

What She Wants

Chapter One

Bells over the door chimed as Gage stepped past the threshold of Chase's Bed and Breakfast. Ahhh... The house was much cooler than his '71 Camaro. Why hadn't he flown here instead of driving a classic car with no air conditioner in August? Because he was too damned impetuous for his own good.

As he waited for the elusive Summer, Gage recalled his aunt's tale of the young widow. Summer Chase had opened a bed and breakfast after her husband died in a car accident. She'd needed the money. He felt sorry for her. It must have been tough to open her home to outsiders.

He heard shuffling and looked up. A woman stood in the doorway, clad in a turquoise one-piece bathing suit and matching sarong cover-up. He let his gaze travel the length of her. Luscious. Possibly the sexiest woman he'd ever seen. Hills and valleys in all the right places. The longest brown hair. He itched to tangle his fingers in it. Gage imagined her walking to him, naked, hair drifting around her bountiful body.

"Hello, can I help you?"

Ah, a lovely voice for a lovely woman. "Summer Chase?"

"Yes, and you are?"

Christ. He hadn't expected her to look so damn edible.

He stood and held out his hand. "Gage Knight. My Aunt Bev is a friend of yours."

She took his hand, and her eyes widened as she caught his words. "Little Gage?"

That damned nickname! His aunt would kill his personal life yet. "Please, just Gage."

She laughed. "Of course, sorry about that. I've just heard so much about you. Heck, I feel like I know you."

He liked her warm and inviting laugh. "All good things, I hope."

She winked at him. "Mostly."

"Well, don't listen to the bad things. My aunt just likes to talk."

"She's a very dear lady."

"About that. Did she happen to call and tell you I was coming?"

"Yep, she called."

He smiled. "I was hoping you might be able to put me up for the week."

"Did your Aunt Bev tell you I could keep you for the entire week?"

Heat filled his cheeks. "Not exactly. Until I got here, I wasn't sure how long I'd be staying."

Driving straight through from Ohio, stopping only for gas and bathroom breaks, had his muscles aching. Only a solid eight hours of sleep would help him feel alive again. Thirty-two years old, and he was feeling it.

"Gage, you're in luck. A couple had to cancel at the last minute, so I do have a room ready, and it's available to you for the entire week as well."

"Thank you! You're a goddess."

She laughed. "Follow me. You look like you could use a cold drink."

She started out of the room, and Gage jumped at her offer. "I'd be forever grateful. The last leg of the trip was hot as blazes."

She stopped and turned. "Your car doesn't have air conditioning?"

"I drive a 1971 Camaro. The only air is from the open windows."

She whistled and kept walking. "Wow. All the way from Ohio?"

"Unfortunately."

When she entered the kitchen and headed for a cupboard, Gage leaned against the doorframe and scanned his surroundings. The kitchen was spacious and well lit by the many windows. He could see a deck out back. Since the house backed up to the beach, he wondered if she'd been sunning herself when he'd arrived.

Crossing his arms over his chest, Gage watched her precise movements. He could stare at the sway of her hips for hours and not get bored.

"Was the trip a last minute decision?" Summer asked as she reached into a cabinet to grab a couple of glasses.

"Yeah. I'm sort of burned out from work. I needed the R and R."

"What do you do for a living?"

"Aunt Bev didn't tell you?"

“If she did, I don’t remember.” She placed the glasses on the counter before grabbing a pitcher from the refrigerator. “Iced tea okay?”

“Is it sweetened?”

“Is there any other kind?”

He grinned. “Perfect.” She poured a glass, then handed it to him. “I’m a private investigator,” he said.

She poured herself a glass, then leaned against the counter and took a sip. Even watching her swallow the tea was sexy.

“A PI, huh? That sounds pretty exciting.”

He pried his gaze away from the elegant line of her neck, but was snared by the sight of her damp lips. An image of her sucking his cock sprang to mind. Christ, what was wrong with him?

“Uh, not as exciting as you might think,” he said. “I track down cheating spouses most of the time.”

“I’ll bet it’s more exciting than changing sheets and cleaning all day.”

He chuckled. “You do have a point there.” Then, after a beat of silence, he asked, “So, Summer, what do you do when you aren’t taking care of this place?”

“That pretty much fills my time. Not much room for recreation.”

“Ever?”

She shrugged. “I try to get out every once in awhile.”

Gage had the crazy urge to lick her, to taste every silky inch of her. From her rosy-cheeked face to her dainty coral-painted toes. He cleared his throat and asked, “Any place in particular?”

She pointed to the window behind her. “Just to the beach. I’ve lived near the ocean my entire life, but it never gets old for me.”

“I can see how it’d be addicting. Since I’m in the middle of farm country, I don’t get to see the ocean. I’m hoping to fix that.”

“Relaxing in the sun with a cold beer will definitely give you the relaxation you need.”

“And maybe a pretty lady to keep me company?”

Her cheeks turned a captivating shade of pink. “I could show you the hot spots around here if you like.”

“It’s a deal, Summer.”

He liked her name. It was evocative of warm, sultry nights and intoxicating fragrances wafting through Spanish moss. He stared out the window and imagined taking her on the beach, under the morning sun. It would be fiery, tumultuous. The kind of sex that left a man’s muscles sore. Let him slip between Summer’s supple thighs and he’d make sure they both walked away smiling. Then the thought disappeared, replaced by a hefty dose of shame. The woman’s a widow, you ass! Get your head out of your pants.

“So, do you run this place by yourself?”

She’d just taken a sip of her tea, but his question had her frowning. “No, my friend Tory helps me out. Mostly on weekends because I’m at my busiest then.” In a quieter voice she admitted, “I really don’t know what I’d do without her.”

“No boyfriend around to give you a hand?” Gage asked, his curiosity winning out.

The shy beauty shook her head. “No, I’m not with anyone. Not since my husband passed away.”

Summer’s low, sexy voice seemed strained. Gage felt like an even bigger jerk now for dredging up distressing memories. He left the doorway and moved beside her. He could smell her scent. Sweet, with just a hint of coconut oil. “I’m sorry, Summer, I didn’t mean to pry.”

She turned around and stared up at him. Her hazel eyes nearly matched the shade of her hair. If he leaned in an inch, her breasts would brush against his chest. So close.

Damn, he really wanted to lean in.

“It’s okay,” she murmured. “It’s been two years. It doesn’t hurt so much anymore.” Her face turned tender and a small smile appeared. “It’s just a touch sore from time to time.”

Gage reached up, aching to touch her cheek, to see if her skin was as smooth and warm as it appeared. Then someone else walked into the room. Shit, story of his life. He forced his hand back to his side.

“Hey there. I’m not interrupting, am I?”

Summer jumped back, smacking her backside against the edge of the counter, her face turning blotchy as if she’d been caught necking. “Not at all. I was just getting our new guest some tea. Want some?”

“Oh, that sounds like heaven right now.” The girl groaned as she grabbed a paper towel from beneath the cabinets and swiped at her sweating brow. “I weeded the flower bed. Lordy, it’s not getting any cooler out there.”

She plopped onto a chair at the long oak table. The petite blonde had on a black tank top that showed off her midriff, and a pair of old, worn cut-off shorts. She was a cute thing. She was also interrupting. Gage had an urge to howl. He wanted her gone. He wanted to be alone with Summer. She’d been this close to relaxing.

“I told you not to do that, Tory,” Summer admonished as she grabbed a third glass. “I was going to get to it once the sun started to set. It won’t be quite as hot then.”

Tory shrugged, looked at Gage, then back at Summer. Her brow arched.

“Oh, I’m sorry. Tory, meet Gage Knight. You remember Bev used to talk about her nephew?”

“Little Gage?”

Christ.

Summer laughed. “Well, little Gage is all grown up and he’ll be a guest here for the week.”

“Great, you filled that room, then.”

“Yep.”

Tory grinned. “Didn’t I tell you it would all work out?”

“I don’t remember you saying that at all. In fact, you cursed that couple for leaving me in the lurch.”

She huffed. “Not to their faces.”

“It’s just as bad to do it behind their backs, and you know it.”

“But you were counting on that money and you let them slide on paying you. You’re too nice, Summer.”

Gage decided to cut in before they started brawling on the kitchen floor. “Good thing I came along. Everyone gets what they want. I get a room. The couple gets out of paying. Summer still gets her money.”

“Yes, a happy ending for all. So quit complaining,” Summer growled at her friend.

Tory took a long drink from her glass. “I still say you need to crack down on these people when they back out on you at the last minute.”

“Fine, but we won’t argue about it in front of a guest.”

Gage snorted. “You should meet my cousins. They were born to argue.”

Summer’s eyes widened. “You don’t mean Bev’s kids? She’s so sweet and easygoing.”

Gage nearly choked. “You haven’t seen her when she’s browbeating her two adult sons. The woman’s downright tenacious.”

“You’re pulling my leg. Bev’s never even raised her voice around me.”

Her words had him curious. “How long have you known my aunt?”

“She and my mom went to high school together, so my entire life really.”

“How come we never met?” Sure as hell he’d have remembered her.

She shrugged. “My mom and your aunt stay in touch via the phone and email, but they don’t see each other very often.”

“Well, I’m glad to finally make your acquaintance, Summer Chase.”

Her eyes changed hue to a darker shade of brown with small green flecks barely visible. “Me too, Gage.”

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