



C
O
B
B
L
E
S
T
O
N
E
P
R
E
S
S

Wicked

The Pleasure Club

THE
CHEF

Josée Renard

The Pleasure Club:

The Chef

Josée Renard

The Chef by Josée Renard

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

The Chef

Copyright© 2010 Josée Renard

ISBN: 978-1-60088-530-3

Cover Artist: Dan Skinner

Editor: Melanie Noto

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced electronically or in print without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

Cobblestone Press, LLC

www.cobblestone-press.com

Dedication

For Greg. Happy belated birthday.

Welcome to The Pleasure Club

Chef,

We're pleased to welcome you to The Pleasure Club. As you have already signed and returned the contract and filled out the forms necessary to ensure you receive your every wish, we will be in touch with you shortly with the details of your first Pleasure Night. Your Wish List and Pleasure Forms have been turned over to our staff of highly trained Pleasure Guardians, and they are hard at work finding your perfect match. We will endeavor to meet your personal fantasy.

When you are contacted again, you will be given a location where your Pleasure Night will begin, and you will also be given a safe word to use should you become uncomfortable. There is no shame in changing your mind. We're here to provide pleasure, and should your safe word be used, your match for the evening will cease all activity and put the game on hold until a mutual agreement between you and your Pleasure Mistress can be reached.

Once again, welcome to The Pleasure Club. Please feel free to contact the office at any time should you have any questions.

*Yours truly,
The Pleasure Club Management*

* * * * *

Chef,

The Chef by Josée Renard

Your Pleasure Night will begin at midnight on Sunday the 10th at 18 Front Street. Do not bring your knives.

Your safe word is spice.

* * * * *

He was tired, so tired, of being called *Chef*. He wondered occasionally if anyone remembered his real name. His parents were gone, and he had no brothers or sisters. All he had was the Serenity Café and the many people who worked for him. And, unfortunately, he was responsible for every one of them.

And at the Serenity, he was known as Chef. He *had* to be Chef.

Customers called him Chef. Suppliers and drivers and vintners and farmers and fishers. Everyone he knew—including his bankers, his accountants, and his tailor—called him Chef.

He needed someone to call him by his real name. Needed, desperately, to step outside the jail in which he'd locked himself. He wanted—just for one night—to be the boy who'd run wild across the fields, the teenager who'd skied the black diamond runs, the young man who'd traveled across Europe, Asia, and Africa with only a backpack and his skills in the kitchen.

The trouble, of course, was that he couldn't do it. He couldn't leave, couldn't give it all up and start again, not without losing everything he'd created. *He* could start again but the people who worked for him, the people he'd saved from the streets and helped to rebuild their lives, those people had nowhere else to go. His freedom wasn't worth their lives.

So he could only think of one way to achieve that freedom, even for a single night, without risking everything.

He was going to call his old friend Calliope and ask her to set him up with *The Pleasure Club*. She'd emailed him a couple of years earlier to tell him she'd finally got together with her professor—and she'd done it through that organization.

He didn't need a long term relationship. He simply needed the

The Chef by Josée Renard

occasional night to be himself again. And he knew, because she'd told him, that The Pleasure Club could guarantee just that.

* * * * *

The winter wind—if this could be called winter—raised bumps on Sara's unprotected arms. If she'd been paying attention to anything at all but the night to come, she would have noticed the unusual cold draft around her windows, would have felt the chill even in the parking garage. She would have worn a coat. But she hadn't been able to think about anything except *him*.

Sara, a primary school teacher with all the baggage that implied, was tired of being Ms. Prim and Proper and was more than ready to let her hair out of the bun it had been in since she started teaching. But of course she couldn't do that where anyone could see her. That would mean she'd lose her job, and she loved those kids.

But she had an ace in the hole—her old school mate, Calliope, and the story she'd told about how she'd finally, *finally*, gotten Geoffrey to notice her.

Sara didn't need or want a permanent man. She had no time for that, but she did want, just once, to use the feminine power she was pretty sure she had. It had to be hidden somewhere. Sometimes she almost got it, sometimes she felt it coiled inside of her, waiting for something—although just what, she didn't know—to let it out.

So when Calliope first told her about *The Pleasure Club*, Sara had blushed, then ruminated, and then asked Calliope for their number. They'd recruited her, and this was her first night as a Pleasure Guardian.

She couldn't remember ever being so excited.

Or so frightened.

She couldn't wait.

She stepped up to the warehouse door and used her key in the lock on the big heavy padlock. She rolled back the door, reached around the corner for the light switch. Everything was exactly as she'd planned it.

Damn. The Pleasure Club Management is good at what they do.

The Chef by Josée Renard

She'd asked for, and received, the swimming pool sized tub, the table filled with food from her favorite gourmet store. Bottles of Veuve Clicquot sat in an ice bucket with two champagne flutes resting beside them.

She lit the sandalwood and jasmine incense she'd brought with her and placed the roses from her garden on the table, their rich fragrance adding to the exotic scents filling the room.

Dozens of candles lit a trail from the door to the room she'd created in the center of the warehouse. Silken walls hid the acres of cold, unused space around it. Rugs of every color and description lay on the floor, so thick and soft her bare feet made no sound at all as she moved around and lit the rest of the candles.

Two velvet soft robes lay on the king-sized mattress she'd had them place on the floor next to the tub, the mattress heated from the inside. The room looked, smelled, and reminded her of a sultan's tent, each detail as perfect as she could make it.

The application her man—that's the way she thought of him—had filled out sounded kind of sad, as if he were missing something or someone. Sara wanted to make him smile.

The candles flickered as a slight breeze blew through the silk. The door had been opened, then shut. He was here.

She could hardly wait.

* * * * *

John stood outside the warehouse on Front Street and wondered whether he'd made a mistake. The street was deserted, the few streetlights casting only faint orange light onto the pavement. The cold, damp wind had him shivering under his thin jacket, making him even more miserable.

His second thoughts were becoming third and fourth and fifth thoughts, but he'd committed to being here and no matter who was waiting for him, it wasn't fair for him to just walk away. He had to tell her to go home. Then he'd go to work, make sure everything was okay with the weekly after hours deep clean, go home, and drop onto his bed and

The Chef by Josée Renard

sleep around the clock as he did every Sunday night.

He pushed open the door and walked in, following a trail of flickering candlelight through the cavernous room. A tent sat in the center of the space, filled with light and covered with the colors of an African sunrise—from the palest of yellows to glorious amber, to the most brilliant carnelian, fading to the deepest of deep blues, so dark that without the backlight of the candles, it would appear to be black.

For a moment, he stopped moving—and breathing. For another moment, he simply stared at the spectacle.

And then he took a single step.

This was what he'd wanted all along, although he hadn't, even in his wildest dreams, been able to articulate it. He didn't know how she'd done it, but she'd somehow taken his application and turned it into *this*, into a dream he'd lived with for years.

He grinned and took another step, then another, until he stood at the door that had been created by swagging back two of the fabric panels. He touched the left one, which was sunrise red. *Feels like silk.*

Though he knew no one would spend that kind of money on a single night.

"Invite me in," he whispered, knowing she wouldn't be able to hear him but saying it anyway.

Music played quietly behind the drapery, and he smiled. Django Reinhardt. *That* had been on his application.

"Please," he whispered again, "invite me in."

"John? Is that you? Come on in. I've been waiting for you."

And with those few words, he was that boy again, galloping across the wheat fields. He was the teenager flying down the mountain, the young man traveling the world.

The sweetest voice he'd ever heard had called him by name and he was enthralled, wrapped up in the fantasy she'd created for him. One night would not, could not, be enough.

He tried to shake off the practical chef and restaurant owner he'd become and sink again into being *John*, the man behind the white jacket. But that practical man insisted on going over the contract he'd signed with

The Chef by Josée Renard

The Pleasure Club and grinning when he remembered the absence of any clause binding him to only one night with this woman as long as he went through them.

He stepped through the open panels and tugged at the ties to close them behind him. The scents of Africa wafted over him, and the last practical thought flew out of his mind. He was glad to see it go.

She walked barefoot across the soft faded carpets, her hair a halo around her pale face, the strands as red as the sunrise she'd created for him. She handed him a glass filled with champagne tinted the palest of peach and raised her glass to him.

"John?" She lifted her left eyebrow and waited, the wine in her hand untouched. "Is this okay?"

He figured the question wasn't really about whether or not he was fine with the fantasy but a way to get him to speak. He cleared his throat and took a sip of ice-cold champagne. *Veuve Cliquot*. How did she know? Maybe it was her favorite too. He hoped it was.

"What do I call you?"

"Ashai," she said. He wanted to laugh. She was anything but shy.

"Not your real name, I take it?"

She grinned at him. "Nope."

She laughed and gave it up. She couldn't answer to Ashai all night, although she'd picked an African name for him, too. She would be sure to forget it at one point or another. "My real name is Sara."

"It's lovely," he said. "It suits you."

Sara lifted the champagne glass to her lips to give herself a few moments. He was more beautiful than she had imagined. And now that he was here, she wasn't sure what to do. She'd had it all planned out. Her presentation was perfect, yet the balance of the plan suddenly seemed a bit—okay, more than a bit—risky.

He grinned back at her, and she relaxed. *How hard can this be?* He wanted to be seduced, he wanted the fantasy she'd created for him—at least, she had translated the look in his eyes when he walked into the tent as one of delight—so all she had to do was begin.

But where?