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TREAT

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Treat

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Chapter One

Michaela watched him move across the crowded room, smiling at everyone he passed. The little apartment they shared was filled to the brim with a mixture of her friends and his. A Halloween party he'd suggested a month ago with a mischievous smile on his too handsome face. An excuse to dress up in costumes, drink copious amounts of liquor and have fun.

She'd agreed because she couldn't say no to Austin. They'd been roommates for only a few months but she already had it bad. What she thought would be an easy pairing turned out to be wrong.

Michaela wanted him with an intensity that made her ache. And he didn't want her.

She waited, breathless with anticipation as he headed her way. Dressed like a sexy pirate with a glittery black patch over one eye and a kerchief wrapped around the top of his dark head. A red and black striped shirt and baggy black pants stuffed into scuffed black boots, he looked like some sort of rogue warrior of the high seas.

He filled her head with all sorts of lustful fantasies. Of him taking her hostage upon his ship, tying her up and having his wicked way with her.

Too bad he was gay.

"I think our party is a success, don't you?" Austin sidled up to stand next to her. He even wrapped an arm around her shoulders, the heat and weight of him burning into her flesh. She shivered, tendrils of need unfurling throughout her body. God, she wanted him.

Wanting something—*someone* she couldn't have was tough. Devastating.

"Definitely. I hope we don't run out of food."

"I hope we don't run out of booze." He laughed and took a sip of the drink he held in his other hand. "Are you having fun?"

She really wasn't but she didn't want to admit it. "I can't believe how many people are here."

"Think anyone will call the cops on us? We're packed in this place, we have to be making a ton of noise."

"Oh God." She pressed her fingers to her mouth. "I hope not!"

Austin laughed and hugged her close. She had no choice but to rest her hand against his chest so she wouldn't stumble into him. He felt solid and warm, muscular and hard.

Her cheeks flushed and she withdrew from him. "I should check out the food situation."

"Michaela..." He sounded like he was protesting and she turned to look at him.

"What?"

With a little smile, he shook his head slowly. "Nothing. Go ahead and check on the food. Be a good little hostess."

She walked away, pondering the odd look on his face. It had been brief, a flicker in his brilliant blue eyes, a shadow across his features but she saw it. And she wondered at it.

Stop, you're wondering about nothing. Wishful thinking. Lusting after a man who's not interested will get you nowhere.

Threading through the crowd, she headed toward the kitchen. She knew she was wasting her time. She needed to get out more and date again. Her last semi-boyfriend had been a bust. All of her steady boyfriends had been a bust and she was starting to think something was wrong with her.

Deviant sexual fantasies will do that to a girl.

Michaela shook her head and grabbed two empty trays from the small dining table. She took them into the kitchen, looking for solace, wishing she could escape the crowd, the entire party.

No such luck. The kitchen was packed, people everywhere and she caught sight of Brad, Austin's sometime boyfriend dressed up as the Mad Hatter.

"Such a fun party, love," Brad said as he approached her, giving her a smacking kiss on the cheek.

"Thanks. It's all Austin's doing." She liked Brad, he was fun, over the top and always sweet to her. She couldn't help it if she was the teeniest bit jealous of his relationship with Austin.

"Oh, I don't know about that sweetie. He's not the most organized person in the world." Brad glanced in Austin's direction. "You seem to keep him grounded."

"Please." She waved her hand as if to dismiss the compliment but secretly it pleased her.

"It's true. He's been behaving in a much more sensible way since moving in with you. I don't know if you've heard any old stories but our Austin used to be a wild character."

"Our Austin". She liked the sound of that. Of course, she wasn't one to share. Or was she?

Her cheeks flushed hot and she shook her head. Once again, her thoughts led her down a naughty path. She needed to get them under control.

"He's told me a few things," she finally said, loading one of the trays with a fresh array of finger foods. "He doesn't go into too much detail."

And how she wished he would. She would give anything to live through his past adventures, at least in her mind.

Brad laughed. "Keeping an air of mystery I assume."

"I guess so." That air of mystery only intrigued her more. She couldn't figure Austin out. Was he really gay? Like, totally gay or did he swing both ways? Why did he like hanging out with her so much? Did he *like her* like her? And why did she revert to high school musings whenever she thought about Austin?

"Well, I'm going back out to mingle." Brad gave her a one-armed hug, the brim of his too large hat nudging her temple. "You're looking hot tonight, sweetie. Go out there and work your magic."

Michaela watched Brad go then glanced down at herself. She hadn't stretched her imagination too far by going with a witch costume. Not scary witch or slutty witch, her costume said fun, flirty witch.

At least she hoped it did.

With an exaggerated sigh, she went back to the dining table with the loaded tray and set it out for their guests. People swarmed the table, plucking the hors d'oeuvres from the tray with eager fingers and she glanced up to find Austin standing next to her.

"You were right," he said with a nod toward the swarm.

"Told you so." Satisfaction tinged her voice.

He grinned and her knees went weak. Her heart pounded double time and her nipples hardened to almost painful points. Would his smile always affect her like this?

She was afraid the answer was yes.

Chapter Two

He had a suspicion that his roommate liked him as more than a friend.

And surprisingly, Austin thought he might return the favor.

He'd been attracted to Michaela from the moment he met her but he brushed it off. He was attracted to lots of people, male or female, it didn't matter. Chemistry was chemistry it didn't matter the sex. The last few years, though, he'd kept it strictly to men. A few affairs here and there plus his failed relationship with Brad. At least they'd remained friends.

"I was just thinking about you," Austin said when Brad approached him.

"All good thoughts I'm sure," Brad drawled as he pushed his giant hat up away from his forehead.

“Always.” Austin chuckled. “Having a good time?”

“Of course, though I wouldn’t mind some alone time with you.” Brad brushed his hand against Austin’s crotch.

He instantly reacted, his cock giving a receptive jerk. Glancing about the room, he caught sight of Michaela who watched him with troubled eyes.

“Maybe later.” Austin stepped away from Brad’s touch. He didn’t want to do this under her watchful eye. “It’s too crazy right now. Michaela needs my help.”

“Do you like your sweet roomie? Have a little crush on her?” Brad batted his eyelashes at him. They glittered purple, matching the shade of his hat.

“She’s become a good friend.” Austin kept it deliberately nonchalant. He didn’t want to give Brad any ideas. “Where did you get those eyelashes? They’re ridiculous.”

“Our friend Scarlett hooked me up. Aren’t they great? They’re heavy though.” He fluttered his eyelashes again. “Why isn’t she here tonight?”

“I don’t know. I invited her.” Austin shrugged. He didn’t get Scarlett sometimes. Longing to be a part of the crowd yet keeping a fair distance from everyone, she made no sense to his practical brain.

“She’s missing a good party,” Brad said, longing in his voice as his gaze raked over Austin once again. “You’re missing a good party too since you won’t take me up on my offer.”

“Listen, Brad, I can’t ditch this party. Michaela would kill me.” He was making excuses, he just didn’t want to hurt her feelings in case she saw them.

There was something about her tonight. A little vulnerable, a little sad and it worried him. Made him want to take care of her.

And he never wanted to take care of anyone. He was all about his independence.

“She’s too busy playing Martha Stewart to notice if you’ve disappeared. Besides it won’t take long.” Brad stepped in closer, his mouth level with Austin’s ear. “I could give you a blow job in the bathroom. I’ll have you coming in minutes and no one would be the wiser.”

Austin’s cock hardened at Brad’s promise. It was beyond tempting. Brad had excellent blow job skills. And he’d been tense lately since hadn’t been with someone in a while.

“Later,” Austin murmured and Brad smiled, reaching up to pat Austin’s cheek.

“I’ll let you fuck me long after the witching hour,” he promised.

“What are you guys talking about?” a voice asked from behind, startling them both. Austin turned to find Michaela smiling at them though it didn’t quite reach her eyes.

“Naughty things,” Brad answered, a purr in his voice as he curled his arm around Austin’s.

“Oh.” She looked surprised by Brad’s comment and she cleared her throat, as if grappling for composure. Her gaze drifted to where Brad touched him. “Well it is Halloween. Time for tricks and treats, right?”

“You getting any treats tonight honey? Is there a new man in your life?” Brad asked.

Austin wished he’d shut up. Brad knew she was single, he’d told him so a few days ago. And Michaela clearly looked uncomfortable.

“No, not right now.” She shook her head, a wistful smile curving her pretty pink lips. “All the good ones are taken.”

“Or gay?” Brad laughed and Austin was tempted to punch him.

“Yeah.” She nodded. “I guess.”

Austin felt bad as he watched her wander away, her frothy black skirts billowing about her as she walked. She looked pretty tonight, her long blonde hair hanging sleek down her back, the pointy black hat sitting at a jaunty angle atop her head.

“She’s got it bad for you,” Brad murmured once she was out of earshot.

“Yeah and why did you have to be such a prick?”

“What do you mean?” Brad looked offended.

“You shouldn’t have said those things to her, Brad. You made her feel bad. And you acted damn territorial. She knows we’ve got a little thing going, you didn’t need to act like that.”

“Please.” Brad sniffed. “I was just being myself. I can’t tiptoe around her for fear of hurting her feelings.”

“Right, so you’ll just act like an asshole instead. Shit.” Austin strode away, ignoring Brad’s pleas, not even looking back to acknowledge him.

There would be no illicit fucking long past the witching hour for him tonight. He was on self-imposed punishment.

Angry at himself for allowing Brad to hurt Michaela’s feelings. Disappointed he didn’t have the guts to explore his confusing emotions for Michaela further.

He was a wimp. Pure and simple.

Chapter Three

Michaela woke to find Austin sitting on the edge of her bed, a concerned look on his face. A single lamp burned on her dresser across the room and she blinked, bringing everything into sharp focus.

Like the fact that Austin wore a pair of black boxer briefs and nothing else. That his dark hair was mussed about his head as if he just woke up and his cheeks were covered in a fine shadow of stubble.

Her body trembled with desire. Oh, he looked delicious. Good enough to eat. And he was watching her as if she'd lost her mind.

"Are you all right?"

She sat up, realized that the tank top she wore was thin enough to be see through and she yanked the covers up over her chest. There was no need giving him a glimpse of her hard nipples. "I'm fine. What happened?"

"You screamed. Scared the shit out of me." He reached for her hand and brought it to his chest. His bare, slightly hairy, firmly muscled chest. His heart beat rapidly beneath her palm. "You about gave me a heart attack."

Michaela pressed her fingers into his warm flesh, savoring the sensation of touching him so intimately. His long fingers circled her wrist like a manacle and the sudden image of him shackling both of her wrists above her head with his hands while sliding his cock deep inside her body burst into her mind.

Her panties dampened and she withdrew from his grip as if he burned her. It was dangerous, having him so close. Tempting her so much. "I'm sorry. I must've been having a bad dream."

"Some dream," he murmured, his gaze meeting hers. Eyes so brilliant blue she wanted to drown in them. A face so gorgeous she couldn't stop staring at it.

Why had she agreed to Austin being her roommate? Why, why why?

"Do you remember it at all?"

She shook her head. "No."

"Are you going to be okay?"

"I think so. Really, I'm fine. I don't even remember what I was screaming about."

He watched her, silent and she stared back in return. The air was charged with electricity, arcing between them, bouncing back and forth and she couldn't breathe. She could only wait with breathless anticipation for Austin to make the next move.

Would he make a move?

"Scoot over," he finally said as he pulled the covers back.

She did as he asked, her mouth dropping open when he slid into bed with her. She moved completely over to the other side, licking her lips when he settled his long, lithe frame into her bed, his dark head cradled by her stack of pillows.

"What are you doing?" she finally asked when she found her voice.

"Staying with you for a while." He lifted his arms and crossed them behind his head, clasping his hands together to lock behind his neck. "Until you fall asleep."

“I’ll be okay,” she protested but shut up when he gave her a stark look.

“Just relax and go back to sleep.” He stared up at the ceiling. “I’ll leave when I know you’re having sweet dreams.”

This was the sweetest, most torturous thing any man had ever done for her. He was in her bed—Austin was in. Her. Bed! But her excitement was fleeting.

He could care less that he was in bed with *her*. He did it only to offer her comfort. Nothing more, nothing less.

Disappointment flooded her as equally as her earlier pleasure.

“The light is on,” she mumbled. “I can’t go to sleep with the lights on.”

“I’ll turn it off.” He slipped from beneath the covers and she watched as he padded over to the dresser. She drank him in, the broad expanse of his smooth back, his firm ass beneath the boxer briefs and his long legs. He had a great body. One she wanted to explore with her hands and mouth all night.

And that delectable body was about to deposit itself back into her bed in a completely nonsexual way.

She wanted to cry. She wanted to laugh hysterically. Why was life so damn unfair?

Austin flicked off the lamp and came back to the bed, his movements loud in the quiet stillness of the night. He slipped beneath the covers once more, settling himself in a comfortable position she could only assume from all the shifting and rustling of the sheets.

“Night, Michaela,” he said, his deep voice soft, husky, sending shivers down her spine.

She hugged her pillow close, blinking back the tears as she rolled over to face away from him. It was hard, his body heat reaching toward her, his scent surrounding her.

So hard to resist.

“Good night, Austin,” she whispered as a single tear trickled down her cheek.

Chapter Four

A warm hand touched her, across her back, down her arm, circling about her shoulder. Michaela lay still and kept her breathing even, pretending she was still asleep.

If she let him know she was awake, would he stop touching her? She didn’t want to take that chance.

He continued to touch her, the heat, the scent of him wrapping around her and she knew without a doubt it was Austin.

She squeezed her eyes closed even tighter. What she would give for him to pull her over onto her back and hover over her. Dip down and press his lush mouth to hers in a soul stealing kiss. Have his big hands smooth all over her body, slowly undressing her, slowly searching her skin.

But he didn't. He continued to touch her and she savored that. Was thankful for the littlest bit of attention he showed her. In the quiet, in the dark of night, the two of them alone, together, at least he reached out to her and showed that he cared.

It was only a friendly gesture but she'd take what she could get.

"Michaela," he whispered. "Are you awake?"

Should she answer him? She wanted to but then again she didn't.

He leaned in close. So close, she felt the whisper of hot breath against her ear, drifting across her cheek. "Michaela."

She loved the way he said her name in his deep, sexy voice. Could only imagine what it would be like to have him whisper her name just as he entered her. Cry out her name just as he was about to come.

Michaela shivered just thinking about it.

A gentle brush of damp lips touched her cheek and then he was gone, sliding out of her bed with the agility of a cat. Quiet, his footsteps light, his movements quick, he left her room as if he'd never been there. Like a ghost come to haunt her on Halloween night and then slip away before the first light of day.

When she heard the click of his bedroom door shutting, she sat up and glanced about the room. She pushed her hair out of her eyes and shook her head.

Maybe she should've answered him. What could've happened? There were all sorts of juicy possibilities, all of them positive, all of them involving her and Austin naked and tangled in the sheets. She knew he liked to experiment, he'd told her so himself though he rarely went into vivid detail.

Lord, how she wished to hear some vivid details.

Michaela plopped back against the pillows where he laid, breathing in his lingering scent. The side of the bed was still warm from his skin and she had the adolescent thought that she never wanted to wash that pillowcase again.

Staring up at the ceiling, she vowed that someday she would try. She would make the attempt and see if there could be something between her and Austin. But she would wait. Feel him out, see if he was receptive. She wasn't about to stick her foot in it and make a fool of herself. She had to make sure.

She had to plan.

She had a feeling it would be worth the wait.

About the Author

After leaving the working world to become a stay at home mom/slave, Karen Erickson realized she needed to get crackin' and pursue her life long dream of being a published writer. A busy mother of three, she fits her precious writing time in between chasing her children, taking care of her wonderful husband and pretending she has a maid. She lives in California.

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