake’s hand.

“How are you two?” He asked, his Australian accent coming through loud and clear. Jovie sighed to herself. It was downright sexy and she envied Alex for that. If the two had switched places, he could bed her in a heartbeat with that lilt. She looked around the condo ... Derek’s gold records were plastered on the wall in the hallway. Impressive to say the least.

“We’re good.” Jake said simply. “Where’s your lovely wife?” He asked planting his hands on his hips and sweeping the room with his eyes. Noticing the records and other accents from Australia he decided that their home wasn’t as feminine as Jovie had made theirs and it made him somewhat melancholy.

“My lovely wife is in our bedroom getting ready. Would you two like something to drink? God knows how long she’ll be.” Derek said with a smile and a wink. Jovie watched him with an ardent interest.

“Nothing to drink for me.” Jake said and wandered around the living room peeking at books on the shelves wishing he could sneak into the bedroom and catch Allie dressing.

“How are you, Jovie?” Derek said quietly as she stood near him. He kept one eye on Jake and with the other eyed her with interest. She felt herself blush furiously.

“Umm ... I’m very good, thank you Derek. I hear you’re busy playing the guitar.” He nodded.

“It’s my latest passion.” He said and then as Alex emerged from the bedroom, “besides my lovely wife of course.” She smiled at him and tucked her hair behind her ear not noticing that Jake was standing right behind her. He cleared his throat. Startled, she jumped and instantly felt herself trembling.

“Hi Jake.” She said softly. He smiled and looked her up and down, not caring if anyone else noticed.

“Hi Allie.” He replied and then moved towards her. She stiffened as he embraced her briefly. She moved away from him and into the waiting arms of her husband who was very sexy in a light blue button down shirt and a pair of denims that were ripped at the knees.

“Shall we go?” He asked and after wrapping his arm around Alex’s neck and kissing the side of her head. She nodded. He held the door open. “Jovie?” He said and indicated the door.

She smiled as she breezed past him. Alex went next followed by Jake. Derek closed and locked the door then joined the others at the elevator.

Jovie chose the most popular of all the restaurants in Beverly and much to Alex's embarrassment she made sure the maitre d' knew that both the Conroys and the Harris's were there. She knew that he would alert the paparazzi as soon as he'd seated them and they would be in the gossip rags the next day. While the other 3 sat Alex excused herself to go to the restroom and when she came back to the table found that the only seat available to her was next to Jake. She eyed Derek and he jumped up and pulled her chair out for her. She blushed. She hadn't meant for him to leap out of the comfort of his chair to hold her chair, she was just mystified as to why he sat across from her and not next to her. She sat thanking him softly and then he sat.

"I took the liberty of ordering you a drink darling." Derek said to her and then winked. She smiled at him.

"Thank you sweetie." Just then the waiter brought their drinks. Silence fell over the table as the four of them perused the menu. Suddenly Alex felt something brush against the side of her thigh and looked down to see Jake pressing his leg against hers. She flushed hotly and glanced at Derek. He had been looking down at the menu in his lap and looked up flashing his blue eyes at her.

"See anything you like?" He asked softly. She smiled nervously. His eyes went back to looking at the menu. "What do you want?" She felt a poke at her leg and glanced over to Jake who was staring at her. Her face turned pink and she looked down quickly. She tucked her hair behind her ear and found her hand was trembling. Setting the menu down on the table she held her hands together clasped in her lap. Alex wasn't sure she would be able to survive the meal sitting next to Jake who touched her constantly. Her stomach was in knots and she didn't feel like eating anything. When it came time to order the meal she ordered a salad just so that Derek wouldn't know something was wrong. And as the waiter collected the menus and excused himself, Jake pretended to stretch and casually slipped his arm over the back of her chair. Alex sighed and reached out her hand to Derek for comfort. He took it and held it tightly rubbing his thumb over her knuckles.

"So, I'm going to start filming soon." Jovie said breaking the silence that had fallen again over the table.

“That’s fabulous.” Derek said with a charming smile. “What’s the movie going to be about?” She shrugged.

“Well there are like four of them I have to choose from. I’m not sure which one I’ll choose.”

“That sounds ex ...” Alex began and then jumped when she felt Jake’s fingers playing with her back. “Excellent.” She said and smiled. “Any wonderful locations this time?” Jo nodded.

“Oh yes! One of the movies is being shot in Fiji!”

“I’ve been there, it’s gorgeous!” Derek added.

“I would love to go.” Jovie said. “I think maybe I’ll choose that one.”

“What’s the movie going to be about?” Jo shrugged.

“Who cares? I’m going to filming it in Fiji!” Alex laughed.

“You won’t be sorry, make sure you bring your camera.” Derek said.

“You’ll miss me though, won’t you Jake?” She said leaning her elbows on the table and resting her head in her hands. Jake was staring off into the distance and not paying attention to her at all. “Jake?” She asked. He moved his eyes slowly towards her and then raised his eyebrows. “Where the hell are you because you sure aren’t here?” He shrugged.

“Fiji I guess.” He teased. She giggled.

“So you are paying attention.” She said. He smiled coyly and tickled Alex’s back.

“Of course I am my dear. I’m riveted by everything you say.” Alex smiled and Jovie giggled.

“You’re silly.” She said. He nodded.

“Yeah, I am.” Dinner came moments later and they chatted while they ate, the conversation being dominated by Jovie and Derek. Alex picked at her salad, pushing vegetables around on her plate so that it would look like she was eating. Her belly was doing flips as Jake edged closer. She eyed the two sitting directly across from her and regarded them carefully. How could they not see that Jake was flirting with her? His hand around her back, he kept getting closer to her with every passing moment ... it wouldn’t be long before he was in her lap. Would they even notice it then? She excused herself from the table and went to the restroom again where she fished her phone out of her purse and dialed Jake’s number. He answered it quickly.

“Pretend I’m someone else.” She said quietly.

“Of course.” He said.

“Now you listen. If you don’t stop that shit I’m going to kill you. You are making it quite obvious, Jake. Please don’t fuck things up for me. You may not be happy with your marriage but I am with mine.”

“Yeah, I know. It kind of sucks.” He said sadly. She sighed.

“Just please, quit. Or else I won’t be able to go out with you and Jo ever again. I can’t take this right now.” Alex felt tears welling up in her eyes and blinked them back.

“I’m sorry.” He said softly. “I don’t want that. I couldn’t stand to see that happen. Listen, I’m at dinner so can I call you back later?”

“Goodbye.” She whispered and hung up before he could say another word. She plopped herself down in a stall, rested her arm on the toilet paper roll and leaned her head down on it. The feeling that she was going to cry came and went and once she felt stronger she went back to the table where she found Jo and Derek chatting away and Jake missing.

“Where’s your husband?” Alex asked Jovie as she sat down and finished her drink. Jovie glanced towards the front of the restaurant where Jake had disappeared moments ago.

“He had a phone call and left to take it.” Alex nodded. The three sat and chatted for some time before Jake returned, apologized and insisted on paying the bill.

“Are you nuts?” Alex asked him and held her hand out. “Just tell us how much we owe.” He shook his head and closed his hand around the check.

“I’m paying tonight.” He said, his eyes focused on hers.

“Jake, just give me the bill.” She said and thrust her hand forward. He looked down at her hand then back up into her eyes.

“Allie ...” He began. Jovie stood and retrieved her purse.

“Alex just let him pay it. I’m going to the bathroom and hopefully this will all be worked out by the time I get back.” She turned and walked off. Acutely aware of Derek’s presence Jake slowly took Alex’s hand into his.

“Alex ... dear ... I’m paying for the dinner tonight. If you feel that strongly about it you can pay the next time. Okay?” He said softly. His hand was very warm as it held hers and her head was dizzy with confusion. She nodded absently and pulled her hand back. In her haste to get away from the table she stood quickly and proceeded to knock over a glass full of water.

“Dammit.” She muttered, righted the glass and laid her napkin on top of the spill.

“Hey,” Derek said as he stood and put his arm around her shoulder. “Let’s go.” He turned to Jake. “We’re going to wait outside for you.” He said and pulled Alex towards the door. Once they got outside he slipped his hand in hers. “I don’t want to go walking on the beach, Alex.” He said. “You seem a little annoyed. Let’s just go home.” He slipped his arm around her shoulders and she snuggled into him.

“I second that.” She said and when Jake joined them moments later Derek told him of their change in plans.

“We’ll drop you off at home so you can get your car and then Alex and I are heading inside. She’s not feeling so well tonight.” Jake glanced at Alex and then shrugged.

“Suit yourself.” He said and then stared across the street. As soon as he noticed Derek wasn’t looking Jake eyed Alex. She could tell he wasn’t happy but she couldn’t do anything about that. He wasn’t her problem, he was Jovie’s. And it wasn’t her fault that he married someone he didn’t love. Alex had. And she was every bit as in love with Derek now as she had been the first time they’d met. Still she couldn’t stand the faraway look he had when his eyes met hers and so while they waited for Derek’s car to be brought around she pressed herself against his chest and made a conscious effort to not look at Jake. Jovie joined them moments later and moaned when she discovered the beach walk was off.

“What did you do now?” She chastised Jake. His eyes opened wide in surprise.

“Me?” He asked as the valet pulled up with the car. The four of them climbed in and Derek headed home. “Why did I do something?” Jovie pulled his arm up and over her shoulders then snuggled into him.

“I was just teasing anyway ...” She said. He sighed and stared silently out the side window the rest of the way to Alex’s. When they got there, Jo and Alex hugged.

“I’m sorry, Jo.” Alex said softly into Jovie’s ear.

“Don’t you worry about it sweetie.” Jo said and then released her. “Get some rest and I’ll talk to you soon.” Derek shook Jake’s hand and then slid his arms around Jovie for a hug. Jake pulled Alex into his arms and hugged her.

“Let’s do this again.” He whispered into her ear. “Except without the other two.” Alex pushed him away and refused to dignify that comment with a reply. She pulled Derek towards the door and though she heard Jake and Jovie getting into their car didn’t bother to turn around or say goodbye, she just wanted to get upstairs and be alone with her man.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘She felt his warm breath on her neck as his hands moved up her side and over the swell of her breasts. He was the sexiest man she’d ever known and now he was preparing to make love to her, her excitement evident. His hair tumbled in soft waves onto the back of his neck; one large curl fell across his forehead and stayed there. His eyes were soft and brown. She wrapped her arms around him and pressed him to her neck then groaned when she felt his plump, damp lips pressing against her skin. He kissed her with passion ...’ Alex sat back and re-read what she wrote, her body engulfed in the flames of excitement that she had just described. She gasped when she realized she had just described Jake as he made love to her. She groaned and deleted everything she’d just written. During the day she made a conscious effort to push him out of her mind distracting herself with Derek but at night while she was asleep and her mind was free he came to her ... she had no control over what he did or how she responded and often times she woke with a start in a pool of sweat. And now as she sat there alone in front of the computer, Derek gone to meetings, her thoughts led her back to Jake and his flirtatious teasing. In the last month the four of them had gone out several times and each time Jake would find one excuse or another to touch her. His eyes swept over her making her blush. And each time she would come away astonished that Jo and Derek hadn’t seem to notice. Maybe, she reasoned they didn’t notice because they weren’t paying attention and she was. And the reason she paid attention? Because she had a deep secreted desire to know him, to feel the raw passion behind those kisses, to touch his body and make him moan with pleasure. Her heart began to pound in her chest and disgusted with herself laid her arms on her desk and rested her forehead on them. As she closed her eyes she saw herself pressed up against the wall in the condo the day she had gone over to talk to Jovie and she wasn’t home. Jake standing dangerously close, his hands on her, his mouth on her neck ... No! Her voice echoed inside her brain. Don’t go there ... she tried to talk herself out of it and yet she did go there, she was there only this time she let herself show him the same desire he was showing her ... her body responded to her mind with an increase in her respirations, her cheeks flushed pink, heart thumping wildly in her chest ... she felt herself become flooded with passion when suddenly her cell phone rang. She jumped up and answered it quickly.

“Can I talk to you?” It was Jake. She breathed heavily into the phone and for a moment was unable to speak.

“Umm ... yeah. Sure. Go ahead.” She said after a moment.

“Can I come over or could we meet somewhere?” She looked around and panicked for a moment. She didn’t want to be alone with Jake, not right now when she was feeling weak.

“Well ...” she hesitated. Think, Alex, think! She ordered herself to clear her thoughts and think discernibly. Derek was away in a meeting but he could come back at anytime without warning. Surely Jake wouldn’t pull any funny stuff knowing that her husband would be back at any given moment and could pummel him to death. It wasn’t that Derek was a body builder but he did work out on a regular basis and even took boxing lessons for fun. Jake knew that, she made sure that he did so she’d let him know. “Okay, come over.”

“Derek’s not there?” He asked.

“No, Jake, he isn’t.” She said.

“I’ll be right there.” She paced the condo nervously and in a short time

Jake had arrived. She opened the door when he knocked and he rushed in, took her into his arms and kissed her. She closed her eyes and allowed herself a moment of lust before pushing at him.

“What are you doing?” She snapped and smoothed her hair down around her head. For a moment she thought her heart would thud right out of her chest and clutched at herself in an effort to calm it. It was no use. He stood hovering over her, his lips damp and trembling, eyes smoky with passion.

“Allie ...” he breathed. “I can’t take it any more.” He wrapped his arms around her and brought his mouth down on hers again. Alex placed her hands on his chest and pushed but he held her fast.

“Jake, please!” He kissed down her chin to her neck. “Derek could walk in any second and he sure the hell wouldn’t interpret this the right way.” She breathed. Jake slid his hands up the back of her shirt and Alex pushed at him again. “Stop it!” She spat. He fingered the clasp on her bra and angrily she pulled his hands away. “Get a hold of yourself!” He frowned at her and then turned away running a hand through his hair.

“I’m sorry, Allie, it’s getting worse. I think about you all the time, the things we could do together, places we could go. I make love to you in my mind and then go into the bathroom and

pathetically jerk off.” She blushed at his revelation and then embarrassed turned away knowing that she did nearly the same thing.

“Just make love to your wife. She’ll appreciate it.” He came up behind her and placed his hands on her shoulders. His body was feverish and the heat from his palms was making her uncomfortable.

“I do.” He whispered. “But I don’t enjoy it. I want to make love to you, to feel you inside, to watch your face as I do it.” She was nearly gasping for air and felt a little lightheaded. He held her tightly. “I know you feel the same. I can see it in your eyes, the way you kissed me back there. Can’t we just have one moment, Allie? Just one?” He turned her to face him and saw the desperation in her eyes. He dipped his head to her and kissed her lips lightly. When she didn’t pull away he delved deeper, his hands around her head holding her tightly. Trembling she placed her hands around his waist and he pressed his body against hers. Alex became lost in his kisses and for a moment everything beyond Jake floated away and it was just the two of them. Until in her subconscious she saw Derek burst through the door and gasp at the sight of them. She broke free and turned away panting and gulped air. Her whole body shook and she sat down hard on a kitchen chair.

“I-I can’t do this here. My husband could have walked in and I would be divorced in a heartbeat.” He knelt down in front of her and took her hand into his.

“I’m sorry, I don’t want to hurt you or cause you pain but I am getting overwhelmed. You haunt me night and day.” She sighed, her trembling was less and now she just felt exhausted.

“Is it just the sex, Jake? Because if it’s just the sex then maybe you should seek some help or something.” He kissed the back of her hand.

“No, baby it isn’t. I want you and I will have you. No matter what it takes, no matter how long it takes.” She covered her eyes with her other hand and felt a numbing sleepiness overtake her. Shaking her head she looked down at him, his big sable eyes pleading.

“You realize you sound like a crazed stalker don’t you?” She asked and not able to suppress it, smiled. He laughed, the edges of his eyes curling upward.

“Yeah, I suppose I do but in all reality, Allie, I want you and have to have you. You’re breaking down, even now. I know you want me but you’re a lot stronger at fighting it than I am. If I were in your place I would have made love to me by now.” He grinned and then winked at her. She giggled. “Hint, hint.” Alex rolled her eyes and stood up pulling Jake up with her.

“I don’t know what to do anymore. All I know is that I’m tired of worrying about Derek and I’m tired of fighting you off. I can’t even write any more. My brain is turning to mush.” He cocked his head to the side and narrowed his eyes.

“Ohhhh ... are you writing about me again?” He said slyly. She blushed and shook her head quickly.

“No!” She said. “I never wrote about you in the first place.” He leaned his head back and laughed.

“You did so. I read it, Allie, I see right through your words. And one day ...” He stroked her hair. “I’m going to find out what sort of animal lives inside you. You can do all the things that you do to me in your book in person.” He slid his hands up her sides and under her breasts. Her nipples were so tight they pressed through her bra and her shirt. He rubbed his thumbs over them. “We’ll write whole new chapters, baby. Only this one you won’t be able to have published. It will be so hot that the words will burn right off the pages ...” He leaned down slowly and kissed her. She grabbed his hands and held them tightly.

“Jake ... stop.” He sighed.

“Stop, stop, stop, that’s all you ever say.” She laughed.

“But you never do. You just keep on going. Like the Energizer bunny.”

“I am the Energizer bunny. You just watch. I won’t stop until you give in.” She pushed him towards the door.

“You have to go. It’s getting late and I don’t want Derek to find you here.” Jake turned quickly and pulled her to him.

“Fine, I’ll go but I want one last kiss.” She eyed him and considered it. Finally she stomped off towards the front door, locked it and then approached him timidly. Jake slipped his hands into her hair and pulled her mouth to his. Closing his eyes he kissed her then let go of his passion. Desire flowed from him into her and when her arms slipped around him he knew that he had succeeded in seducing her. He moaned softly as his mouth sucked at hers, his tongue running across hers and sending sparks of lust throughout her entire being. Finally she broke free and licked her lips. He panted passionately, his eyes bore into hers, pulling at her. She unlocked the door and opened it quickly ending the session.

“Out.” She said shakily. It was a moment before he could move and when he did it was very slow.

The sun had barely lit the day when Alex and Derek strolled down Santa Monica Boulevard, hands clasped, neither of them speaking. It was the second week in a row that they had gotten up early, dressed, and headed out to a coffee shop on the Boulevard for breakfast. The day was starting out warm but the breeze was cool so Alex wore a sweatshirt over her arms. There was one table left open and Derek directed Alex to sit while he went inside and got their tea and bagels. He emerged moments later and sat next to her.

“I got you honey wheat.” He said as he slid hers over to her. She smiled.

“Thank you, darling. How is it that in two months you know me so well?” He leaned forward for a kiss then sat back after he’d gotten one.

“I pay attention.” He said. She felt the first painful pang of guilt creep into her chest and smiled at him to cover it up. Not that she had actually done anything to feel guilty about ... but she had thought about it ... a lot lately. Jovie was busy with auditions for the movies she wanted so that left Jake free to pester Alex more than usual and since Derek had also been busy preparing for his next whirlwind European concert tour that left her with too much time on her hands and not enough time with her husband to keep her in check. She was resisting Jake as best she could and failing miserably. Just the day before she had gone out bike riding with him to a trail not too far away in Coldwater Canyon and half way to the end of the 6 mile trail they stopped and plopped down in the grass to drink some water and catch their breath. She found out quickly that Jake was more interesting in taking her breath away than letting her catch it. He pulled her into his arms and laid her back on the grass.

“If I want a kiss do I have to ask your permission again?” He said and smiled. She looked up him, the sun blazing behind his head making his face look dark and foreboding. She nodded and squinted to be able to see his eyes. It didn’t matter because he closed them and moved in for a kiss. They lay there on the grass in the hot sun kissing for some time. Jake had tried several times in the recent past to get her to let him make love to her and every time she declined. She had no qualms about letting him kiss her but nothing below the waist and he was satisfied so far with that. He’d gotten further than he thought he would have sooner than he imagined. But he still tried, and this time was no different ... as they kissed he slid his hand slowly up underneath her tank top and onto her back. She turned slightly so he could caress her bare skin. She ran her hands over his hair and slid her fingers into the curls, indulging in the soft curves. With a slick

flick of his wrist he unsnapped her bra and ran his fingers around her side and took one breast into his hand. Alex sighed softly as he kissed her neck then her shoulder and lifted her top. He squeezed it and nipped gently at her nipple. It tightened into a hard nub as he slipped his lips around it and began to suck. Every nerve ending in her body felt as though he'd set it on fire and she moaned in response.

“Jake ...” She breathed when he'd finished with the first and moved onto the second.

“Hmmm?” He said as he sucked delicately on her hardened nipple. She pulled his hair aside and watched him. She was inflamed with the desire to let him make love to her but guilt pulled that to a screeching halt. He slid his hands down to the waistband of her shorts and toyed with the zipper.

“Jake ...” She said again. He heard her but having gotten this far he was going to push the envelope. He unsnapped then unzipped the shorts and slid his hand down her waist and over her hip. “No, baby ...” She whimpered as his hand slid down around the curve of her buttocks. He pulled her body close and rubbed his erection against her. Alex groaned and pulled his face back up to hers where she met his mouth with her own and sucked wildly at his lips. He began to tug the shorts down slowly until he could slide at least one finger between her legs. He gasped when he dipped the tip of it between her lips and felt how wet she was.

“No, Jake, no!” She pushed at his wrist as he slid his finger deep inside her, encouraging her passion, hoping she would be so overwhelmed with desire that she would beg him to make love to her. Alex pulled his mouth from hers and looked into his eyes. “Jake, stop! Now!” She panted. “I can't do it, you won't make me. You're just making me miserable because I won't let you.” She flopped backwards on the ground and covered her face with her hands. Embarrassed, he removed his finger, wiped it on the hem of his shirt and then zipped her back up. He pulled her hands from her face, frowning.

“I'm sorry, Allie. Really I am.” He said softly, concern washing over him making him feel weak and ashamed. She slipped her arms around his neck and hugged him. He kissed her neck softly and petted her hair. “Please forgive me?” She released him and looked into his eyes sadly, tears building and then spilling down the sides of her head. He wiped them away with his thumb. “Do you?” He whispered, his eyebrows raised, eyes opened wide. She nodded.

“I don't know how much more of this I can take.” She sighed turning her gaze away from his. He turned her back to face him.

“I will wait, Allie. As long as it takes ... I’m a patient man.” She searched his eyes for understanding and believed she’d found it.

“What if it’s never?” She said quietly. He felt his own emotions soaring and blinked to ward them away.

“Don’t say that, baby.” He choked. “I’m hoping it isn’t never. I love you so much ...” He kissed her lightly and waited while she sniffled then kissed her again.

“We should get going.” She said. He leaped up off the ground and held his hands out to her so she could stand then he helped her put her bra back on. Once she was settled they got back on their bikes and took off.

Now, sitting there drinking a chai latte and chomping on a bagel she was overwrought with disgust of herself and the fact that Jake evoked such a powerful lust in her that is crying for release.

“I’m going to miss you terribly.” She said suddenly choked with emotion. Derek smiled at her and took a sip of his tea.

“You could come with you know.” He’d said it a hundred times since he told of his tour plans. She’d begged off stating her need to write and be close in case her parents needed her.

“You know I can’t.” She said sadly and finished the last of her tea. Derek had finished as well so they collected their garbage, dumped it in the can and walked off down the Boulevard holding hands.

“I still don’t see why you couldn’t come with me.” Derek said breaking the silence that had grown between them. Alex sighed.

“Derek, I have to do some serious writing and then there are my parents.” He pulled his hand free from hers and slid his arm around her shoulder pulling her closer.

“You could do your writing on a laptop.” He offered. “The best money could buy. One specifically built for a writer of your caliber.” She snorted at that.

“You have no idea what caliber writer I am Mr. Harris.” She chastised. “You’ve never even picked up one of my books let alone read it.” He laughed and kissed the side of her head. “You think it’s funny but I don’t.”

“I’m sorry baby.” He said looking down at the ground as they walked, a blonde curl falling in front of his eyes shading them from her view. He scratched the side of a stubbly chin and then smiled coyly at her.

“And the frigging books are written about you.” She said disgustedly. “Even Jake has read them.” He gasped loudly.

“Oh dear God, not Jake! Well shit, I guess I’ll have to read them now. Can’t have Jake one-upping me now can I? That bloody drongo.” Alex frowned.

“Oh yeah, well that makes me feel better. So you’re going to go right to the bookshelf when we get home and sit down and read?” He giggled and she pinched his waist which brought on another set of giggles.

“I sure am, right after I bed my wife.” She blew air out of her mouth.

“Not with that attitude you won’t.” He feigned getting punched.

“Oww! That hurt. You mean to tell me you would say no to me?” He asked, astonished. She nodded.

“Oh you bet I would. Especially if you’re playing dirty.” His mouth dropped open in surprise.

“Dirty?” He gasped. “Not me.”

“Oh yes you.” She said, still upset that he hadn’t read any of her books and certainly didn’t intend to. They reached the condo and made their way inside. Derek went straight to the bookshelf and pulled her latest bestseller off the shelf and thumbed through it.

“What’s it about?” He asked flopping down on the couch. She smiled; impressed that he’d even gone that far. Alex straddled him on the couch, yanked the book out of his hands and tossed it on the floor behind her. His eyes opened wide. “Now what the hell did you do that for? I was going to read the flipping thing.” She stared into his soft blue eyes and slipped her hands up and underneath his tee shirt. “Ohhh ... you have a better idea do you?” He said and leaned his head back on the couch. She devoured his mouth as she unbuttoned the blouse she was wearing then tossed it aside. She took off her bra and guided his hands to her breasts. He kneaded them roughly as his desire took hold and he felt the need to be inside her. “Shorts, baby, take them off.” He groaned. She stood long enough to slip off her shorts and panties and he undressed at the same time. He lay down on the couch and she straddled him again guiding his thick manhood inside her. He gasped as she enveloped him in a soft, warm, wetness and then

rocked her hips. He held on to her tightly and pulled her down hard onto him. He came with abandon and moaned his delight. She kissed him then rested her head on his chest and listened to the beat of his heart as it slowed back to a normal tempo. She eased herself off him and dressed. He stretched on the couch and watched her. She picked the discarded book and set it back on the shelf.

“Were you really going to read it?” She asked kneeling on the floor next to him and picking at the curls that matted his chest.

“Nope.” He said boldly. She frowned. “It was just my way of bedding my wife.” Hurt washed over her face. She slapped his chest, got up and stormed off into the den where she turned on her computer. “Alex!” He called. “I was just kidding baby.” He followed her. “Darling ... it was a joke.” He pulled her into his arms.

“I’m hurt by that.” She said refusing to look at him. He grabbed her cheeks and pulled her face to his.

“Alex, I was joking.” He said seriously, his eyes boring into hers. “Of course I’m going to read it. That’s a promise.” She nodded but was unsure. “I don’t make promises I don’t intend to keep.” He said softly. She seemed more subdued but he kissed her to be sure. “I love you, Alex. I promise I will read it.” She hugged him and sent him away to get dressed. Once dressed Derek sat in the living room with the guitar and Alex sat in the den with her imagination

CHAPTER FIVE

“I wish you didn’t have to go.” Alex said for the fifth time in an hour. Derek sighed and tossed his duffel bag out the front door and into the hallway.

“I wish I had a dollar for every time you said that in the last week. I could buy the Taj Mahal.” He said in his Australian lilt and then laughed. Tears dripped from her eyes and she wiped them away with the back of her hand. “Can you lend me a hand sweetie?” He called and then handed her a backpack when she appeared in the doorway of the bedroom. “Thank you, love.” He said and swatted her behind as she turned and headed out into the hallway. Derek pushed the elevator button and looked at his watch again. “Dammit.” He said. “I can’t remember if I packed my passport.”

“I packed it for you. It’s in this backpack.” Alex said flatly. Derek pulled her close and kissed her.

“Thank you babe, what would I do without you?” She eyed him, the blue of her eyes standing out in stark contrast against the red of her usual whites.

“I guess you’ll find out.” She sniffled. He held her against his chest and rubbed her arm.

“Don’t, darling. I hate to see you so sad.” She sniffled again. The elevator doors opened and they slipped inside.

The driver placed his bags carefully in the trunk of the limo as Derek held Alex in his arms.

“You have all my numbers, right?” He asked pulling a piece of hair from her eyelashes where it had gotten snagged. She nodded. “You’re going to call me whenever you need me, right?” She nodded again and sniffled. “You do love me, right?” He smiled weakly, his eyes holding hers. She nodded. “Are you going to speak to me before I leave?” He said and then laughed softly. She smiled.

“Of course.” She said. “I’m just a little down.” He kissed her lightly.

“You could have ...” She placed her fingers over his lips.

“Don’t say it!” She said and then laughed. He tugged her hand away and pulled her in for a more passionate kiss.

“I love you, Alexandra. I will miss you like hell.” He said as he finally pulled away and went to climb into the limo. He glanced at his watch and frowned at the time. “Dammit.” He said again.

“Well quit looking at your bloody watch and you won’t be behind!” Alex said with a laugh and shoved him into the back seat. He grabbed her and pulled her down for another kiss.

“Be a good girl while I’m gone. I’ll be back for a visit soon, that’s a promise!” He closed the door and in the blink of an eye he was gone. Alex stood on the sidewalk and watched the car as it moved down the street. She stared at it until she could barely see it and then it turned the corner and was out of sight. She dragged herself inside and made her way to the computer. She opened her Word program and sat staring at the last paragraph she’d written until her eyes went out of focus and she began to cry again. She laid her arm on her desk, set her face on it and sobbed until she was tired then crawled off into the bedroom, undressed and slid into bed. She hugged Derek’s pillow to her chest. It was full of his scent, Cool Water cologne. She breathed

him in and sighed. Lying quietly she listened to the silence and felt a new wave of tears begin. She didn't know why she was so sad ... it's not like he was gone forever. He would be back in a few short months for a week or so and then he would be off again. She could handle that, couldn't she? And it wasn't like she was going to be all alone ... after all she had Jake. She gasped loudly as she thought it. Derek wasn't even gone a day before she'd had him replaced with Jake. She blushed although she was alone. Pushing Jake out of her mind she stuffed her face into Derek's pillow and smelled him again. She felt a dull aching in her belly.

"Oh Derek ..." She moaned. "You told me to be a good girl and without you here I'll be the mouse and Jake will be the cat." Without the threat of Derek bursting in the door any minute her resolve will melt away and she'll be left with nothing but raw, carnal lust. How could she fight Jake now? She felt a fluttering in her belly and realized that just the thought of resisting his hearty advances had her excited beyond belief and moist between her legs. He had a way of turning her into a puddle whenever he touched her ... and now that Derek was out of sight would she still be able to persevere? She groaned and pulled the pillow tighter against her. Glancing at the clock and seeing that it was only 10:30 she agonized over the fact that it was going to be a long day. Closing her eyes she put everything out of her mind and it wasn't long before she fell asleep.

Her cell phone ringing jarred her out of sleep. Alex picked her head up off the pillow and answered it quickly.

"Why are you still asleep?" Jake asked. She eyed the clock and then lay her head back down on the pillow and the scent of Derek drifted up into her senses. It was 11:30 ... late but not late enough.

"I'm not still asleep, I went back to sleep." She muttered sleepily. He growled.

"God, you sound sexy. You are probably all curled up in bed under the covers nice and warm." He groaned and Alex smiled.

"I am." She murmured then yawned and stretched.

"Did he leave?" The question stung like a bee and she sucked in air.

"Yes." She said simply.

"So you are alone?" He asked in a low voice. She sighed as she realized the battle was to begin now. She didn't know if she was up to it or not.

“Yes, Jake, I am.”

“Let me in.” He said. She frowned.

“What?” She asked.

“Let me in.” He said again.

“Where are you?” She pushed back the covers and swung her legs over the side of the bed.

“I’m outside your door.” Her heart began its familiar up-tempo beat and her breathing sped up just like it always did when Jake was around.

“Good God.” She said heading for the front door. She dropped her cell phone on the credenza and unlocked the door. Jake was leaning against the side of it when it swung open. He smiled when he saw her and eyed her mussed hair and skimpy outfit.

“Good morning.” He said and followed her inside closing and locking the door behind him.

“How did you get up here?” He laughed.

“Well good morning to you, Jake. Hey, I’ve missed you ...” He said in a ‘girlish’ voice. She smiled and turned to him.

“That totally didn’t sound like me.” She said and giggled. He planted his hands on his hips and grinned.

“Oh wait, did I miss flipping the hair back?” He teased and then swung his head to the side pretending to flip his ‘hair’ backwards. Alex giggled again and covered her mouth with her hand.

“And I don’t do that!” He reached out, grabbed her arm and pulled her to him. She landed against his chest with an ‘oof’.

“How do you know you don’t do that, do you ever watch yourself?” He said somberly looking into her eyes. She swallowed and prepared for battle but with every moment that passed she could feel her resolve melting away. “I thought not.” He said when she remained silent. He bent his head to her mouth and kissed her gingerly. His hands crept from her back downwards then when he’d reached down as far as he could go, slid back up. Her legs trembled nervously and her arms automatically went around his neck. He kissed her again and she accepted the kiss and gave it back. “This is a pretty sexy outfit you’ve got on here, babe.” He said when she pulled back. “Did you wear that when you said goodbye to Derek?” She frowned and pushed her way out of his grasp.

“I don’t want to talk about Derek.” She said sadly then headed over to the couch and plopped down on it. He sighed, disappointed in himself for having said it and moved to her.

“Hey,” he said crouching down next to her and running his finger along the outside of her bare thigh. “I’m sorry, Allie.” He looked up at her and saw the pain in her eyes. “Sometimes I’m so jealous I can’t think straight.” He caught her gaze and held it. “This is one of those times.” She looked away then back at him. “Am I forgiven?” She sighed and leaned her head down onto his.

“I suppose.” She said reluctantly. He knelt down in front of her and pushed her legs apart so he could edge himself between them. He pulled her into his arms and hugged her.

“No more of that from me, I promise.” He said softly stroking her hair and letting his fingers lightly trail down her back.

“You’d better not or I’ll throw you out.” She warned. He held up his right hand to her.

“Scout’s honor.” He said his expression serious. She made a face.

“Were you even a Scout?” She asked. He burst out laughing.

“Well, no, but I promise you in all sincerity.” She wrapped her legs around his and pulled him close. “I don’t ever want to hurt you on purpose.” He said softly before bringing his mouth down on hers in a sincere but sultry kiss. He slid his hands down her sides, over her hips and along her thighs. His breathing accelerated as his desire became inflamed. He ran his hands back up over her hips and dipped the tips of his fingers into the waistband of the silken boy shorts she had on. His engorged erection strained painfully against the tight jeans he wore. Alex moaned as his skin tickled hers. Not wanting to push it he moved his hands back upward underneath her camisole then lifted it up and over her head. Enraptured, he kissed down the side of her neck then her shoulder. She tilted her head back for him and he ran the palms of his hands across her stiff nipples. She felt his ochre curls brush against her as he circled her areola with his tongue. It was only moments before he set her aflame and her body cried out to him. She slid down off the edge of couch and knelt in front of him. She captured his gaze and he immersed himself in her eyes. Her hands took hold of his tee shirt and she lifted it above his head. He regarded her carefully and feared it could be a trap, just as soon as he would try to relieve her of her panties she would turn on him. He didn’t know at which point there would be no going back but it certainly was getting close ... Alex leaned forward and sought out his lips while her hands explored his chest. Jake wrapped his arms around her and held her tightly as their mouths came

together. He made no attempts to remove her bottoms and of her own accord tugged his zipper down then unbuttoned his jeans. He burst out of his pants as she pulled down on them. "Allie, baby ..." He moaned into her neck. "Please don't do that unless you're going to follow though." She wrapped her hand around his massive, enlarged manhood and squeezed. "Oh God, oh dear God ..." he groaned as she stroked him. He kissed her feverishly as his hands slid into the tops of her panties and pulled downwards. She lifted one leg and allowed him to remove them then he skimmed her bottom lightly and followed the line to right between her legs. Using the tips of his fingers he wiggled them into her tightly closed opening and felt her wetness puddle down into his hand. "Allie," He groaned. "Can I give you pleasure? I want to make you come." She nodded, her body flooded with want. He ordered her to sit back on the couch. She did so and then opened herself to him. He bent down and nearly fell over, his body trembled with desire to feel her, taste her, bring her satisfaction. He ran his tongue lightly over her lips, tasting her love juices and nearly bringing himself to orgasm doing so. Jake wiggled it between her lips and found a whole new puddle of wetness. Gliding easily inside he found her clitoris stiff and pulsing gently to the beat of her heart. He lapped at it gently and increased his speed the louder she moaned.

"Jake!" She cried out as an intense wave of desire washed over her. Dizzily she leaned her head back and moaned as Jake brought her to the brink of orgasm and licked her right over the edge. She pulled violently at his hair and gritted her teeth. "Take me!" She demanded. "Now!" He stood over her, his manhood standing at attention, leaking mightily and aching to make love to her.

"Are you sure?" He asked cautiously. She kicked at him.

"Yes, hurry!" He pulled her up off the couch and laid her on the floor. She opened her legs and invited him in. He guided himself to her opening and slid in easily groaning with every inch until he was in as far as he could humanly go. He made love to her then, pulling all the way out and sliding back in quickly, her body enveloping him and squeezing gently.

"I'm not going to last long." He panted moving quickly in and out, her drenched insides holding him like a fist, stroking him, bringing him quickly to the height of desire. "Allie, I'm coming ..." he groaned as the first throb of orgasm overtook him, his body shuddering with pleasure. She gasped when she felt the heat of him spraying her insides, pulsating powerfully. He leaned down and kissed her eagerly until his breathing slowed and his body began to taper

from the stormy high he'd been on to a more relaxed state. He rolled onto his side pulling her with him and swallowing her up in his arms. "My beautiful Allie ..." he whispered as he kissed her sweat-misted forehead. "I love you." She buried her head in his chest and sighed satisfactorily. Her heart had returned to a normal tempo and she felt sleepy again. She needed that, it had to be eliminated from her system and though she'd planned to resist once she was in his arms it was all over with. She wanted him as much as he wanted her and it was only a matter of time ... she figured she would just get it over with and end her misery. As Alex slipped into a light sleep in Jake's arms, he reached up onto the couch and pulled a throw pillow down then tucked it under his head. He closed his eyes and immersed himself in her aura until a numbing sleepy feeling wafted over him and he too slept.

Alex woke first and sighed contentedly as she was immersed in Jake's arms. She smiled as she thought back to earlier when Jake said he wanted to give her pleasure. He sure had; she was gratified from her head to her toes. And just being there, alone with him, cuddling she felt safe and warm. The impending disgrace of her infidelity had not yet surfaced and she wanted to revel in the bliss of the moment while it lasted. She closed her eyes and breathed him in. He had a slightly spicy scent, not like something she could attribute to anything else except perhaps deodorant. It didn't matter, it was his scent and she adored it. He coughed suddenly and then his eyes flickered open. He smiled when they made eye contact.

"Well hello." He said softly and leaned forward to kiss her forehead. She smiled.

"Hi." She whispered. "How do you feel?" He groaned and stretched then wrapped his arms around her again, not wanting to let her escape as he knew she would if she was given half a chance.

"I feel like I've died and gone to Heaven. Hey, is there room service in Heaven because I'm getting hungry." Alex giggled. She was feeling a bit empty herself. She and Derek had walked down to the coffee shop early this morning and that was the only meal she'd had. Her thoughts turned to Derek and she willed them away for the time being. The time would come to think on it, it just couldn't be right now, not when everything was this perfect.

"Want me to make you something?" He smiled and touched her face lightly.

"How about you take the 'something' off that sentence and then my answer would be yes." She shook her head.

“You have a one track mind.” He nodded.

“When it comes to you I do. But, in my defense it’s mostly your fault.” She frowned.

“My fault? How is it my fault?” He lightly traced the outline of her mouth with the tip of his finger.

“Because you’re more beautiful than the prettiest flower and much more fragrant. Your eyes are the color of the ocean but much deeper and hold such cherished secrets. I look forward to diving deep and unlocking those secrets one by one. And if I found that there was a place for me in there I would feel that if I died suddenly I would go to my grave the happiest and most satisfied man on earth.” She felt her heart skip a beat and her nose tingled with the first sign of tears on the way.

“Jake.” She whispered. He leaned down and kissed her softly.

“I love you, Allie. I really do.” It was then her heart began to ache and the tears finally materialized. “No, don’t cry, baby ... I don’t want to make you cry.” He hugged her tightly and kissed her hair. How would he feel if he knew that she could probably never love him the way he loved her? The thought brought on another new wave of sadness. He held her through her grief and her pain until the tears subsided and she was left limp and fatigued.

“I’m sorry, Jake.” She said finally.

“Don’t be sorry, Allie. I expected no less. This whole situation is enough to make a sumo wrestler weak. I, myself struggle through it every day and it hurts inside. It really hurts.” The last sentence came out strained. She looked up at him and found he had tears in his eyes too. She touched his face gently. He grabbed her hand and kissed it.

“We don’t have to talk about it, Jake. We can get dressed and go have something to eat if you’d like.” He forced a smile and nodded.

“I would like that.” He said, his voice barely audible. She struggled to get up but he had an iron grip on her.

“Umm I can’t get dressed if I can’t get up and I can’t get up if you don’t unlock the restraints.” She said and then giggled. He sighed.

“Not just yet. I need another minute to compose myself.” He said and closed his eyes. Alex snuggled into him and fell limp. It wasn’t long before he loosened his grasp and she pulled away. She located her panties and bra and slipped them on. She planted her hands on her hips

and eyed him as he lay there on his side, leaning on his elbow, his body displayed naked before her. She raised one eyebrow and growled.

“Well look at that ...” she said in a low, husky voice. “I’d like to have a picture of you right there.”

“Would you?” He asked and then motioned her over with his finger. She shook her head.

“Oh no you don’t ...” She picked up his jeans and tossed them at him. “Get your ass up and take me out for something to eat before I die of starvation.” He laughed and sat up slipping his legs into his jeans then stood to zip up. He found his shirt and put it on. She snuck into her bedroom and put on a pair of shorts and a tee shirt then joined him minutes later. They made their way down to his car, got in and he pulled away. “Where should we go?” She asked. He glanced at her a moment then looked back at the road.

“I have a special place where I want to take you.” He said and reached over for her hand. She slipped hers inside his and they rode together in silence.

They were taken to a table in the back of Mrs. Garza’s restaurant and were seated in a dark corner. Jake looked over at Alex and smiled.

“This place has authentic Mexican food. And though I know the owner I’m not known here. I come here by myself when I want to be alone.” She glanced around at the walls which were filled with authentic Mexican trinkets and serapes, their bright colors displayed safely behind glass. There was a vanilla candle burning in the middle of the table, the flame flickered softly across Jake’s face.

“It’s wonderful.” She sighed, the contented feeling still situated warmly in the pit of her abdomen. He reached across the table and grasped her hands.

“Thank you for letting me bring you here.” He said. She smiled and squeezed his hands.

“Thank you for bringing me here.” He released her hands and they began to peruse the menu. “So what’s good? What do you recommend?” He thought a moment before speaking.

“I usually get the fajita shrimp burrito. It’s really good and there’s a lot of it. You won’t be hungry later that’s for sure.” She thought for a moment and when the waitress came Jake asked Alex what she wanted. She decided to have the plain fajita burrito. He turned to the waitress and smiled.

“El burrito de Fajita por favor para la señora y mí tendrá mi generalmente, el burrito del camarón del fajita sin crema amarga.” He said. She jotted everything down and then asked about drinks. “Una jarra de margaritas de la fresa hará.” He said, handed her the menus and then smiled as she turned and left. Alex grinned at him.

“I’m totally impressed now.” She said. “I had no idea you could speak Spanish.” He felt his cheeks burn hotly and was grateful for the darkness of the restaurant.

“Well ...” he said and then cleared his throat. “It’s not a difficult language to speak. I learned some of it when I was recording my last album and then I took lessons to learn to speak it better.”

“Do you have to speak Spanish to the waitresses here?” She whispered. He smiled and shook his head.

“I do it because I can and it keeps me up on my pronunciations.”

“You’re good at it.” She said. The waitress brought them a pitcher of strawberry Margaritas and then set down two full glasses. Alex’s eyes opened wide. “Oh my God, who the hell is going to drive home after that?” She narrowed her eyes and glared at him. “Are you trying to get me drunk?” He burst out laughing and sipped his drink.

“I think it’s too late for that! I’ve already had you, remember?” It was her turn to blush, her cheeks felt inflamed and she looked down. Oh yes, she remembered. She thought about his tongue and how he’d brought her to orgasm faster than she ever remembered. As if icy cold hands were running down her spine she shivered. She took a sip of the drink and let the taste of the fruit roll around on her tongue. It was the best she’d ever had and she told him. “I know, I don’t think there’s anything here that isn’t wonderful.” He said and then smiled at her. “Including you.”

“Oh, stop, Jake, you’re embarrassing me.” She teased and for a moment he wished that large table wasn’t between them, he would have loved to pull her onto his lap and kiss her delicious pink mouth then delve his tongue inside and taste the strawberries. “So where’s Jovie today? Isn’t she going to wonder where you are?” She asked and looked down at her hands avoiding his gaze.

“She’s got three auditions and no she won’t wonder where I am. She doesn’t care, Allie, and I’m being honest here.” She looked up at him and felt a dull, aching pain somewhere inside her chest.

“Why wouldn’t she care?” She asked. She thought she knew her friend, she was pretty sure she loved and adored Jake. He had been her love, her life for the last two years ... He shrugged and shook his head.

“She’s in her own world, Jovie is. If it doesn’t revolve around her it’s shit. And I don’t revolve around her. So ... you can make your own deductions from there.” Alex bit the side of her cheek. It just didn’t make sense but then again she was only with them both at the same time now and then, she couldn’t see what went on behind closed doors.

“I think she loves you.” She said softly. Jake glanced at her briefly then looked away. He crossed his arms and leaned on the table.

“I’m sure she thinks she does.” He said and cleared his throat. “She loves money too. What does that tell you?” Alex sighed. Well his relationship may be crappy, she thought to herself, but mine isn’t. She suddenly felt the pressure of guilt on her shoulders and slumped over from the immense weight of it.

“I don’t know, Jake. I only see you two for short periods of time and in that time she seems like you’re her world.” He sniffed and made a face.

“There’s a difference between being someone’s ‘world’ and being their possession. I am her possession. Watch closer from now on and you will see.” Just then their food came and there was a blanket of silence over the table as they ate. After they finished and their plates were cleared they filled their glasses with nearly melted margarita and sipped.

“So, Jake ...” Alex said began hesitantly. She knew there were things they should talk about like where this relationship was going and what the potential hazards were. He took a drink of the margarita and eyed her.

“Yes, Allie?” He said and laced his fingers together on the table in front of him.

“Now that we’ve ... umm consummated this relationship, what happens next?” He felt a jolt go through him and he jumped slightly.

“Well ...” He said and then hesitated. “I would like to continue to have a relationship with you and eventually in time ...” He reached out and took her hand into his and made tiny circles on the back of it with his thumb. “In time I’d like you to be my wife.” Alex felt his words hit her like a kick in the head. How could that be when she was already married and didn’t intend to get un-married?

“But Jake ...”

“Allie, I know what you’re going to say.” She made a face at him.

“Oh you do, do you?” He nodded.

“Yes. And the answer is that I will wait. No matter how long it takes. You are the woman for me and I realized that too late. Now I have to suffer the consequences of my inability to act quickly enough. I don’t expect you to see it right away but hopefully in a fair amount of time you will.” She looked down shading her eyes from him. “We’ve already got the physical part established.” She looked up quickly and met his smoldering eyes with her own. “And I have to say Allie that you certainly do live up to the heroines in your novels. Was I as good as you make me out to be?” She rolled her eyes and laughed.

“How many times do I have to tell you?” He finished his drink and then shook his head.

“I don’t believe you.” He replied, matter of fact. “I’m not blind. I read every single one of your books and the rock star doesn’t appear until after I met Jovie.” He looked at her out of the corner of his eye and then smiled devilishly. She blushed hotly and looked away.

“But you’ll also notice he appears during the time I met my husband.” He shook his head.

“No, nope, there’s where you’re mistaken. The male rock star appears in the novel that came out just one month before you met him.” He gave her the devilish look again. She sighed. She wouldn’t win this one and she knew it. “So, again, I ask you ... am I as good as you’d hoped I’d be?” She giggled and smiled demurely. She’d never admit to it even if he claimed to already know. She’d deny it until the day she died.

“You know, one fabulous time could have been a fluke. I think I’d have to try it again to see if you can really live up to my standards.” His mouth dropped open and he sat up quickly. He held his arm out to flag down the waitress.

“Check please!”

Alex glanced at her watch as Jake pulled up in front of her condo.

“Jake its 4:30. What time is Jovie going to be home?” He glanced down at the clock on the dashboard of the Porsche and thought for a moment.

“Probably sometime in the next hour.” He said.

“Maybe you should just go home then so she’s not suspicious ...” She glanced out of the car windows fearfully. He turned to her and leaned closer.

“How about I park in your garage and then she won’t see the car and I won’t care if she gets home first?” She searched his eyes and swallowed hard. Her mouth was very dry and she was feeling a little bit tipsy. “I have a reputation at stake here Allie; I have to do my best to prove my point.” He smiled and leaned in for a kiss. Nervously she pecked his lips and pulled away.

“I just don’t want you to get into trouble.” She said.

“Show me how to get into the garage.” He said and put the car in gear.

Alex knew as soon as they were in the door Jake would be all over her and when he wasn’t she was shocked. She set her keys, phone and purse down on the credenza by the front door and then waited for him to make his move. He stood leaning on the wall that led into the kitchen, his arms folded across his chest and watched her with smoldering eyes. She stood a few feet away and stared at him expectantly. He smiled.

“Well?” He said finally. She sighed.

“What do you mean ‘well’?” He chuckled.

“You don’t remember what your heroine did in the second book featuring the rock star after they got home from a night at the soiree?” She groaned and rolled her eyes.

“Are you back to that again?” He pushed himself off the wall and approached her calmly. Alex felt her nipples tighten as he stood next to her and her lower half tingled in anticipation of his advances. He trailed his fingers up her arm and onto her shoulder then he ran his fingers into her hair and pulled her close. His mouth came down on hers and kissed. She slid her hands around to his back and they disappeared under his shirt. Running her fingertips over his soft, warm skin she marveled at how different he and Derek were. Never mind the fact that Derek was a minimum of 8 years older than Jake and that Derek was completely conscientious of his physique so much so that his muscles were very well defined ... there was something about Jake’s body that sent her spiraling into sensory overload. He was soft and tender, warm and cozy ... he was covered in a downy fuzz that began just below his shoulders and ended in a ‘v’ shape by his bellybutton. It was immensely provocative. She pulled at his shirt; she wanted it off so she could look at his bare chest. He pulled away momentarily so she could slip it over his head and then went back to her mouth. As he kissed her he slid his hands under her shirt and unsnapped her bra. She moaned as he cupped her breasts and kneaded them.

“My pants, baby ...” he breathed between kisses. “There’s something in there for you.” She ran her hand down the front of his jeans and marveled at the large lump that had grown in a matter of minutes.

“Damn, Jake.” She gasped. “It’s huge!” He uttered a deep, throaty laugh and thrust his tongue deeper into her mouth. She sucked at it hungrily as her fingers worked the snap and zipper of the jeans. Alex pushed them down his hips and they dropped to the ground. He first lifted one foot then the other and kicked them away. She wrapped both hands around him and stroked. Jake pulled her down to the floor and lifted her legs. He massaged her hips and then ran his hands downward between her thighs.

“Are you ready for me?” He asked slipping his middle finger inside her and finding her drenched. He slid it in and out a few times watching the expression on her face go from desire to passion. “Oh Allie ...” He groaned.

“Jake, I’m ready ...” She begged. He dipped the head of himself in her and then rubbed his slippery skin over her clitoris. She gasped loudly. “Oh that feels good.” He