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*The Twelve Quickies of Christmas*



Book 8

*A Christmas Phantasie*  
Kit Tunstall

A CHRISTMAS PHANTASIE

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**A CHRISTMAS PHANTASIE**

**Kit Tunstall**

## **Chapter One**

Jakarta stumbled when she and Teague entered the lobby of Castle Phantasie. If not for his supporting arm cradling hers, she might have fallen over in shock at the sight that met her eyes. She couldn't help gazing with childlike wonder at the Christmas tree dominating the lobby. It must have been twenty feet tall, but the arched ceiling of the room easily accommodated its height.

Even more stunning than its stature were the tree's decorations. Real candles in brass holders, numbering in the hundreds, dotted the branches. Interwoven among the lights were thick bunches of white garland, along with antique ivory and brass bulbs. The angel at the top was too far up to distinguish its features, but it wore an intricate scarlet and ivory dress. To show up as well as it did, the tree topper must have been at least three or four feet in height.

She turned to Teague, giving him an impulsive hug. "This is fabulous, darling." When he had promised to give her a Christmas to remember, he hadn't taken the oath lightly.

He put his arm around her waist, pulling her closer. Strands of her ebony hair brushed his cheek when he bent his head to kiss her. "Wait until you see the room. It's their Deluxe Phantasie suite."

A surge of excitement filled her at the prospect. As she walked with Teague to check in, in her mind's eye, she envisioned yards of soft carpet, decadent fabrics, and antique furnishings.

The process went quickly, handled by an efficient blond German man who spoke English with a crisp accent. After taking their pertinent information, he entrusted them to a bellhop. The young man took Jakarta's carryon bag and led them up the stone staircase.

Jakarta admired the castle with wide eyes. It was obvious the owner had made every attempt to restore Castle Phantasie to its original splendor, wherever possible. The details were exquisite, down to the candleholders mounted on the wall flanking the staircase, complete with red, holly-scented candles, wreathed with real holly leaves, and currently not lit.

The climb up the stairs seemed to take forever, and she became aware of the chill that had settled into her bones during the drive from the airport in the van. Even her new ski jacket didn't do much to warm her.

She slanted a look at Teague, noting the flush of color in his wind-kissed cheeks. His hair was damp from the snow that had melted in it. The light cast by the crystal chandeliers spaced every few feet on the vaulted ceiling brought out red-gold highlights in his honey-brown hair. He looked cold too, but she easily thought of ways they could quickly warm up each other.

"Just this last flight," said their bellhop several flights of stairs later. "There's an elevator, but this is the best way to see the castle."

Jakarta breathed a sigh of relief, knowing the trek was almost over, and that she could use the elevator from now on. Apparently, even chasing after a classroom of forty-two six-year-olds all day hadn't given her the stamina to tackle all these stairs.

A couple of minutes later, she decided it had been worth every single step to arrive at their room. The young man had swiped an electronic card through the box mounted beside the ornately carved wooden door and now stood back to let them enter. "There are only two tower rooms," he said, as they slipped past him. "These suites are always booked, sometimes years in advance."

Jakarta lifted a brow in Teague's direction. "How long ago did you make this reservation?"

He squirmed, appearing embarrassed. "Last Thanksgiving."

She flinched, abruptly remembering last November had been the first time he proposed to her. Had he booked this room with the anticipation of honeymooning here?

The thought was uncomfortable, and she allowed the room's beauty to distract her from it. It was a circle, complete with two tall windows that would have been without glass when the castle was first constructed. The stone walls could have been original, but they were well maintained if they were.

While Teague tipped their attendant, Jakarta wandered deeper into the sitting room, paused by the roaring fire to strip off her heavy gloves, which she stuffed into her pockets, and brought her hands closer to the flame. A white fur rug—appearing soft and inviting—draped strategically in front of the fireplace, was the perfect contrast to the black carpet. The furniture wasn't the antique style she had anticipated, but modern, covered by gleaming white fabric, and didn't detract from the aged atmosphere of the annular room.

Sliding glass doors, set directly into the rounded side of the outer wall, caught her attention. Jakarta walked over to them, taking a moment to figure out how they worked. The doors opened like any other sliding glass door, but curved around the orbicular shape of the room, instead of sliding straight.

Beyond the glass doors was a balcony. She stepped outside, immediately huddling deeper into her coat, as the cold wind tried to burrow inside. Her bare hands instantly felt chapped by the temperature, and fat snowflakes stung her cheeks. She walked to the thin metal rail and looked down.

She stepped back when vertigo seized her. They were at the highest point of Castle Phantasie, and the ground was a long way down. From this vantage point, the mountain framing the castle seemed accessible merely by reaching out to touch it.

She turned around and went back inside, just as Teague closed the door behind the man and dropped the electronic key on the gleaming black table by the door. She went

to him, putting her arms around his waist. "This is fabulous, honey." Tears welled in her eyes, thinking about the trouble he must have gone to in planning this trip.

"It is beautiful, isn't it?" He stepped away long enough to unzip his coat and pull it off. "Let me take yours too."

She shrugged off the damp ski jacket and handed it to him. He hung both on the black coat rack by the door before turning back to her. She smiled. "Let's see what's behind curtain number one."

He nodded, and they walked together over to the partition that divided the room. It wasn't so much a suite as it was a studio, with only one wooden door, which must conceal the bathroom. Teague slid back the fabric partitions separating the sleeping area from the sitting room space to reveal the bedroom. It was sparse, with only a large dresser in the same gleaming black wood as the rest of the suite, and a rack for hanging clothes.

Only the bed saved it from being mundane. An image of the two of them rolling on the snowy white fur coverlet draped over the massive round bed caused her breath to catch in her throat. She looked at Teague, noting his flush had deepened, and his breathing was ragged. She knew he was sharing her thoughts, but that didn't surprise her. After two years together, their minds were often accordant. "I've never slept on a round bed before."

Teague gave a husky chuckle. "You won't be doing much sleeping for the next few days, my love."

No, she didn't imagine she would. A sigh escaped her, as she found herself wishing they could just stay in the bedroom. Their rapport was perfect there, unlike other aspects of their lives. Did he feel it too, that they were drifting apart? Was this trip nothing more than a last-ditch effort to salvage their relationship?

A knock at the door interrupted her morose thoughts. "Who's that?"

“Probably dinner. I requested it be brought to our room tonight, since I anticipated we would both be tired from the long flight.” He frowned. “I hope that was okay with you? I wasn’t trying to make the decision for you.”

Jakarta smiled, and her dark-brown eyes softened. “That’s fine.” She searched for a way to express how touched she was that he would worry about making such a small decision for her, but the moment passed when he walked to the door to admit room service. Again, tears welled in her eyes, and she brushed them away, impatient with her melancholy thoughts and tendency to cry tonight.

Besides, Teague wouldn’t be expecting gratitude. For him, offering her a choice in everything was an essential part of helping her heal. She knew he held the hope that if she could completely get beyond the past with Darien, then she could move onto a future with him. Thus far, she hadn’t been able to convince him that she didn’t want any sort of permanency in the future. A sinking sensation filled her stomach, because she suspected when he accepted that, he would end things. Teague wanted more, deserved more, than she could ever give him.



## **Chapter Two**

Jakarta trailed a finger of her left hand across the china plate, getting the last bit of cream. "Those pastries were to die for," she said, bringing her finger to her mouth to lick off the topping.

Teague intercepted her hand, taking her finger to his mouth. A quiver of delight ran down her spine when he drew the digit between his lips and cleansed her finger with his tongue. He drew out his strokes, licking her finger with small swipes long after when it would have been clean. Finally, he removed her finger, but held her hand, pressing it against his chest. "Delicious."

She pretended to pout. "I know. That's why I wanted the last bite."

His blue eyes took on a smoky tinge, and his voice lowered an octave. "I wasn't talking about the cream."

Just the timbre of his voice and that look in his eyes caused her pussy to flood with moisture. Her nipples beaded in her bra, and the lace was suddenly abrasive. She was ready for him to make love to her.

He felt in his pocket for something, and her pulse skyrocketed. He must be looking for a condom, which meant he planned to fuck her right there before the fire, on the white fur rug, where they'd had their impromptu carpet picnic. She couldn't wait to feel the soft fur against her back, Teague against her front, and his cock sliding deep inside her.

Her erotic thoughts fled when he removed his hand from his pocket, and she saw the familiar diamond ring between his thumb and middle finger. She tried to tug her hand away, as he poised the band over her ring finger. Why did he persist in pushing this issue? "Teague," she said in a steely tone, meant to act as a warning.

He looked up from the ring and her finger. "Why don't you just try it on, to see how it fits? You might like it."

She succeeded in pulling away from his hold. Jakarta shook her head. "No. I already know how I'll feel about wearing any ring again. It's a prison, Teague...maybe symbolic, but it's still a sign of ownership, of possession. I won't be bound again."

His eyes darkened further, but not with passion. He dropped the ring on the floor. "Fine. You don't have to wear a ring. I don't need that. I'll take you as my wife, any way I can get you."

She shook her head. "Why is the piece of paper making it all official so damned important, if the ring isn't?"

"Because at least then I'd know you want more than the moment with me." He got to his feet. "I love you, Jak, you know that."

She nodded. She did know that. Unlike her, he was free with the words. The few times she had managed to express her emotions, the words came out stilted, lacking even a hint of the depth of love she felt for him.

He paced a small circle around the rug. "I want to spend my life with you."

"I want to be with you too."

His mouth twisted. "But you want an escape option, should things not go as expected."

She bowed her head, not meeting his eyes. Her voice was stiff when she said, "I do love you, Teague. It's just—"

He sighed. "I know what the problem is. Don't you think it's time to let go of the past?"

Her eyes widened. "I have! Do you know how hard it was for me to start seeing you? I wanted to call off that first date, but I didn't." She lifted her head, trying to convey her earnestness when their gazes locked. "I was terrified to move in with you

three months ago, but I did it. Why do you have to keep pushing me? Why can't you be happy with what we have?"

Her heart broke when she saw his shoulders fall. He turned his back to her, and she knew the argument was over for now. It wasn't gone though. The issue hovered between them all the time, tainting every moment they spent together. Half the time, she was so tense about another impending proposal that she couldn't relax. She had trouble sleeping now, and she knew it was the same for him. Until he brought up the future talk, and kept bringing it up, her sleep had finally been nightmare-free for the first time in years.

"I think I'll go to bed," he said with an utter lack of emotion. "We'll want to hit the slopes early tomorrow."

She forced her voice to sound pleasant and polite. "Yes, I'm sure we will." She winced at the stiff exchange, sensing the chasm opening between them had just widened a few more inches. Castle Phantasie might be a dream come true for a vacation, but it might also be the last stop at the end of their relationship's road. Why couldn't he be happy with the moment and forget about the future?

He lay beside her, casting a glance at the luminous hands of the clock on the dresser every few minutes. The numbers seemed to change with infuriating slowness. Jakarta's even breathing indicated she was asleep, but she had required the aid of a Valium to get there. She had claimed jet lag and the time difference prompted the medication, but he knew it was because his proposal and the subsequent argument had troubled her.

Teague balled his hands into fists around the thick fur cover. He had promised himself he wouldn't ask her to marry him the very night they arrived, but the moment had felt right. Holding her hand to his heart, feeling the connection that sizzled between them, he had assumed she couldn't possibly deny him yet again.

He sighed, finally rolling over onto his side, with his back toward her. He knew her refusal wasn't about him, but her rejection still hurt. At the heart of the matter was her

lack of trust in him and in the strength of their bond. She couldn't make the next logical leap-of-faith that would take them to the future he craved. He wanted to know she would always be there by his side. He wanted to watch her belly swell with his children, and to grow old with her, while she seemed content with living moment-to-moment.

That wasn't enough for him any longer. If she couldn't trust him, their relationship was doomed. That's why he fervently hoped his plans for tomorrow night would work. If she felt threatened and left him, he knew he wouldn't get her back, because she would never trust him again.

But then, did she really trust him now?

### **Chapter Three**

Her muscles ached in places she had forgotten she had. A day on the slopes, skiing down the Alps, had shown her just how out of shape she was. Jakarta shot a glance at Teague, as he stripped off his outer coat and hung it on the coat rack. He didn't seem more than a little winded. Obviously, his tri-weekly trips to the gym and weekly squash games with one of the partners in his law firm had prepared him adequately for a day of rigorous activity.

It had been fun, of course. It was heady to plunge down the mountain, knowing she was at the mercy of nature, with only her own wits and two ski poles to save her if something went wrong.

Still, that was enough adventure for her. It was the day before Christmas Eve, and they were due to fly out in the early hours of Christmas Day, to make it back in time for dinner with his parents. She would be content to spend the next two days sipping hot chocolate in the lobby by the huge fireplace that dominated one whole wall, basking in the candlelight from the tree.

Better yet, she'd rather spend the rest of their time in this fabulous room, making love in front of their smaller, cozier fireplace or on the round bed that was surprisingly comfortable and similar to a normal bed.

She hesitated to suggest that plan, not certain what his reception would be. From the time they woke that morning, he had acted as if last night hadn't happened, but she could tell by his bleary eyes that he hadn't slept, and by the way he sometimes studied her peripherally, that he hadn't forgotten her latest refusal.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Not really. I'm too tired to be hungry."

He nodded. "Why don't I send for a bottle of wine and a plate of cheese, and we'll relax for a while? Maybe later, we'll want to have dinner in one of the three restaurants."

"That sounds like a plan." She rolled her tight shoulders. "I think I'll have a hot bath while we wait for the wine."

Teague waved his hand. "You have plenty of time."

When she emerged an hour later, freshly bathed and still warm from the Jacuzzi, wearing only a white silk robe, she found Teague sprawled across the overstuffed sofa. Two glasses of wine were on the table in front of him, as was a medium-sized gift box, wrapped with a green satin bow. She frowned. "What's that?"

"Scharzhofberger Auslese. It's not the most expensive wine Castle Phantasie stocks, but it's a respectable vintage—"

Jakarta rolled her eyes. "Not the wine. I'm talking about the box."

He smiled. "Oh, that's a present for you."

Her frown deepened. "I thought we agreed to exchange our gifts Christmas night, when we get home?"

He shrugged. "So I smuggled along a tiny one. Shoot me." He patted the cushion beside him. "Come on and open it. You know you want to."

She couldn't resist the allure of the package, or the teasing glint in his eyes. Jakarta went to the sofa and sat down beside him. She frowned when she realized his lighthearted façade hid a deeper layer of tension. His gaze was watchful, and his hand wasn't quite steady when he lifted a glass to sip the pale Riesling.

She had a stirring of unease when she pulled off the bow and lifted the lid. His indrawn breath of anxiety was barely discernable over her gasp when she peeled back the tissue paper to find a pair of white furry handcuffs. Stricken, she looked up at him. "What the hell is this?"

“A gift.” All trace of teasing was gone. He sounded deadly serious, and grim lines bracketed his mouth.

She dropped the box on the table, anxious to rid herself of the sight of the cuffs. They were too much like the pair her ex-husband liked to confine her with, right before he had sex with her. Of course, his had been the real thing, strictly police issue, to accompany his job as a detective. “Why would you ever get me something like this?”

“It’s a gift,” he said again, no less somber, “but more for me than you.”

She shook her head, bewildered. In two years, Teague had never once given her any indication that he liked to play the sort of perverse control games Darien had enjoyed. She started to get to her feet, feeling the need to escape. His hand shot out quickly, clamping around her wrist. She struggled to pull free.

“Don’t fight me, Jak. I won’t hurt you.” He looked sad, rather than demented.

She cast a wild-eyed glance at the cuffs. “Oh, yeah? Then why did you bring those?”

“Desperation,” he said quietly.

His tone caught her attention, and she stopped struggling. “What?”

Teague’s eyes captured hers, and the pain in them cut through her. “I can’t keep going like this, not knowing what tomorrow will bring, knowing you don’t trust me.”

She shook her head. “I do trust you.”

He grimaced. “No, you don’t. You trust me more than you trust any other man, which I know is difficult for you, but it isn’t enough.” His grip eased on her wrist, and he lifted her other hand, pressing hers between his. “I need to know you trust me completely, Jakarta. If you can’t commit to a future right now, I need to believe there’s at least a possibility that you can someday.”

“I…” She trailed off before uttering a reckless promise.

“You say you love me.”

She nodded, but he ignored her.

“Love and trust go hand in hand. I’m asking you to give me one night to show you can trust me. I need more than the verbal assurance that you do. I need proof.”

“What kind of proof?” Her stomach churned with nausea, and the cuffs drew her eyes once more.

“I want you to surrender control to me.” He dropped one of her hands and leaned forward to pick up the cuffs. “These are flimsy, meant only for lovers’ games. It’s the symbolism that matters, Jak. I want you to wear these for the rest of the night and let me do whatever I want to you.” He closed his eyes briefly, as if gathering strength. “And I want you to do this because you trust me, not because you want to placate me.”

Her eyes burned with tears. “What if I can’t do that?”

He looked down. “As I said, I can’t keep doing this.” Teague straightened. “It all comes down to tonight, Jak. The decision is yours. I know how bad things were for you, and I know what he did to you. Hell, I was there beside you in the courthouse hall when he threatened to kill you after the judge granted the divorce.” He squeezed her hand. “I know what I’m asking of you, but I *need* this.”

Yes, he had been beside her. From the first day she went to his office to hire him to handle her divorce, she had always been able to count on Teague. Jakarta frowned, realizing how much she had relied on him, especially in the first few months after her divorce was final. Darien had never made good on his threat, but Teague had hovered beside her, protecting her, and giving her his support.

As their relationship changed, she became emotionally stronger, and his support hadn’t wavered. It had only changed to accommodate her newfound independence. He had never tried to stifle that. The only thing he had ever asked was for her to trust in their future, and she couldn’t do that. It brought a lump to her throat to know he thought she didn’t trust him, just because she didn’t trust in marriage any longer.

It was easier than she expected to take the cuffs from him and fasten one around her wrist. “Just because I don’t want to attach a label to us and be bound to a future that



might not turn out as we expect doesn't mean I don't trust you." She swallowed. "If you need this to prove I do trust you, then I'll do my best to give it to you."

He nodded, reaching for her other wrist. Jakarta surrendered it to him, squeezing her eyes shut when he snapped the fur manacle around her other wrist. She had a momentary recollection of the bite of steel cutting into her flesh deep enough to bruise, but that faded when she pulled on the cuffs. They were loose, hanging more like bracelets than handcuffs. The chain holding them together was plastic, and she could break it with little effort.

She looked up and met his eyes, licking her lips. "Now what?"

He put his arm around her, pulling her closer. "I just want to hold you for a little while."

She scooted closer, trying to remove some of the tension gripping her body. The brush of *faux* fur against her wrists was meant to be sensuous, but it was a forceful reminder that she had surrendered total control to her lover for the night. If she changed her mind or panicked, their relationship would be over.

Slowly, she turned her head to rest her cheek against Teague's chest. The soft cashmere of his blue sweater was comforting, as was the way he stroked his hand up and down her arm. Her mouth was still dry, and she attempted to swallow. "I'm thirsty."

Teague leaned forward to retrieve her untouched glass of wine, bringing it to her lips with deliberate movements. She tilted her mouth to drink, as he brought up the base of the glass. She sensed the wine rushing forward and jerked away without thought, fearing she would choke.

She knew she had made a mistake when she looked up to see the sadness in his eyes. She wondered if he would end things right then. He studied her for a moment before leaning forward. Wine dripped down her chin and into the cleavage of her robe. His tongue traced a path from her lips, down her neck, and to the V where the robe gapped.

Jakarta shivered at the light touch, and her nipples pressed into the silk when he flicked open the lapels with one hand and burrowed his face between her breasts. His tongue swiped away the last of the wine before tracing lazy circles over her skin, moving ever closer to her right nipple, without making contact.

She longed to bury her hands in his hair, but when she tried to lift her wrists, his other hand grasped the chain between them, preventing her from moving. His tongue continued working toward her nipple, finally arriving at the nut-brown peak. He drew it into his mouth, and she moaned with pleasure. Teague bit down gently, and she squirmed. Her hands tried to rise again, but he applied enough pressure to keep them in place against her stomach.

He traced her nipple with the tip of his tongue, pausing to flick rapidly over the tip. As she shifted her weight, his free hand moved under her left breast. He cupped it, rubbing his thumb across her neglected nipple. It responded immediately by hardening further, seeking more of his light touch.

He lifted his head to meet her eyes, while lowering her hands from her stomach to her lap. "Do you know how much I love that robe?"

"Yes. I wore it for that reason." It had been a gift from him last Christmas.

Teague squeezed her breast once more before letting his hand drift lower, to span her soft stomach. "The white is such a stunning contrast to your beautiful skin." He moved his hand in a circle over her stomach. "Your creamy, milk-chocolate skin."

A grin twitched at her lips. "Are you going to eat me or make love to me?"

He leaned closer to her face, rubbing his nose against hers. "Both, my love, but first..." He trailed off, getting to his feet, much to her disappointment.

She eyed him uncertainly, longing for him to continue what he had started. "First, what?"

His eyes raked from her shoulder-length tight curls to her bare feet, tipped with light-pink toenails. "I'm going to play with you, and you're going to sit there, without moving."

She lifted a brow. How difficult could that be? "Okay."

He grinned, but his smile wasn't entirely cheerful. It held a hint of something indefinable that lifted the hairs on the back of her neck. "I'll be right back. I have to get a few things."

As Teague went to their luggage, Jakarta changed her position, easing back against the thick cushions in an attempt to get more comfortable. She had a feeling she would be sitting there for a while. Her muscles were stiff, but it was impossible to relax without knowing what he planned to do to her.

He returned quickly with a green plastic case, which he set carefully on the cushion beside her. He didn't open it. Teague turned away from her to push aside the coffee table, but brought back her glass of wine, which he placed on the floor.

When he lifted his hands to her face, she realized he held a white scarf. "What's that for?" Even as she asked, he was placing it over her eyes and knotting it at the back of her head. "Teague?" She couldn't hide the panic in her tone, and her first instinct was to get away.

He put a hand on top of her head. "Shh, just relax."

She tried to, but it was difficult just sitting there, not able to see what would come next. She flinched when something touched her lips, until she realized it was her wine. She opened her mouth and dipped her tongue inside the rim, to gauge where the level was. The crisp, fruity wine welcomed her tongue, bringing with it a slight tang. It flowed into her mouth in the perfect amount. She swallowed, and he withdrew the glass without her choking.

His hands disappeared from her body for a moment, and then they were untying the sash of her robe, before pushing it off her front. It pooled on either side of her legs, leaving the front of her body naked to him.

She stiffened when she heard him open the mysterious case with a click. Seconds later, something cool touched her chest. It was small and metallic. Jakarta gasped when it raked over her nipple. "What is that?"

“No questions,” he said in a firm tone. He didn’t sound angry, but he was clearly establishing the rules. “In fact, there won’t be any talking at all, unless you need me to stop. If so, I want you to say, ‘fantasy.’ If you do, I’ll stop right away, to ask you if you want to continue with something else, or if you want to end this completely.”

She knew he meant the game they were playing, but her heart read the more ominous meaning he could infer. If she stopped him, she might as well pack her bags and leave without looking back. It was over between them. Considering how aggressively she had fought the notion of establishing something more permanent, the idea of never seeing him again frightened her more than she would have expected. “I understand.”

His fingers were gentle as they tweaked one of her nipples. “You’re allowed to moan and make breathless cries of pleasure, of course.”

She almost giggled at his silliness, but caught herself. She didn’t know if that was an approved sound. “Okay.”

He touched her lips. “Shh.” Then his fingers were back at her nipple, along with the metal thing. As he slipped it over her sensitive flesh, she recognized a nipple clamp. Her stomach churned when she remembered previous experiences with similar items. Darien had delighted in tightening it to the point of agony, despite her pleas for him to stop.

Just like the handcuffs, Teague barely tightened the clamp. It was just to the point where she could feel pressure, without any pain. He did the same to her other nipple, and she relaxed slightly.

He dipped his head, and his tongue laved one of the swelling peaks, eliciting a moan. Jakarta pressed her hands together, striving not to move as he worked her nipple with his mouth, before grazing it with his teeth.

The sensation was short-lived. Teague took something else from his box, and she jumped with surprise when many thin quills brushed over her thigh. She almost asked what it was, but held back.

He must have decided to reward her restraint with an explanation. "This is a bamboo whip." He brought the bristles to her hand, brushing the tips against her fingers. "It can be sharp if I poke you with it, and it stings when used the old-fashioned way, but it has an interesting texture."

She had to agree, when he drew the ends down her left breast, pausing to brush the bristles against one of her supersensitive nipples. It almost hurt, without crossing the line into pain. She didn't know if she was relieved or disappointed when he brought it lower, down her stomach, and back to her thighs.

She stiffened when he slapped her across the thigh. The bamboo bristles left a sharp sting behind. That didn't surprise her, but the way her pussy creamed did. She squirmed without thinking, earning another strike.

"Stay still, Jak."

She nodded, and then wondered if that was a forbidden movement. He didn't acknowledge it, but she decided not to push his rules.

The bristles went lower, and his hand slipped between her thighs to push them wider. Then the bamboo strands feathered across her mound, catching curls and tugging them lightly. The tips stung just a bit, especially when they slid down her slit and brushed against her clit. She let out a startled yelp, even as his finger followed in the wake of the whip to soothe her clit.

He caressed her with small circles, while the whip forged ahead, tracing a line down the inside of her thigh. It paused at her knee, and his fingers left her pussy. She felt him get closer as he knelt on the floor and lifted her leg. The sting of the bamboo tips carried down her leg, to her ankle. She stiffened when it went across the arch of her foot. Jakarta couldn't hold in a cry when he brought it against the sole of her foot with a resounding slap. The sting lingered, even as he withdrew the whip.

Her stomach quivered when she felt the spines brushing up her other leg, but the tips didn't rake her skin. She dug her nails into her hands when he brought the whip against her pussy. Her eyes widened when he pressed the smooth wooden shaft a

couple of inches into her opening. She was wet and more aroused than she could believe, and the handle had easy entry. He teased her by thrusting it into her a few times before taking it away.

She heard him rummaging in his case and hoped that was the last of the bamboo whip. Her foot still stung from where he'd swatted her. She didn't want to imagine how her butt would feel if he chose to spank her with it. To her relief, he grasped her breast and removed the nipple clamp from her right nipple. Blood flow returned with a vengeance, and it stung, but in a pleasurable way. He released the other clamp too.

Before she could bask in the relief, he took one nipple into his mouth, sucking forcefully. Spasms shot through her pussy at the increased sensitivity. When he bit her with gentle force, she cried out. The feeling was intense, but more pleasurable than painful. While his mouth devoured her nipple, his fingers alternately squeezed and released the other, working her into a frenzy. She arched her back, and he pressed a hand against her stomach, reminding her to return to her appointed position.

She leaned back, gritting her teeth to withstand the sensations overwhelming her. Just when she thought she couldn't take any more, Teague lifted his head and released her nipple. She whimpered, not sure if she protested his withdrawal, or if she was thankful for it.

She cocked her head slightly when she heard a buzzing sound. The origin of the sound moved lower, until something muffled it. She stiffened when a cool object pressed into the opening of her pussy, before gliding up to tease her clit.

"The batteries in this vibrator should be good for a long while," Teague said softly. He circled her clit with the tip of the vibrator, chuckling when she groaned.

Jakarta couldn't keep her thighs from trying to close, but he refused to let them. With a sudden movement, the vibrator left her clit and entered her pussy, as deep as it would go. Her pussy immediately convulsed in sympathy with the vibrations.

"That might be set too high," he said. The vibrations lessened, until they were barely noticeable. "I just want you to feel it, love. I don't want you coming yet." He

cupped her pussy, bringing her lips together around the vibrator. "In fact, you aren't allowed to come until I say so. If you're about to, I need you to let me know. Since you can't talk, you'll have to lift your hands. If I see you do that, I'll stop what I'm doing until you've regained control."

Jakarta nodded to show she understood, and he didn't reprimand her for the movement. It was all she could do to manage the action, as the low buzz of the vibrator sent shockwaves through her. There was no ignoring the way it increased her arousal and tried to coax an orgasm from her. Since he had it turned so low, all it succeeded in doing was torturing her into a fever pitch. She ached for release, and the vibrator had been inside her only a few minutes.

"Now, stand up, slowly. We don't want the vibe falling out."

Jakarta responded to his hands as he helped her gain her feet. She pressed her thighs together and took small steps as he led her to the side of the couch. She didn't resist when he bent her over the arm at the waist. He pushed her robe over her left side, exposing her buttocks and thighs.

"Is the toy still in tight? Raise your hands above your head if it is."

The position was awkward. She braced herself against the armrest with her stomach, while raising her arms over her head. The vibrator was still deep inside her, providing its never-ending erotic torture.

"Good. Put your arms down across the armrest and stand here, just like this."

Jakarta stayed in the position he had assigned. He moved past her, and she heard the rustle of clothing, followed by the noise of him searching through the box. Her legs shook with the effort to stand while simultaneously holding back her orgasm, and she leaned most of her weight against the arm of the couch.

When he returned to her, he pressed his body against hers briefly, to show her he was now naked. She shivered when his lips brushed her lower back, as he licked the line of her spine, stopping at the indent of her buttocks. His hands slipped lower, to part her cheeks.

“You’re doing so well, Jak. I’m proud of you.” There was a squirting sound, and then his index finger was probing her anus. It was slick with lube and slipped inside easily. She moaned with pleasure. He knew just what to do to get her aroused. She wriggled her ass, earning a light smack for moving.

“I know how much you like this.” He caressed one of her buttocks with his free hand, while a second finger ventured into her anus. “Do you like having that vibrator in your pussy, while I play with your ass?” He chuckled. “No need to answer, love. I know you do.”

Convulsions rippled through her pussy when Teague began thrusting his fingers into her anus. He stopped much too soon, and she groaned in protest. He continued to hold her cheeks open, and she stiffened when she felt the head of a plug probing her anal opening. Judging from the feel, it was larger than any she had ever tried before, and she took a deep breath as he carefully pushed it deeper into her. Her body adjusted much faster than she had expected, but it was used to accommodating Teague’s cock.

She was stretched to her limit, and with the vibrator thrumming inside her, she could feel her orgasm approaching. For a minute, she was tempted to let it happen and try to hide it from him, but imagining his disappointment had her raising her arms.

“Is it too much? Poor darling.” His voice was little more than a harsh exhalation as he caressed her buttocks. One of his hands traced the line of her cleft, pausing to push against the butt plug, forcing it in deeper, and making her moan.

She gritted her teeth, trying to fight the pleasure. A sob of relief escaped her when Teague extracted the vibrator from her pussy. The sense of fullness immediately eased to a manageable level. She sensed him moving away from her, but didn’t shift positions.

The vibrator fell into the box with a thunk, and the couch dipped as Teague got on it. His hand tipped up her chin, and his mouth claimed hers. Her lips softened against his, and a new sense of calm filled her. He nibbled on her lower lip, and she sighed. When he drew the lip into his mouth to suck gently, she tried to reach up to cup his



face. Right before touching him, she remembered she wasn't supposed to move and lowered her hands again.

In punishment, he nipped her just forcefully enough to sting, and then soothed the sore spot he had created on her lip with his tongue. It swept over her upper lip, tracing its contours, before plunging into her mouth. The tempo of the kiss changed from light to earnest, and she responded in kind. His hunger might have frightened her, if she didn't sense the underlying tenderness in his touch.

She longed to reach out for him when he drew away. The couch made a low squeaking sound when he changed positions. Seconds later, her eyes widened behind the blindfold when he touched his cock lightly to her mouth. She obeyed the unspoken command and parted her lips. His cock slipped inside, and she ran her tongue around the corona. He was hard and throbbing. She didn't think it would take much to make him come. She sucked lightly, and Teague groaned.

He cupped the back of her head, bringing her closer, so she could take in more of his cock. She relaxed her throat and let him enter. She bit lightly, and his hands tightened in her hair. She smiled around his cock, knowing he was the vulnerable one at that moment, despite her blindfold and handcuffs. She gloried in holding his cock in her mouth. He trusted her implicitly not to hurt him, and she appreciated how difficult that could be, which made pleasing him pleasing for her.

"I love it when you do that." He stroked her hair, as he thrust into her mouth.

She didn't verbally respond. Instead, she obeyed the parameters he had set and replied by drawing his cock as deeply into her mouth as she could and sucking forcefully. He stiffened at the sensation, and she expected him to find release any second.

"Not yet," he said with a grunt. It was impossible to tell if he was talking to himself or her.

She wasn't surprised when he withdrew his cock from her mouth, but she felt a flutter of disappointment. That abated when he came around behind her and removed

the plug. She waited for him to take its place or surge into her pussy, but he didn't. Instead, he gripped her shoulders and straightened her gently.

"Turn around, Jak."

She turned, finding his commands easy to obey. She didn't know what tonight was supposed to prove. She felt no different about the future than she had when they started this game. She only hoped it would satisfy him for a while. She didn't want to lose Teague, despite her reluctance to commit to him.

He kissed her on the cheek. "You've been incredible so far. I want you to know I appreciate how much trust it took to bind yourself with those handcuffs. I know it must be frightening to not know what's coming next, so wearing the blindfold is a big step."

She relaxed against his chest, sensing he had finished playing games. Now, maybe he would just take her to bed and make love to her properly, allowing her to touch and please him in return.

But he wasn't done yet. "What I'm asking of you now is the real test, Jak. You have to trust me. Consider everything else a warm-up."

## **Chapter Four**

Her stomach churned, and she wanted to ask what he meant. She held back, not knowing if the rules were still the same. The chance to ask him anything disappeared when he left her. She turned her head when she heard the glass doors sliding open, followed by a chill wind sweeping into the suite. She shivered. "Teague?"

"No questions," he reminded.

She bit down the urge to speak and strained to hear what he was doing, hoping to get an idea of what to expect. She heard him move to the fireplace, but that was the only sound she identified.

When he came back to her, he didn't give her a chance to ask questions. She gasped when he lifted her into his arms. Teague was only a few inches taller than she, but he apparently had no trouble carrying her. The cold increased when an icy wind blew up her robe. Her teeth chattered as they stepped outside. What was he doing?

He started to lower her, and she braced her feet, ready to stand. Instead, her buttocks collided with the fur from in front of the fireplace—and it was barely supported on the rail. She couldn't help breaking the rules. "Teague, what's happening?"

"Trust me, Jak."

Her balance felt precarious, in spite of his arms locked around her. She knew she was perched on the rail of the balcony, high in the air. If he dropped her, she would fall to her death. She whimpered with fear and tried to fight the handcuffs. They were stronger than they had appeared, and she wasn't able to break them. "Let me down."

He sounded sad. "I will, if you're sure that's what you want. Just say the word, and it all ends."

She started to confirm she wanted to stop, but the safe word he had established wouldn't pass her lips. She trembled with a combination of cold and fear, but still couldn't say 'fantasy'. She had every right to end this ridiculous game now, before one of them got hurt, but she couldn't do it.

From somewhere, she summoned a surge of strength, pursed her lips, and leaned against him. He remained stiff for a moment, but then relaxed against her, shifting her balance again. She clawed for support, but her cuffed hands found nothing. One of his arms remained around her back, as the other slipped between her thighs. She never could have imagined she could get aroused under the circumstances, but her pussy responded to his caress by supplying more moisture.

"You're doing great." He circled her clit between his thumb and finger. He applied more pressure, and his pinkie flirted with the opening of her pussy.

She fought back the urge to thrust against his finger, knowing she could fall if she did. The temperature was in the lower-twenties, and her nipples ached with the cold, but she burned inside. Part of her still had the urge to demand he stop, but the other part surrendered to his passionate ministrations. She tried to block all thoughts of her precarious position from her mind and concentrate on his hand working its magic. Soon, an orgasm built, and his encouraging, "Come for me, Jak," was all she needed.

Her body shook under the onslaught for several seconds, and she couldn't seem to draw in a deep breath. He continued to stroke lightly as convulsions swept through her. The orgasm took the edge off her desire, but wasn't fulfilling enough to satisfy her. Her heart raced, and it was several minutes before she regained any awareness of her surroundings.

Slowly, she realized his arm was no longer around her back, and she was perched on the rail just by her own balance and his hand between her thighs. She stiffened and felt herself inching backward. She reached for him, breaking the silence rule once again. "I'm falling."

"I know." He sounded calm. "The question is, do you think I'll let you fall?"

Her brain raced. She tried leaning forward, hoping to drop onto the balcony if she slipped, but he wouldn't let her. His hands prevented her from moving toward him. Her only options were to stay erect or lean backward. Fear stirred in her, and she couldn't help remembering the times Darien had hurt her, threatened her, and pushed her beyond her limits. Until tonight, she never could have pictured Teague having the same sadistic tendencies. It didn't fit with his personality. So, how could he do this? Was he getting off on her fear? Did he want her to fall?

It was almost as if he read her mind. Considering how well he knew her, he probably didn't need to be clairvoyant to know her thoughts. "Do you think I'll reach out and save you before it's too late, or do you think I'm like your ex-husband? Will I watch you suffer for my own enjoyment? Tell me what kind of man you think I am, Jak? Do you trust me?" He asked the last question with intensity, as if everything depended on her answer – which it did.

His point couldn't have been clearer. As she perched on the rail, feeling gravity struggling to assert itself on her, with only his hand between her thighs keeping her steady, she understood what he was trying to tell her.

She had automatically assumed he was doing this for his own sick pleasure, had even compared him to her ex-husband, who had been the most sadistic bastard to ever live, and it had been second nature to do so. She *didn't* trust him enough, not as she should.

She whimpered, but not with fear. It was pure mental distress. After two years of knowing him, of seeing what kind of man he was, she hadn't been able to move past the lessons she had learned at the hands of her ex-husband during a three-year period of Hell. Everything about Teague proclaimed he was a decent, trustworthy man, but she couldn't see that. All the times she had told him she trusted him, she had been lying. She couldn't trust anyone but herself.

She was going to lose him if she didn't change that. She had to trust in Teague and their future, or she would be alone forever. If she couldn't have faith in him, she would never trust anyone.

Knowing she had to trust him and doing it were two different things. It took every particle of courage she had to relax her body. With her hands bound, she had no hope of grabbing onto anything if he didn't catch her. She took a deep breath and leaned backward, feeling herself slipping from the rail, along with the rug.

She was surprisingly unafraid. She didn't think for one minute he would let her fall, and her trust in Teague proved well placed when his arms wrapped around her, arresting her descent. He lifted her from the rail, holding her close. She was surprised to hear him sob, and one of his tears splashed on her cheek when she lifted her head. This time, she knew the game was truly over, and she didn't hesitate to speak. "I love you." The words sounded completely natural, and they felt liberating to utter.

"I'm sorry." His voice shook slightly, and his arms tightened around her. "I shouldn't have forced you into that, but I didn't know what else to do."

She pushed her bound hands up between them to slip off her blindfold. She blinked at the light filtering onto the balcony from their room. It was a sharp contrast to the clear night skies of Lasënbourg, dotted with millions of stars. "You wouldn't have let me fall." She spoke with conviction, knowing it was true, because he had proved it. But if she hadn't trusted him enough to let herself fall, he never would have had the chance.

Awkwardly, she cupped his face with her cuffed hands. "I trust you, Teague. I trust you with my life." The wind increased, and she shivered in reaction. "Are we done outside?"

"Yes." He put his arm around her waist. "We aren't done inside yet." He lifted her into his arms and carried her inside. Teague put her on her feet long enough to close the balcony door, and then he lifted and carried her to the bed.

"I'm cold."

*He smiled down at her, and his eyes were smoky-blue. "You won't be for long."*

He laid her in the center, propping her head on a pillow. Jakarta buried her fingers into his chest hair, forcing him to come down with her. Teague took a second to undo the safety release catch on the handcuffs, and her hands were free to roam over his body as she pleased.

“I can’t wait for you any longer. It was just as much torture for me as it was for you tonight.” He pushed strands of hair off her face before leaning forward to kiss her.

She opened her mouth and thrust her tongue inside his, as she parted her thighs and locked her legs around his.

Teague barely had time to sheath his cock with a condom he must have left on the bed earlier. He tossed the wrapper over his shoulder without looking to see where it landed.

She broke the kiss long enough to voice her demands. “I need you now,” she said, writhing impatiently.

His hand moved between their bodies, and he parted her lips. His cock hovered at her entrance, and they both moved simultaneously, with her arching her hips as he sank his cock into her. She’d had one orgasm, but it hadn’t been enough to satisfy her, not after everything he had done to stimulate her. She arched against him frantically, but his thrusts were equally fervid.

One again, their mouths met and dueled, with their tongues matching the actions of their lower bodies. Jakarta moaned when Teague sought out her clit with his fingers, pinching it lightly. She tightened her thighs around him, urging him deeper.

Spasms started in her womb, and she knew she wouldn’t be able to hold out much longer. When she felt Teague’s cock stiffen inside her, followed by tremors as he came, she let go of her resistance and let the orgasm sweep over her. Just having him inside her, with her, made the climax much more intense and gratifying. She dug her fingers into his shoulders and milked his cock with her convulsions of satisfaction.

Their orgasms seemed to go on forever, although only a few minutes could have passed. Eventually, Teague relaxed against her, careful to brace his weight so he didn't crush her. His tongue swirled around her ear before he spoke. "That was incredible."

"Yes." She snuggled closer, letting the delicious warmth spread through her. She was so relaxed that her eyes were drifting closed.

"Jakarta?" He sounded hesitant.

She forced up her eyelids to meet his gaze. He looked troubled. "Hmm?"

"What does this mean for us? Do we have a future?"

She smiled. Before answering, she brought a hand up to push damp strands of honey-brown hair off his sweaty forehead. How could they have gotten so hot after being out in the cold? She almost giggled at the answer. Easy, they had been together, and that was instant combustion. "Oh, yes, you're stuck with me. I have to warn you, if I'm like the other women in my family, I'll probably get fat and wrinkly when I get older."

He grinned, and his relief at her commitment was obvious. "That's okay. My granddad went bald by forty, and you've seen Dad's paunch."

She clicked her tongue. "I guess we'd better take each other. In a few years, no one else will want us."

His eyes grew somber. "I'll always want you." His expression cleared. "We're doing it tonight."

She lifted a brow. "I thought we just did."

He chuckled. "No...well, I'm sure we'll do that again too. I meant we're getting married tonight."

She shook her head. "How?"

"There's a chapel in Castle Phantasie." A tinge of color flushed his cheeks. "I, um, made a midnight reservation, so we could get married on Christmas Eve."



Before that night, she would have been angry at his presumption, but she couldn't muster the energy to care. She wanted to marry him, so why wait? They could always have a real wedding when they returned home. Their families would understand. "I do."

He frowned. "What?"

*Jakarta laughed. "Just practicing for later."*

### **About the author:**

Kit Tunstall lives in Idaho with her husband, near family and friends. In addition to books available through Ellora's Cave, she is the author of *365 Days of Lara Branson* (available late October, 2002), and *Undercover Mother* (available by September, 2003). Her shorter works have appeared in more than a dozen markets, including *Sex on the Edge*, *Boise Weekly*, *Epiphany Magazine*, *BloodLust-UK*, and *Bridges Magazine*.

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