

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

ELLORA'S CAVE

*Quickies*

*Cathryn Fox*

WEB

of

*Desire*

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Web of Desire

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# *WEB OF DESIRE*

Cathryn Fox

## Prologue

As Ally Shears approached the old abandoned mansion she felt her stomach knot and her mouth go dry. She hated what she was about to do, but knew she had little choice in the matter. Mentally reciting the banishing spell from her Book of Charms, she reached into her jeans, her fingers connecting with the packet of herbs needed to send her cousin to the netherworld.

Dodging a low-hanging branch that fringed the walkway, she made her way down the narrow path leading to the decrepit house on Manor Drive. The soothing scent from a nearby lilac reached her nostrils but did little to ease her ragged nerves. With light footsteps, she crept up the stairs in search of Selina. Even though Ally hated the task before her, she knew it was best for the townsfolk. Banishing her cousin to the netherworld was a much better alternative than what the angry women of the town would likely do to Selina for using witchcraft on their beloved men.

If her cousin couldn't abide by the council's rules and use her witchcraft only for the betterment of mankind, then Ally had no choice but to take matters into her own hands.

The sleepy southern town of Belhaven had been charitable enough to take in their kind hundreds of years ago and keep their witchcraft a secret from the rest of the world. The least *they* could do was adhere to the laws set in place and behave like respectable citizens. And being a respectable citizen did *not* mean spinning a giant spider web to catch the town men and have your wicked way with them.

No matter how naughtily delicious that sounded.

Selina's wicked stunts had gained the town's attention and earned her a banishment spell. Ally insisted she be the one to cast it, for Selina's own safety. The truth was, the two were very close. Selina had been there on the worst night of Ally's

life. Consoling her when Tanner Cage, the only man Ally had ever loved, stood her up on prom night and skipped town the next day. That closeness made the discovery of Selina's secret antics all the more shocking to Ally.

Ally pushed open the door and inched inside, fearing Selina would detect her presence and surmise her intentions before Ally had a chance to cast the spell. A moan sounded from the back bedroom, drawing her attention.

Ally followed the sound. She craned her neck and peered into the dimly lit room. What she saw frightened and intrigued her at the same time. Smack-dab in the middle of the room was a huge floor-to-ceiling web with a gorgeous, well-endowed man attached. Whacking a crop across her palm, Selina circled him, keeping a wide berth as she examined his rippled physique.

Selina turned at the sound of Ally moving into the room. She arched a delighted brow. "Hello, cousin. How nice of you to join me."

"I'm not here to *join* you, Selina."

"No?"

Fingering the packet in her pocket, Ally stepped closer. "You can't do this, Selina. It's wrong."

"Tsk...tsk...always the good witch, Ally." She slapped the crop harder against her palm and then pointed it at Ally. "I know deep inside there is a part of you that would love to have your very own toy like this." She waved her hand toward her naked captive. "Besides, look at that beast." She pointed to his erection. "He doesn't look too distraught to me."

Ally was pretty sure his girlfriend would be. "It's still wrong, Selina."

Selina chuckled. "Why don't you let your naughty little witch out to play once in a while?"

Ally grabbed the herbs from her pocket and sprinkled them in the air. A cloud of fog formed around Selina. Ally began to chant the banishing spell.

Selina's eyes opened wide. Her hands flew up in a halting motion. The crop fell to the floor. "Ally no," she cried, her voice growing faint as Ally circled her and continued to recite the spell.

Ally sprinkled more herbs into the air. "I'm sorry, Selina, you gave me no choice. Believe me, I'm doing this for your own good."

Selina's skin grew translucent. Her gaze locked on Ally's. "I'll be back, Ally. Just wait and see..."

Those were the last words Ally heard before her cousin disappeared into the fog.

## **Chapter One**

*Ten years later*

Something was not right in the sleepy southern town of Belhaven.

Ally Shears placed a book on the gray metal shelf in front of her as a shiver of unease crawled over her skin like an insect. Every nerve ending in her body began tingling with foreboding and she knew—better than she knew every nook and cranny in the library she'd been working at for the past few years—that a dark cloud had descended over the town.

She felt a presence behind her. Ally spun around, half expecting to see her banished cousin hovering there. Instead, she gasped in surprise as the handsome Sheriff Devlin came charging forward. Startled by the anger in his eyes, she pressed a hand to her chest and took one small step backwards, positioning herself behind a rack of books.

"Selina's back in town," he growled, his dark eyes narrowing to mere slits as he fisted his broad hands at his sides.

She didn't care for his accusatory look. Did he somehow think this was her fault? After all, she had been the one to cast the banishing spell years previous. She schooled her expression. "Yes, I know," she said, keeping her voice low, controlled. She'd felt Selina's presence all day but had hoped like hell she'd been mistaken.

He drew an impatient breath and leaned toward her, using his height to look down on her. "She was spotted sneaking out of the old abandoned house on Manor Drive."

Ally frowned. Why they hadn't torn that decrepit old place down was beyond her. Especially after they'd found all of those men captured in Selina's silken webs. Men she'd lured to the manor and done sexual things to. Things that had left the town's women reeling, and some of the town men, well...violated. As a good, law-abiding witch, Ally would never consider doing something so wicked.

The sheriff raked an impatient hand through his thick black hair. “We need you to go over there, check things out and cast another banishment spell.” He gave an angry shake of his head. “One that will hopefully *take* this time,” he grumped, his dark brows furrowing slightly as he glared at her.

Ally wove her fingers together and resisted the urge to spin her own web and secure the sheriff to it. For punishment only. She never had cared for the way he looked down his nose at her since “the trouble” – as it had become known around town.

She pushed Devlin’s remarks to the back of her mind. Right now she needed to concentrate on the herbs required for the spell to send Selina back to the netherworld, for the good of the town as well as Selina. Ally certainly didn’t want her cousin taunting and tormenting the decent people returning to Belhaven for their high-school reunion this week – the same people who had rightfully demanded her banishment in the first place.

Centuries ago, Ally’s descendants had escaped the Salem witch trials and settled in the scarcely populated, sleepy little town of Belhaven, a place outsiders rarely visited. When word eventually leaked that they were witches, the townsfolk were prepared to burn them at the stake. But after proving that they had healing powers and were able to cure the sick and help the wounded, the city council had allowed the witches to stay, and swore to keep them secret from the rest of the world, providing they followed very stringent rules and only used their craft for the good of the people.

They lived amongst the townsfolk for centuries, gaining respect and trust. Of course, during Ally’s lifetime, witchcraft had become much more accepted, as Wicca was practiced by many throughout the world.

Life had been pleasant in their small community – until Selina decided to wield power for her own selfish needs. It became evident that she had an agenda of her own when she began breaking every rule put in place by the council. Spinning strong, sticky webs made from fine, silky threads, she captured the good men of Belhaven and used them for her own pleasure. Now Ally and the rest of her clan were suffering the



repercussions of her cousin's self-indulgent acts. The council had hushed up the incident, knowing that, with the exception of Selina, the witches were all law-abiding folks. Unfortunately, many no longer trusted them, going out of their way to avoid her kind.

Ally took a quick peek at her watch and noted it was nearing four o' clock. Deciding to check out early, she glanced at Devlin. "I'm closing up now. I'll head over there just as soon as I lock the door and gather some herbs for the spell." She tilted her head to look him in the eye. "Will you be accompanying me?" she asked with bright-eyed innocence, knowing full well that the thought of going inside the mansion made the sheriff shiver beneath his wide-brimmed hat.

Her smile stretched wickedly as she watched him squirm under her steady gaze. His jaw clenched. "You think you'll need me?" he asked in an unstable voice. Before he drove his hands into his front pockets she noticed them shake.

She shrugged. "I might. Of course, if you're afraid..."

He gave a quick shake of his head. His eyes flashed. "It's not that—"

Cutting him off, she folded her arms across her chest. "Well, what exactly is it then?" she asked, deadpan.

"I think I should keep watch from outside. To wait for Selina's return." His deep voice stammered.

When she smirked at him he blurted out, "I'm *not* afraid."

*Well, he should be afraid, Ally mused, because Selina had certainly had it out for him ever since he'd flatly turned her down, years ago. Lord knows what her cousin would do to him, given the opportunity. The last place Devlin wanted to be caught was in one of Selina's webs.*

Or *hers*, for that matter, if she ever decided to spin one.

Lucky for the town, Ally was a good witch.

## **Chapter Two**

Ally stood back and examined the crumbling mansion left abandoned for years. Ivy vines climbed the walls like snakes and coiled around the posts that supported the veranda. The grounds and walkway were overgrown with shrubs, weeds and wildflowers. With the sheriff remaining a good twenty feet behind her, she made her way onto the porch. Chips of old white paint peeled beneath her hand as she brushed her fingertips over the wooden railing leading up the steps.

When she reached the massive front entrance, she closed her fingers over the brass doorknob and pushed. The heavy door creaked open, the hinges moaning like a wounded animal. Ally looked over her shoulder and gave a curt nod to the sheriff, signaling she was going in.

She felt a sense of déjà vu as she squeezed the packet of herbs inside the front pocket of her jeans and took a tentative step inside the old house. The planked floorboards groaned beneath her. Every light footstep stirred the air. Small particles of dust rained down from the ceiling, dancing and shimmering in the long column of late afternoon sunlight that sliced through cracks in the decaying cedar siding.

The air smelled stale and pungent. Like day-old pizza and beer. Or socks that had been left in a gym bag too long. Ally crinkled her nose and concentrated on breathing through her mouth.

A murmur coming from the back of the mansion drew her attention. She quietly padded down the long, dark hallway until she stood outside a closed door. Pressing her ear to the wooden slats, she listened.

Silence.

She lowered herself onto her knees and peeked through the large keyhole. The sunshine slanting through the open window gave off sufficient light for her to see a man squirming, trying to break free from the strong, binding web that held him captive.

From ceiling to floor, a web had been spun in the center of the room. With his back clinging to the sticky strands, his hands were secured over his head. His long legs were spread wide apart and securely attached as well. With his head turned away from her, she couldn't discern his features. God, he was so big, like a Viking warrior. His presence swallowed up the small room.

She bit down on her bottom lip as she slowly perused the length of him. His thick, sculpted muscles bulged in all the right places and threatened to rip the seams of his snug jeans and short-sleeved shirt. She was actually quite surprised to find him still fully clothed. Selina obviously hadn't finished what she'd started.

Her gaze traveled over his unruly mass of dark hair and then lower, over his broad shoulders and tight abs, stopping only when she reached the apex of his legs. She swallowed hard. Oh *yes*, his muscles definitely bulged in all the right places. Whoever said good things come in small packages certainly wasn't talking about this guy. She stared at his impressive size for an endless moment as she undressed him with her eyes. Awareness started at her core and rippled onward and outward. Her whole body began tingling in the most interesting places. When she gave a sexy moan, he began to turn in her direction. As if she'd been caught with her hand in the cookie jar, Ally quickly pulled back from the keyhole and straightened. She brushed the dirt from her knees and took a fueling breath of courage before entering. She had no idea what else she was going to find behind that door.

When she closed her hand over the knob, a breeze from the open window stirred the air. Suddenly, a very enticing, very *familiar* smell seeped through the keyhole and reached her nostrils. She inhaled deeply as the spicy, manly scent sent her thoughts spiraling back in time.

Memories flashed through her mind like lightning. Memories of her senior prom and the handsome Tanner Cage, high-school heartthrob and captain of the football team.

She'd been so madly in love with him. She'd taken extra care in her appearance that beautiful spring evening, arranging her long golden curls on top of her head, letting a few tendrils spill down her neck, just the way he'd liked. Underneath her pale blue satin gown she wore a silky white chemise, knowing she was finally going to give her virginity to the man she loved.

The truth was, Ally had always loved Tanner. Since kindergarten, really. It wasn't until high school—when she'd traded her thick glasses for contacts, lost the braces and gotten curves in all the right places—that he'd begun to see her as something more than the neighborhood tomboy.

Tanner had asked her out during their senior year. After that first date, they became inseparable, joined at the lips, as some would say. They'd eagerly—and naïvely—talked about marriage.

A smile touched Ally's mouth as she recalled his pet name for her. Ally Cat.

Tanner Cage had been her soul mate. Her everything. And she had been ready to take their relationship to the next level. They both wanted their first night together to be special and had agreed they would consummate their love on prom night. That night had never happened. He'd left her standing on her doorstep waiting for him. Ally had cried until the sun came up. The next day she heard Tanner skipped town and joined the military. Ally had never set eyes on him again and the last she heard he was doing an overseas tour of duty as a Navy SEAL.

Selina had stayed by her side, comforting her. Even though Selina had done wrong by the townsfolk, she'd always been there for Ally. They were family—blood sisters—which made it twice as difficult for Ally to banish her. But Ally knew the banishment was for Selina's own safety.

Tanner Cage had broken her heart and destroyed her belief in happily ever after. She'd been with other men since that dreadful night, of course, but how could she ever connect with a man emotionally? How could she ever find true love or give her heart to another when it belonged to one man—a man who didn't want it.

She shook her head, clearing away her painful thoughts. She gave a heavy sigh, knowing that if she ever did set eyes on him again, she'd make him pay for that dreadful night. He'd be smart to spend his life steering clear of her. She knew the well-disciplined witch inside her was only so forgiving.

She twisted the knob, eased the door open and stepped inside the room. Her eyes widened in astonishment as she took in the vision before her. The sound of her indrawn breath filled the air. Her pulse drummed in her neck and she had to lock her knees to avoid collapsing. Faltering backwards, she gripped the doorknob as if it were a lifeline.

When those beautiful, familiar green eyes met her gaze, the edges of her vision became fuzzy. Feeling lightheaded, she drew air into her lungs.

God, it couldn't be him. It just couldn't. Not after all this time.

His dark brows knitted together. "What do you want with me?" he asked, tugging hard on the binding threads. And what the fuck is this thing I'm stuck to?"

Ally bit down on her lip. The truth was, he was better off not knowing.

When she didn't answer, he asked again, "What do you want with me?"

She remembered that deep voice. So rich and enticing. Like warm, melted butter. It seeped into her skin and filled her with heated memories of his passionate touch, his fiery kisses. Heat curled inside her. She pinched her lips tight and suppressed a ragged moan.

Was it really him or was she just dreaming? Had that delectable, familiar male scent simply caused her mind to conjure up the image?

She narrowed her gaze. "Tanner?" she asked quizzically, seeking verification that the man from her past had suddenly resurfaced.

He glared at her, confusion obvious in his gaze. "Do I know you?"

She drew in a sharp breath. It *was* him. And he didn't remember her. She straightened her spine and swallowed. Perhaps he couldn't see her well in the dark shadows of the room. She took a tentative step closer, providing him with a better view of her face.

"It's me. Ally."

"Ally?" He paused as though searching his memory. "I don't know anyone by the name of Ally."

Her heart crumbled like the burnt toast she'd eaten for breakfast. How could he not remember her? They'd been in *love*. At least she had thought they were. Was she so forgettable that the man she'd wanted to spend the rest of her life with could so easily dismissed her from his memories?

Determined to get to the bottom of it, Ally searched for an explanation. "Do you have amnesia? Or memory loss? Did something happen during your last tour of duty?"

"No," he bit out. "You obviously have me mixed up with someone else."

Another thought struck her and made her stomach curdle. Had somebody played with his memory? Used witchcraft on him? The only one she knew who had ever abused the craft was...Selina.

She opened her mouth to ask, but shut it when he cut her off with a glare. She *had* to be mistaken. Selina and Ally had been more like sisters than cousins. She recalled the way Selina had spent the night comforting her when Tanner had run off. Ally refused to believe Selina would hurt her like this. Besides, Selina's wicked antics hadn't started until a few years after Tanner had left town.

Hadn't they?

"Are you going to let me down?" he asked.

"I *was* going to," she replied, walking over to the table beside him to look over the contents. Lubricant, a pink vibrator, nipple clamps, two long candlesticks and a book of

matches. A leather crop drew her attention. How interesting. She picked it up and ran her hands over the long, textured length of it. She wondered what kind of fun Selina'd had with that particular prop.

His body stiffened with annoyance. "What do you mean, you were going to?" he bit out.

Silence ensued as she took a long moment to peruse the captive man before her. Gone was the thin teenage boy she'd fallen for. In his place was a man. A man with broad shoulders and thick, sculpted muscles. A man who oozed sexuality in a way the young, high-school boy never had.

"You know, Tanner, you owe me something." She stepped close—close enough that his scent overwhelmed her senses. Pressing the crop against his cheek, she let it slide over his neck, his chest and lower until it grazed the huge bulge between his legs.

He flinched. His eyes darkened as disbelief marred his features. "How can I owe you anything? I don't even *know* you."

"That's where you're wrong. We knew each other quite...intimately," she murmured.

She watched his glance leave her face and wander down her body. He dragged his teeth over his bottom lip as his eyes latched upon her breasts. Ally felt her nipples harden involuntarily under his lusty gaze. Her chest heaved as a surge of blood rushed through her veins.

"Ally..." He let her name roll off his tongue as though he were testing it, tasting it. His gaze smoldered as it locked with hers. "If I'd known you...*intimately*," he said, lowering his voice, "there's no way in hell that I'd forget."

His warm breath caressed her face like a lover's kiss. Her body came alive, stimulated by his bold words. A tingle worked its way down her spine. She blinked and fought to recover her voice. "Well, it seems you did, now doesn't it?" she challenged.

He gave her a sexy, predatory grin. "Why don't you let me down and give me a chance to sample that hot body of yours. Perhaps that will help trigger my memory." His voice dripped with sensual promise.

She slowly walked around him, dragging the long crop over his hard body. She felt his muscles bunch. She stopped directly in front of him and looked deep into his gorgeous eyes. A sudden surge of anger and hurt welled up inside her. "Or perhaps I could leave you here and make you pay for forgetting me."

He growled and struggled with the silken web. "You wouldn't!" His voice sounded whiskey-rough.

When their gazes met and locked she expected to see rage. What she saw instead captivated her. Heat coiled deep in her belly as moisture gathered between her thighs. The passion that shimmered in his eyes made her breath catch and her anger recede. Her brain stalled and she had to remind herself to breathe.

"What exactly is it I *owe* you, Ally?" The deep timbre of his voice made her shudder.

"A prom night," she said and pressed the crop hard against his growing cock.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tanner groaned and pressed into her touch. Fuck, that felt good. He had no idea who this woman was or what she thought he owed her, but if she kept touching him like that he was going to rupture an artery.

He thought back to his senior year and couldn't recall ever knowing an Ally. He wasn't sure why she had brought up the prom. He'd never even gone. Never planned to. He'd always thought of it as a senseless ritual. Instead, he had met up with the guys, knocked back a few beers and then left town to join the military.

Ally reached out and swept aside a lock of his hair. When she did, he watched color bloom high on her cheeks and wondered what she was thinking. Wondered what the hell she planned on doing with that whip she clutched in her tightly fisted hand.



His question was quickly answered when Ally drove the crop between his jean-clad legs and pressed the knobbed end between his ass cheeks. It stung, but he liked it. He bit down on his bottom lip and forced himself not to show his reaction. *Holy shit*. He could hardly believe how turned on he was. When his eyes locked with hers, he was both aroused and chilled from the intensity in her gaze.

If he'd had a sexy woman like her waiting for him at the prom, no way in hell would he have ever skipped town.

With a featherlight touch she skimmed her fingers over his cheek, his lips and lower, until her hand hovered over the top button of his shirt. The feeling was erotically stimulating and every muscle in his body twitched. His heart began to pound beneath her touch.

Once again he racked his memory, trying to recall who she was. Nothing. Surely she was mistaken. Surely he didn't know her. His gaze traveled over her face. She was beautiful – exquisite, really – with honey-amber eyes and hair the soft golden color of a wheat field. Her full breasts narrowed to a slim waist that bloomed into curvy hips. Her long sexy legs were wrapped in a pair of snug-fitting jeans. And she smelled so damn good. Like vine-ripened raspberries. Her feminine aroma was vaguely familiar, yet he couldn't quite put his finger on it. He inhaled deeply, letting her scent fill his senses.

He shook his head. There was no way he'd ever forget a woman as sexy as she was. No way in hell. *Especially* if they'd been intimate.

When his gaze settled back on the creamy swell of her heavy breasts a tremor ripped through him. His mouth watered for a taste as his cock throbbed in response. He became acutely aware of how much his body ached for her touch.

She reacted to the tremor she felt in his body. Her fingers slipped from his chest and dropped to his cock. She cradled his erection in her delicate hand.

"Seems you might be a bit intrigued by my plan." Her sexy voice vibrated all the way down to his toes.

He swallowed and focused on what she was doing with her fingers. “What exactly is your plan?”

She gave him a sly smile. “If I told you, that would take the fun out of it, now wouldn’t it?” When she gently squeezed his balls, he growled and thrust his hips forward. Unfortunately, the silky web prohibited him from moving too far.

“Let’s just say I think you need to be punished for breaking my heart and abandoning me on prom night. I missed out on a night of lovemaking with you that I’d been dreaming about all year.” Mischief danced in her eyes.

“Let me down from here, Ally,” he growled. “I mean it.” When she ignored his protests he continued, “If you don’t, you’ll pay.” Perspiration beaded his forehead.

She shook her head slowly. Her eyebrows raised a fraction. “No, I don’t think so. I kind of like you this way.” She began working the buttons on his shirt. “Besides, you’re the one who’s going to pay.”

The determined look in her eyes heated his body. A tremor moved through him—from passion, not anger.

“I could yell for help.” He twisted his right hand and was surprised to find he’d somehow managed to snap the seemingly unbreakable silken bindings. He hid that information from her.

“Yes, I suppose you could.” Her voice was a hoarse whisper. She met his gaze straight on and moistened her lips. “If you wanted to,” she challenged. The heat in her eyes licked over his body.

Giving up on the buttons, she grabbed his shirt and ripped it open. The buttons popped and sprinkled on the floor. She splayed her hands over his chest and leaned in until her mouth was a breath away from his. Her fingers toyed with his nipples. He sucked in a sharp breath and exhaled a groan.

She pitched her voice low. “Do you want to scream, Tanner?” There was a little erotic whimper in the back of her throat.

He clenched his jaw. Yes. No. *Fuck*. How could he possibly make a rational decision when all the blood was draining from his head and settling low in his groin?

She brushed her mouth lightly over his. Her hips bumped into his thighs. Her puckered nipples pressed into his chest. A tremor racked his body. He growled, pressed his lips hungrily into her sweetness and deepened the kiss with wild abandon. The heat from her mouth scorched his soul and stirred the fire inside him. Blood pounded through his veins. Needing to touch her, he struggled against the silky web. She tasted like sex and sin and heaven, all at the same time.

Suddenly he knew there was no way in hell he was going to yell for help.

### **Chapter Three**

Ally stepped back and took a moment to regroup. Her simple plan to arouse Tanner, leaving him unfulfilled and longing for more, the same way he'd left her many years ago, had suddenly become a little more complicated. His erotic kiss fueled her hunger and left her yearning for one of more substance. He was so beautiful, so muscular and so hard that her body came alive, just from at looking him.

The heat and energy radiating from his flesh stirred her libido. Warmth pooled in her pussy and filled her with a restless ache—an ache to feel skin against skin, to be kissed by his sensual lips, to be touched by his thick, capable hands, and to feel his growing erection stoke the fire simmering inside her.

Without realizing what she was doing, she cupped her breasts, ran her thumbs over her protruding nipples and whimpered. Her eyes connected with Tanner's. The look on his face told her all she needed to know. Watching her pleasure herself excited him. She bit down on her bottom lip and considered that bit of information. Perhaps that could be part of her plan. To let him watch as she touched herself. To leave him hot and needy while she eased the mounting tension deep inside her slick pussy.

“Do you like this, Tanner?” Ally ran her fingers down her neck and dipped them under the thin fabric of her T-shirt. A shiver prowled through her body and turned her inside out as his burning eyes left her face and lingered on her breasts. Throwing her head back, she moaned in delight as her warm fingers connected with her tight peaks. A fever rose in her and she knew she had to find release before her entire body went up in flames.

“Let me fuck you, Ally,” he murmured, the rough timbre in his voice giving way to soft persuasion.

She looked him square in the eye. They were dark, full of lust. She sucked in a tight breath as her head began spinning. So tempting. So very, very tempting. She became hyperaware of the thick bulge between his legs. Her pussy moistened, urging her to give in to her desires. As much as she loved that idea, she knew that wasn't part of her plan. That would give *him* pleasure. Shaking her head to clear it, she fought her traitorous libido, reminding herself what he'd done to her.

Blowing out a shaky breath, she tried to keep the longing from her voice. "Why do I need you to fuck me, when I have this?" She walked over to the table and picked up the long, pink vibrator.

His nostrils flared. "Because my tongue can do things to you that that device can't."

For a brief moment she pictured his mouth buried deep inside the dark triangular patch at the apex of her legs. His tongue licking, sucking, nibbling, bringing her to previously undiscovered heights of ecstasy. Her whole body quivered as liquid desire dampened her panties.

She fought to find her voice. "Pretty sure of yourself, aren't you?"

"Yes," he growled with a touch of arrogance in his voice. "Let me down from here and I'll prove it."

When she shook her head back and forth he let out a roar of frustration. Dropping the rubber cock back on the table, she closed the distance between them. She ran her hand down his smooth, tanned chest. His moist skin felt wonderful beneath her fingers. Her hand dropped to his waistband. She unfastened his button and listened to the hiss of his zipper as she drew it down. "Just to show you that I'm not totally insensitive, I thought I'd give your cock some breathing room. It does seem rather constrained behind your tight jeans."

After she freed his erection, it sprang out from its restrictive confines, clamoring for attention. Ally gasped in surprise as her pulse leapt in her throat. He was so big, so thick. The swollen purple head looked velvety soft. Her fingers tingled, anticipating a

touch. Her mouth watered for a taste. Desire burned so hot in her she felt dazed. The need to touch him, to stroke her tongue over his smoothness consumed her.

Raw, primitive urges took over, and before she realized what she was doing, she dropped to her knees. She moaned and pulled his cock into her hungry mouth.

She threaded her fingers through his silky curls and cupped his heavy balls. Rocking on her heels, she pumped his cock in and out of her slick mouth. She remained nestled between his legs for a long moment, her tongue stroking and laving his engorged shaft. Lust spread like wildfire through her body as she reveled in his taste.

His low growl of pleasure brought a smile to her face. It was easy to tell he was close to erupting. Her tongue urged him on. His balls tightened against his skin, his cock swelled in her mouth, liquid desire dripping from the tip. She pulled away, leaving him teetering on the edge.

“Don’t stop, Ally. Please, not yet.” His voice was harsh, rough. He thrust his hips forward in search of her mouth.

Ally stood on wobbly legs and met his gaze. She pouted her full lips. “It seems I’ve gone and wet my panties,” she murmured.

He began panting heavily as she backed away and unsnapped her jeans.

She shook her hair from her face and presented him with a mischievous smile. “Perhaps I should take them off.”

The heat in his eyes licked over her skin. “Yes, take them off. Take *everything* off,” he blurted out as he struggled to free himself. “Let me see your cunt, Ally.”

Ally seductively wiggled her backside as she slowly drew her pants over her thighs. Tanner’s tortured curses reached her ears. “Fuck, Ally, what are you doing to me?”

She kicked her pants away and widened her legs. Desire twisted her insides as she dipped her finger inside her drenched panties. She drew in a tight breath as her nail grazed her inflamed clit. “Mmmmm...” she moaned, throwing her head back as she pleased herself.

“I’m gonna fuck you if it’s the last thing I do.” His voice was a ragged whisper.

Ally paused and looked at him. His gorgeous green eyes were dark with heat – and promise.

“You can bet on it,” he assured her. She bit down on her lip as a fine tingle of anticipation worked its way down her spine.

“Are you forgetting who’s in control here?” She reached down and picked up the bright pink sex toy. Her eyes never once breaking the steamy hold she had on him as she stroked her hand over the bulbous head. She drew it into her mouth and licked the tip, imagining it was his cock she was suckling.

Tanner’s eyes tracked her every movement. His visual caress did mysterious things to her nerve endings. His nostrils flared as he clenched his jaw. She watched with heated interest as his chest rose and fell in a fast, erratic pattern.

Keeping her gaze locked on his, Ally took small steps, widening the distance between them, until her back was pressed against the wall. Drawing her panties down she tossed them toward Tanner. They landed silently at his feet. Tanner’s gaze dropped to her cunt. She positioned the rubber cock between her legs and opened her dewy folds, displaying the pink satiny skin of her most private flesh. “Is this what you wanted to see, Tanner?”

He gave a slow nod of his head and swallowed hard.

“You know – you could have had this on prom night if you hadn’t run off,” she murmured, lifting one leg and resting it on a nearby chair.

Tanner’s jaw went slack, his eyes smoldering, and he was breathing as though he’d just run a marathon. He mumbled curses under his breath as he struggled to free himself.

In one smooth motion she breached her slick opening. The pink toy pushed against the walls of her tight pussy. She let out a long moan of pleasure as she savored the sensation. She slid the vibrator all the way into her slick core and back out again. Her liquid heat dripped over the rubbery head. All sense of time and place was lost on her

as she worked the toy in and out of her heated channel and stroked her breasts with her other hand.

Blocking her mind to her audience of one, and concentrating only on her own pleasure, she pinched her eyes tight as she drove the thick rubber cock back inside her slick cunt. She was close, so close to finding release. Her breath came in ragged bursts as her orgasm neared.

“You’re so sexy, baby.” A rich, decadent rumble of pleasure sounded from the depths of his throat.

She loved the tone of his voice. So deep, so masculine. It seeped into her skin and filled her with a fiery need. She inhaled. His warm, masculine scent curled around her and urged her on. She pumped faster, harder until she heard the dark whisper of his voice again. He sounded close. So close, in fact, she thought she felt his hot breath on her cheek. But that was impossible. He was trapped in Selina’s web.

Her lids flew open. She’d been so lost in sensation, she hadn’t realized Tanner had freed himself. She took a quick moment to appraise the situation, then made a move to run.

Using his body weight, he pinned her against the wall. She could feel his cock pressing against her midriff. “I’m about to make good on my promise,” he breathed into her ear, his hands tracing the pattern of her curves. She shivered under his seductive touch.

She opened her mouth, but before she could say anything he closed his lips over hers. He moved his hand to the small of her back and drew her pelvis closer to him. He pulled the rubber cock from her pussy and tossed it aside. “You won’t need that anymore,” he growled into her mouth. He parted her swollen folds and eased three thick fingers deep inside her cunt while his thumb scraped over her clit.

Ally could barely summon the strength to remain standing. She sagged against him and he tightened his hold, bracing her to him. His gaze locked on hers as he worked her



into a state of aroused euphoria. She wanted to push him away and run, but she couldn't. It felt too good, too right.

His lips greedily closed over hers and branded her with his heat. Twining her arms around his neck, she began panting heavily. He expertly fucked her with his fingers until she was on the brink of a powerful orgasm. She felt almost desperate for release. The desire in his eyes sent shivers through her body.

"Take your shirt off," he ordered. In one fluid motion she peeled it over her head and tossed it aside.

When his hungry gaze settled on her milky cleavage, her pussy began to clench. "That's it, baby. Let me finish what you started." She fell under the spell of his deep, mesmerizing voice.

Craving the feel of his skin, she pulled him against her naked flesh and began rocking her hips, meeting and welcoming his every thrust. She ran her hands over his thick, corded muscles, reveling in the feel of his moist flesh.

"Let me show you what my tongue can do." His voice thinned to a whisper.

She opened her mouth to speak but no words formed. His burning eyes left her face as he slowly tracked down her body. Settling himself between her legs, he urged her thighs wide open and lowered his head. She shivered with delight at the touch of his soft, velvety tongue.

"Sweet Jesus, Tanner!" she cried and arched her spine.

She moved against him restlessly and plowed her fingers through his hair. The pleasure he was giving her was beyond her wildest imagination. He did things to her body that no one had ever done before. Things that made her dizzy, wild, feverish. She wanted to touch him. Everywhere. She wanted her mouth on his chest, his abdomen, his cock. It was too much, too intense.

Scraping her nails over his shoulders she pulled on him. "Stop...stop...God, don't stop," she begged, as he continued his mind-blowing erotic assault.

His tongue probed her soaked opening then licked her all the way from front to back. A jolt of fire curled around her and she began to quake. In no time at all an explosion tore through her as she shuddered her surrender.

Tanner let out a low growl of satisfaction when her juices poured into his mouth. Wrapping his arms around her waist, he held her and absorbed her tremors as she took her time coming back down to Earth. After her breathing regulated he slid up her body until his mouth hovered over hers.

Her heart lurched in her chest as she watched him. Every old feeling she had for him came clawing back to the surface. She was still so deeply in love with him. But her emotions were quickly squelched when she recalled that he didn't even remember who she was.

"Now wasn't that better than some toy?" he asked, his lips glistening with her desire. She could smell her heady scent on his breath.

Lowering her gaze to shadow the emotions in her eyes, she nodded. It occurred to her that the reason she'd kept him secured to the web wasn't to make him pay for leaving her – it was with the hope that he'd remember her, remember their past.

When he shifted closer, she felt the wet tip of his arousal press against her. She began to feel guilty for trying to keep him captive. Especially after he'd freed himself and given her such intense pleasure without taking anything for himself.

"I'm sorry," she murmured. "It was wrong of me to keep you captive. Let me make it up to you."

He pulled her into his embrace, twisted them around and began to walk her backwards. "What exactly do you have in mind?" he asked, a playful glint in his eyes.

She shrugged and nibbled on her lower lip. "I don't know. Maybe dinner."

He chuckled softly. "I have a better idea." His deep voice dropped to a whisper that caressed her body.

“Oh? And what would that be?” she asked tentatively, watching his thick muscles shift with each movement.

“Tell me more about this prom night we missed. What was so special about it? What were we going to do?” A warm smile turned up the corners of his sexy mouth and softened his features.

When she lowered her head, he cupped her chin and tilted her face until their eyes locked. “Tell me,” he coaxed softly.

The tenderness in his voice made her blurt out the truth. “We...we were going to make love. You were going to be my first.”

Wrapping his arms around her waist, he effortlessly picked her up and pushed her shoulder blades against the sticky web, trapping her.

Her eyes opened wide in surprise as the strong bindings secured her in place. “What...what are you doing?” she cried, alarm obvious in the tone of her voice. She felt her face go pale as she hopelessly struggled to free herself.

He picked up the leather crop and looked deep into her eyes.

“I’m going to give you the prom night you never had.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The air in the room had cooled considerably as night approached. Neither one of them seemed bothered by the chill as their desire kept them hotter than the inside of a furnace. The sun had disappeared over the horizon, leaving the room draped in darkness. Tanner shut the window and lit the candles on the side table. The warm flickering light silhouetted their bodies.

He took a small step back and perused the naked woman before him. The soft glow of the candlelight made her honey-gold skin glisten. By God, she was exquisite. It wasn’t just her physical appearance that attracted him. There was something about her. Something that drew him in and tugged at his emotions. She was unlike any other

woman he'd ever been with. In fact, she was everything he'd ever been looking for. How could he not remember her? Ally's voice pulled him back to the situation at hand.

"Let me down from here," she demanded, her eyes flashing with anger and something else. If he had to guess, he'd say passion, anticipation.

He stepped closer, until he could feel the heat radiating from her body. Using the backs of his fingers, he trailed a line down her face. Her skin felt so soft beneath his hand. Looking at her made him wild with the need to fuck her. She stiffened and twisted her head sideways, breaking his touch.

She glared at him and blew out a shaky breath. "The sheriff is outside waiting for me. I could scream." Her voice rose an octave.

He smiled and skated a finger over the milky curve of her breasts. He could feel her heart pounding inside her chest. His fingers dropped to her cunt and threaded through the fine hair between her thighs. He caressed her nether lips and parted her folds. His fingers quickly became drenched with her moisture. When he wiggled his finger, she arched into him and bit down on her bottom lip. Her action was so telling. She was excited. That pleased him.

"Yes, you could," he said, his voice rough. "If you wanted to," he challenged.

"Of course I want to," she said, her cheeks turning one shade pinker. He watched her throat as she swallowed.

His grin widened as he lightly massaged her engorged clit. "Now why would you do that, Ally? Why would you deny yourself what you really want?"

She opened her mouth and he silenced her with a kiss. He pressed his lips over hers. Hard. Possessively. He traded hot, wet kisses with her for a long, endless moment, until his touch penetrated her defenses. Soon her lips widened and her tongue moved inside to mate with his. Every sensual movement of her body indicated her wants and desires.

He let out a low growl of longing as he began to devour her with his mouth. He pressed his cock against her, letting her know the effect she had on him. When she

began whimpering for more, he buried his face in the side of her neck. He lingered there, breathing in her erotic scent.

His cock throbbed painfully, screaming for release. But he wasn't about to give into his need just yet. First he wanted to drive this luscious naked woman beyond the brink of sanity. He wanted to stir the fire in her until she begged for release.

"Please, Tanner, more. I want more." She squirmed and tossed her head to the side. "I want to feel you inside me."

A sound rumbled deep in his throat. "Ah, now it's *you* who begs." Dropping the crop he still clutched in one hand, he quickly discarded his pants and removed his shirt. His hands gripped the side of her hips and held her pelvis close to his. His cock scraped her swollen clit. Her sigh of sweet pleasure filled the room.

He twisted his head and examined the contents on the table beside him. The candlelight flickered across the ceiling, creating shadows and providing him with enough light to examine the sex toys on display.

His blood began racing with anticipation. "What do we have here?" he asked, stepping away to grab the nipple clamps. "Were you planning on using these on me?"

She shook her head as her eyes lit up with apprehension. "No. Those aren't mine."

He turned the clamps over in his hands and smiled at her. Ally's chest began to rise and fall quickly. "Tanner..." Her voice was a hesitant whisper.

"Shhhh." He pressed a finger to her lips.

She swallowed her protests when he bent forward and licked the creamy valley between her heavy breasts. A bead of perspiration trickled down her chest and he leaned in and tracked it with his tongue. Her soft moan of pleasure reached his ears. He took one hard nipple between his lips and grazed his teeth over the delicate flesh. Drawing the rock-hard nub deeper into his mouth, he suckled until hollows pulled at his cheeks. He felt her go wild under his gentle assault. She took deep gulping breaths as he treated her other nipple to the same erotic pleasure. Before she had time to protest further, he attached the nipple clamps to her breasts.

Pitching forward, her eyes opened wide in surprise. She moistened her lips and gasped. By small degrees her expression changed from apprehension to excitement. "Tanner that feels...I don't know. It hurts, but it feels incredible at the same time." He pulled on them just a little and she whimpered.

Tanner grabbed the crop and began dragging it over her quivering flesh. "You've been a naughty girl, Ally. What made you think you could keep me captive and torture me by making me watch you pleasure yourself? Didn't you think there would be consequences?" When she didn't answer he pulled on the nipple clamps. "I asked you a question," he growled.

Her head lolled to the side. "I...I don't know." He watched her lids flicker as her eyes darkened with desire.

Tanner circled around her. Reaching down, he used all his strength to tear the bindings around her lush backside, giving him access to her most intimate areas. He pulled apart her perfectly sculpted, heart-shaped ass cheeks. She clenched her pink puckered hole. He stroked the tender flesh with the tip of his finger and she squirmed. Careful to avoid the web, he put his lips close to her ear and whispered, "Naughty girls must be punished, Ally." He pushed one long finger into her tight opening. Her heat curled around him like a glove.

"Tanner..." she whimpered, her voice merely a breathless whisper.

Something in her voice was so comforting, so familiar. It seeped inside him and filled him with warmth. A rush of feelings exploded through him and left him shaken. He was unprepared for the onslaught. In that instant, he knew what he felt for her was more than just a sexual pull. He also knew how easily it would be to lose himself, heart and soul, in this sweet, sexy, *amazing* woman.

Her head rolled to the side. "Tanner," she whispered again as he worked his finger inside her. God, he loved the way she said his name.

It amazed him how important her pleasure had suddenly become to him, and how deeply they'd connected on an intimate level. Tanner wanted nothing more than to give

her a wonderful experience, a “first time” experience that she’d never had with another man.

The sudden image of her with another man filled him with an unexpected rage. What the hell was going on with him? He couldn’t explain it—couldn’t explain all the muddled feeling and emotions churning inside him. All he knew was he wanted to be her first for a lot of things. Her first *and* her last. If another man touched her, he just might have to kill him.

## Chapter Four

Ally had never felt anything quite like Tanner's finger probing her ass. It was both pain and pleasure mingled into one. When she wiggled her backside, Tanner growled and pushed his finger in deeper.

"Tell me, Ally. Have you ever been fucked here?" He pulled his finger out, spread her cheeks wider, and rubbed the crop over her swollen opening.

She shook her head and gasped for her next breath when the crop breached her ringed passage.

"Since I supposedly stood you up on prom night and missed being your first here," he reached around and fondled her pussy, "then perhaps I can be your first *here*." He coaxed the crop in another inch.

He grabbed the bottle of lubricant off the table and poured a generous amount into his hand. "How does that sound, Ally? Do you want me to be your first?"

"Tanner, I don't think..." Her words trailed off when he withdrew the crop and his slick finger reentered her ass.

"I'll make it good for you, Ally. I promise," he whispered, easing in deeper.

She cried out and bucked against him. "Oh God, that feels incredible." Arching her back, she granted him deeper access. He worked his finger inside her for a long time, until she got used to the new feeling. She thought she was going to go mad with desire. The barrage of sensations made her body convulse. Suddenly it wasn't enough. She wanted more — *all* of him inside her.

"Please put your cock in me," she begged, ramming her ass harder against his finger. Her pussy dripped with desire. The scent of her arousal began to permeate the room, bringing her passion to new heights.



She could hear his breathing change and knew he was fighting for control. “No. First you’ll fuck the crop until you get used to the feel.” Even though he tried to sound harsh, she detected gentleness and caring in his voice. His tone softened. “Then maybe I’ll let you have my cock.” His words touched something deep inside her and stirred her emotions. She suspected she knew the real reason he didn’t give her what she begged for. Taking her comfort and wellbeing into consideration, Tanner knew his impressive thickness would be too much for her bear her first time.

She bit down on her bottom lip and fisted her hands above her head when he slathered her opening with warm lubricant. He eased the long crop inside her. She let out a little gasp as it filled her. Closing her eyes she concentrated on the tiny points of pleasure. Her body began to tremble from the stimulation.

“You’re so fucking hot, Ally. My cock is throbbing watching you take the crop into your ass.” His voice caressed her flesh.

She had no idea being penetrated this way could be so pleasurable. Tanner seemed to know just what to do and just how to touch her. The sensual hunger he aroused in her was shocking. It was a pure carnal delight. She emitted a deep primal sound from the depths of her throat. She felt the muscles in her cunt begin to quiver.

His breath was hot on her neck. “Are you enjoying this, Ally? Do you like me being the first here?” he tenderly whispered into her ear, concern evident in his tone.

She couldn’t find her voice to answer. Her throat was too tight with emotion. Instead, she arched her back, driving the crop in deeper. Tanner’s hand slid over her hips and parted her labia. When he feathered his finger over her clit she felt herself explode into a million fragments. Her head thrashed side to side as she tumbled into a powerful orgasm.

He eased the crop out and gently ran a soothing finger over her sensitive tissue. “I think your ass has had enough for today.” He circled around her until they were eye to eye. He removed the nipple clamps and tossed them aside. “I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

God, the compassion and concern in his eyes warmed her all over.

She shook her head from side to side and tried to recapture her breath. "No. It was perfect," she whispered, surprised that she was able to find her voice.

He reached down and stroked her slick cunt while his gaze settled on her mouth. "You're so wet, Ally. Do you know what that does to me?"

Aching to caress his face, she tugged on the binding strands, hoping to snap them. "It's what you do to me, Tanner. It's never been like this for me before. It's never been this good," she blurted out.

He furrowed his brow, aware of the emotions surging through him. "Why, Ally? Why is it so good with me?"

He watched her eyes turn glossy as she lifted her gaze to his. "Because I love you. I've never stopped loving you, Tanner." Her voice ended on a soft whisper.

He jerked his head back, his jaw dropping open. She lowered her lashes, shadowing her eyes.

Tanner nudged her chin up with his thumb. "It's never been this good for me before either, Ally," he admitted. He gave her a warm smile. "Sex has always just been about physical pleasure to me, but you make me feel something in here." He pressed his hand over his heart then leaned forward and gave her a gentle, tender kiss on her forehead. "I don't know why. Honestly, I don't *know* you well enough to have feelings for you. But I *do* have feelings. Strong feelings." He shook his head. "I can't explain it to you because I barely understand it myself."

There was so much emotion in his voice it took her breath away. Ally felt her heart do a somersault while her stomach did cartwheels. She drew in a shuddery breath and absorbed the heat radiating from his body.

He ran his fingers up her arms until his hands locked with hers. His mouth hovered over her lips. She could feel his cock throb against her body. "Tell me how you like it, baby. Do you like it hard and fast or soft and slow?"

The fire in his eyes began burning her up. "It doesn't matter, Tanner. All that matters is that it's you who is giving it to me."

He grew quiet for a moment and then said, "Do you really love me?" His expression was bewildered, his voice full of disbelief.

A surge of warmth flooded her veins and she had a hard time filling her lungs. "I've never loved anyone but you, Tanner." Her voice trembled. "When you ran away, you took my heart with you."

He cupped her face as his mouth closed over hers for a deep, passionate kiss. She felt his thick cock probe her opening.

"Please, Tanner. Let me down from here. I need to hold you in my arms again, just one more time."

With a quick, forceful tug he tore the silky bindings from her hands and pulled her to him. She collapsed against a wall of packed muscle. Burrowing her face in the crook of his neck, she inhaled his familiar scent while focusing on his touch and the feel of his skin against hers.

He gathered her into his arms and backed her up against the wall. Her body fit against his perfectly. She instinctively wrapped her legs around his back. "Fuck me, Tanner."

"No," he said. His gaze was powerful, unguarded.

She looked at him questioningly. Her brows knitted together as she frowned. "No?" Need made her voice husky.

He trailed a kiss over her jaw and looked at her with pure desire. "No, baby. I'm going to *make love* to you. The way you said we were supposed to years ago." There was such tenderness in his gaze.

Her pulse leapt in her throat. Ally twined her arms around his neck and pulled him closer. Her breasts pressed against his chest. She couldn't seem to get him close enough. She cried out his name as he pushed his thick cock into her. With slow, steady strokes he massaged the tight walls of her pussy, drawing out her pleasure.

"You feel amazing," he murmured into her mouth. His voice covered her like a warm blanket as he filled her with his heat. When she squirmed against him, he pumped harder and faster. She could feel his cock throbbing inside her.

"Tanner...*please*." Her voice quivered as she cried out to him. In her haze of arousal she had no idea what she was begging for. She only knew she needed him to ease the escalating tension building inside her.

She squeezed her cunt muscles around his cock. "Mmmm..." he moaned against her skin.

Reaching between their bodies, he pressed his fingers over her swollen clit, coaxing her body into release. Waves of pleasure began washing over her.

She threw her head back and gasped. "Don't stop," she whimpered as her release approached.

"I don't ever plan on stopping. Not today, not tomorrow, not next week. I'll never stop making love to you, Ally."

His words sent her over the edge. Her pussy began to spasm. She arched against him, drawing his cock deeper inside. She called his name and gasped in pleasure when his fingers caressed her sensitive flesh.

He lowered his head and drew her nipple into his mouth. The feel of his warm lips closing over her breast was exquisite. Her body shook as he laved her tight peak with his tongue. She went wild in his arms. She scraped her nails over his back and came apart completely. She felt Tanner's release shudder through him as he slammed into her and pinned her back to the wall.

He closed his mouth over hers and drew her in for a soul-searching kiss. She remained pressed against him until their hearts and bodies fused into one.

Tanner broke the kiss and finger-combed her hair off her face. He gave her a warm smile. He opened his mouth to say something but then shut it again. He looked perplexed. She looked into his eyes searching for answers but all she saw was unanswered questions.

"What is it?" she asked.

He gave a slight shake of his head. "Nothing." She was astonished by the tenderness in his voice.

Ally suspected she knew what he was thinking. "Why is it you can't remember me? Remember *us*?" Once again, Ally's stomach curdled, wondering if witchcraft was indeed involved. But who would do this to him? To her? And why?

Tanner shook his head sadly. He didn't have an easy answer. "I'm not sure."

"Well, well... What do we have here?"

## **Chapter Five**

Tanner and Ally both spun around at the sound of the voice. When Tanner spotted a shadow in the dark corners of the doorway, he hooked his arm around Ally's waist and positioned her behind him. A moment later a beautiful woman stepped into the room. He vaguely recognized the girl with the long black hair and shimmering sapphire eyes. A knot tightened in his gut as he stared at her. There was something about her eyes. Something hauntingly familiar. Something...hypnotizing.

She stepped closer and slowly walked over to the table that held the used sex toys. The light from the flickering candle cast shadows across her porcelain profile. She twisted around to face them and pouted.

"Seems I'm a little late for the party."

Tanner heard a small gasp escape from Ally. She grabbed him by the shoulder and whispered in his ear. "I need my pants."

He quickly scooped Ally's clothes off the floor and handed them to her. She hurried into her pants and pulled on her T-shirt. Tanner shrugged on his own shirt and climbed into his jeans.

"Do I know you?" he asked, widening his stance as though prepared for battle.

As soon as the girl smiled, it hit him. She was the one who had captured him. The last thing he remembered before Ally had come to his rescue was having a conversation about the Belhaven high-school reunion.

Tanner blinked his eyes and shook his head, trying to remember what had happened before he'd woken up bound to the web. He broke out in a cold, uncomfortable sweat. "What did you do to me?" he growled. He listened with half an ear to Ally's low whispered chant behind him. What in the hell was she doing?

The dark-haired girl emitted a deep, sultry laugh from the depths of her throat. "Well, it seems I didn't get a chance to do *anything* to you. It looks like my lovely cousin got to you first."

Tanner spun around and glared at Ally. "*Cousin?* You were in on this?"

Ally shook her head then glared at the dark-haired witch. "Selina's responsible for this, not me."

Tanner stepped back and shook his head. "Would somebody *please* tell me what's going on here?"

They ignored him and glared at each other.

"Selina, what are you doing? Why are you back in town? And why would you do this to Tanner?" Ally asked, her voice rising with each question.

Selina folded her arms across her chest and grinned. "Now what kind of greeting is that, little cousin?"

"How did you get here?"

Selina's grin widened. "Bad *always* prevails over good, Ally. Haven't you learned that by now? I managed to find a way around your *ancient* banishment spell." She rolled her eyes. "As you know, I had many years to work on it."

*Banishment spell.* Tanner wrestled with half forgotten memories. They were *witches?*

Ally slipped her hand into the front pocket of her jeans. "What do you want with Tanner?"

Selina's eyes darkened to black coals. Her jaw twitched. "Why do you care? He never loved *you*. If he had, he wouldn't have made love to me on prom night before he deserted you and joined the military."

Tanner watched Ally's shoulders stiffen. She shook her head in disbelief. "You were with me on prom night, Selina," she countered.

"Before that, cousin. While you stood on your porch and waited for Tanner, he was making love to me."

Face red with anger, Ally took a step toward Selina, but Tanner held her back. "He never would have done that," Ally bit out.

"If you don't believe me, ask him yourself."

Ally's mouth twisted as though she'd just sucked on a lemon. "I can't. It seems he's lost all recollection of that night. All recollection of *me* and the love we shared."

Tanner's head bobbed back and forth as he tried to follow the conversation. Tried to put together the pieces of the puzzle.

A mischievous grin curled Selina's lips.

Ally let out a humorless laugh and shook her head in disgust. "I can't believe you're responsible for this. Why, Selina? Why would you delete Tanner's memories? Why would you do this to him? To *me*?" she asked in a low, deceptively calm voice.

Like a bow stretched to the limit, Selina's composure snapped. She took a step forward and reached for something in her pocket. Tanner fisted his hands and waited. He wasn't about to let anything happen to Ally.

"He would have wanted me if *you* hadn't come along. Little Miss Perfect with a sweeter than sugar smile. The little tomboy who grew into a gorgeous cheerleader with all the popular friends. While I sat at home alone with no one."

Ally's eyes softened. "But you had me. And I thought we had each other."

Selina huffed. "We had each *other*? Are you forgetting you banished me to the netherworld?"

"Only for your own good, Selina. What you were doing to the townsfolk was wrong, and you know it. If they had gotten their hands on you before I sent you away, it could have been a lot worse. I was protecting you."

"I didn't need or want your protection, little miss good witch. Didn't you ever think I would tire of being in your *perfect* shadow?" Selina waved her hand through the air and snarled. "But I fixed you, *all* the women of Belhaven who preferred your friendship



over mine, and all men who never gave me the time of day. I made everybody in this town *pay* for overlooking me.”

Ally stepped forward. “The townsfolk will pay no more for your imagined insults,” she assured her.

In a motion so fast it took Tanner off guard, Ally pulled a packet out of her pocket and sprinkled the contents over Selina. Keeping a wide berth, Ally circled her cousin and began chanting a spell.

Selina laughed. “Oh please, little cousin. Your magic has grown weak from lack of use.” Reaching into her own pocket, Selina pulled out a vial. “Now it’s time for *you* to go visit the netherworld. And *you* won’t be coming back.” Selina glanced at Tanner. “But don’t worry, Ally. I promise to take extra special care of *him*.”

Ally twisted around and glanced at Tanner. “Get out of here now, while you still can.”

“I’m not going anywhere without you, Ally. Ever again.”

A movement at the door drew their attention. Tanner turned and spotted the sheriff.

Selina’s eyes widened in delight. “*Sheriff*,” she purred. “How nice of you to join us. Don’t worry, I have something *extra-special* planned for you. No one turns me down without paying for it.”

The sheriff drew his gun. Selina threw her head back and laughed. In that split second, Tanner lunged for her and knocked her off balance.

The vial flew into the air. Before it hit the floor and smashed, Ally grabbed it.

She pulled the rubber stopper free. “Tanner, *move!*”

As soon as Tanner distanced himself, Ally threw the potion on Selina and once again recited the spell.

A thick fog covering her, Selina cried out and lunged for Ally, but before she could grab hold, her body turned translucent. “I’ll be back, Ally. Wait and see...”

“Not this time, you won’t.” Ally brushed her palms together. “You were wrong, dear cousin. Good *always* prevails over evil.” She turned to the sheriff.

He scratched his head and gave her a genuine smile. “Thank you, Ally.” Taking his notebook from his pocket, he turned. “This place gives me the creeps. I’ll meet you both outside.” His boots pounded the floor as he hurried outside.

Suddenly, as though he’d been struck by a wrecking ball, Tanner flew backwards and hit the wall. He cracked his head and winced in pain. When he opened his eyes and looked up, Ally was standing over him. Her eyes were full of worry. She knelt down and brushed his hair off his forehead.

“Tanner, are you okay?” Her voice trembled. “Please be okay, my heart couldn’t take losing you again.”

Tanner looked deep into Ally’s eyes as old memories flooded him. “Ally Cat,” he said softly and pulled her down onto the floor with him.

Her relief was obvious. “Oh my God, Tanner, you remember.” Her voice caught on a sob as tears pooled on her lashes.

He shook his head and smiled. “Your spell must have broken the one Selina had over me.” He pulled her into his arms and she molded herself against him. Every forgotten emotion he’d ever had for her filled his heart. His insides ached with the love that overcame him. “I never slept with her, Ally. She tried to lure me into her bed, but I turned her down. That must be why she cast a spell over me and erased you from my memory.”

“It’s okay, Tanner. I believe you.”

He cupped her chin and lifted her face until her eyes met his. “Baby, we’ve lost so much time together. I’m so sorry this happened.”

“I know. Me too.” The sadness in her heart was apparent.

He brushed her tears from her cheeks. “I love you, Ally Cat.”

She closed her hand over his and sniffed. "I love you too, Tanner," she echoed. "I've never stopped."

He pulled her impossibly closer and she melted against him. "I always felt like there was something missing from my life, and now I know what it is. I want to make love to you every day for the rest of our lives to make up for all the lost time." He tilted his head to kiss her.

She inched her head back and looked at him. "One question." A sudden gleam sparkled in her eyes.

"What is it?" he asked, nuzzling her neck, inhaling her rich female scent.

"When do we start?"

## **About the Author**

If you're looking for Cathryn Fox you'd never find her living in Eastern Canada with a husband, two young children and a chocolate Labrador retriever. Nor would you ever find her in a small corner office, writing all day in her pajamas.

Oh no, if you're looking for Cathryn you might find her gracing the Hollywood elite with her presence, sunbathing naked on an exotic beach in Southern France, or mingling with the rich and famous as she sips champagne on a luxury yacht in the Caribbean. Perhaps you can catch her before she slips between the sheets with a man who is as handsome as he is wealthy, a man who promises her the world.

Cathryn Fox is no ordinary woman. Men love her. Women want to be her.

Cathryn is bold, sensuous and sophisticated. And she is my alter ego.

Cathryn Fox welcomes mail from readers. You can write to her c/o Ellora's Cave Publishing at 1056 Home Avenue, Akron, OH 44310-3502.

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