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An Excerpt From: A NIGHT AT THE CAVERN

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Hysterical laughter bubbled from her lips. Dear God. She covered her face again to hide her burning cheeks. What was she doing here?

“Hello. Care to share the joke?”

Miranda turned toward the raspy, dulcet voice and promptly choked on an indrawn breath as she gazed up at the Adonis standing by her side.

If sin and impetuosity conceived a child, this man would be their progeny. White-tipped blond hair fell across his forehead and framed the bluest eyes she'd only ever seen in satin fabric swatches. His chiseled jaw looked so smooth, she wanted to lick the skin to test the velvet texture. A black scrollwork tattoo peeked out from the collar of his white cotton shirt. Under the thin fabric, the shadow of the body art ran across his chest and down his flat abs, disappearing under the waistband of his jeans.

As she continued to gawk, his smile widened and those baby-blues sparkled as if her reaction was exactly what he expected.

“I—” She licked her dry lips. “I, uh, hi. I...I was just laughing at myself.” She looked at her glass and rubbed the delicate stem between her nervous fingers. If she continued to gaze at him, something stupid was going to blurt out of her mouth, she just knew it.

“Is this your first time here?”

Obvious much? “Yeah.”

“And you're not enjoying yourself. At least you don't appear to be. You've been staring at that dance floor an awfully long time. Why aren't you out there?”

He'd been watching her? Holy crap. How many other hunky guys were hiding in the shadows, watching her be a total goober?

She waved her hand to encompass the environment. “This isn't really my scene.”

“And what scene would that be?”

“Having a good time with a bunch of strangers.”

His laugh was deep and seductive. In response her spine straightened, lifting her breasts in a subconscious effort to present her best posture.

"Do you come here often?" she asked, then mentally smacked herself in the head. *That was so lame.*

"Probably more often than I should." He squeezed his lean, muscular body between her and the woman seated on the stool next to them. "I'm Jorge. I designed this club."

Heat burned her through their clothes where he pressed along her arm and side. His palm was just as warm as she clumsily shook his offered hand and felt her brain short circuit from his electric touch.

What did he say? Right. Introductions. "I'm Miranda."

"Miranda or Mandy?"

"Ugh, no. Just Miranda. Did you really design all of this?"

"Yes ma'am. Every inch. Well, the owner, Amaryllis, she had a few ideas. She wanted a place where all who entered felt welcomed and had a safe place to fulfill their deepest desires."

"That's a lofty expectation."

"If you're going to aim, might as well aim high. So tell me, Miranda, what do you desire?"

"I don't think I'm the best person to ask that question to."

"Why not?"

Maybe it was the alcohol, or perhaps it was knowing that the only reason a hunk like him was talking to her was because he was trying to keep the customers happy. Whatever the reason, she experienced the uncommon urge to confess her feelings to another.

"Because I'm a chickenshit and can't even admit them to myself let alone a stranger."

His booming laughter drew several glances their way, and when he laid his big hand over hers, she about swallowed her tongue. She froze, afraid to even breathe lest he pull away.

"I find your honesty refreshing." His bright smile drew her gaze to his firm lips. "Let me read your mind and take a guess at what you desire."

So many illicit ideas were running through her head right then, she couldn't even keep track of them all.

Jorge looked her deep in the eyes, mesmerizing her with his deep-blue gaze and the devilishness flittering in his smile. "I think...you want to dance. How about it?"

How about what? Wait. What? She blinked hard. "You want to dance with me?"

"Yeah. Come on."

Oh, okay. He wanted to brush that hard body against her? Yippee. "Let me pay for my drinks first."

"Don't worry about it." He caught the bartender's attention and wadded her tab into a ball. "She's with me."

"Sure thing, Jorge."

He was going to dance with her and take care of her bill?

I think I love him. Miranda bit her lip, fighting down the surge of pleasure that shot through her.

Her joy was tempered as the crowd parted for her gorgeous companion, and women, and some men, looked at Jorge as if they could already taste the salt of his skin on their tongue.

Who was she kidding? Compared to Jorge, she was just a lump of nothing special.

The Latin rhythm of the music pulsing through the speakers was perfect for hip rolling and booty shaking, yet Miranda felt as stiff and awkward as a ten-year-old boy forced to attend a cotillion. She sucked in her stomach and moved as little as possible to avoid shimmying like a bowl of jelly.

Jorge slipped his arm around her waist and pulled her tight into the curve of his body. From breast to thigh, not even light passed between them and her knees trembled. His warm breath tickled her neck as he murmured in her ear, "Stop thinking. Pretend it's just you and me, and let go."

As she inhaled in his man-and-soap scent, Miranda realized he was right. She was thinking too much. For some reason the cute-guy gods were smiling down on her and she was letting her crappy self-esteem ruin the moment. It was one dance. If she didn't blow it, more might follow. All she had to do was enjoy the moment for what it was. Magic.

With a deep breath she closed her eyes and soared.