



Sapphire Blue Publishing



MISSY JANE  
*Resignation*



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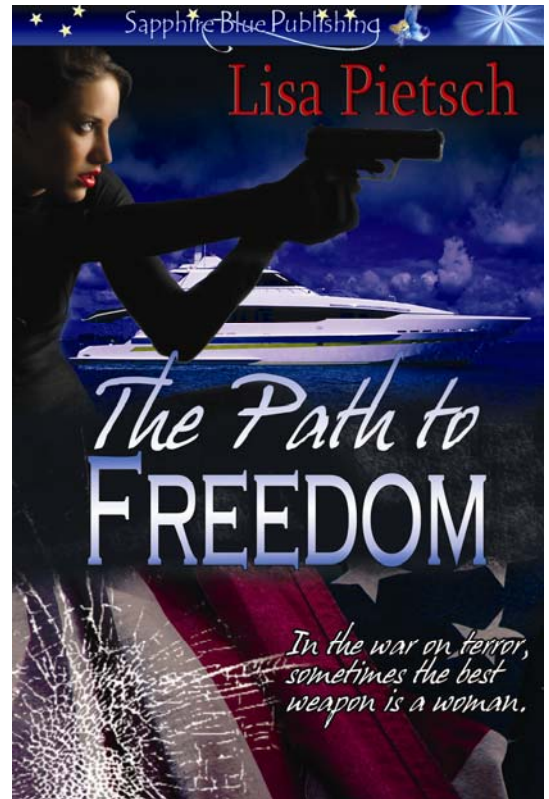
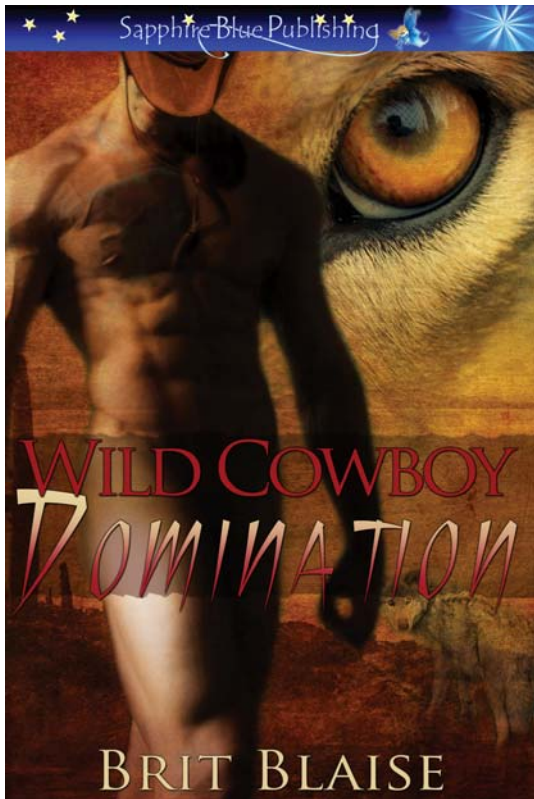
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# *Resignation*

**By Missy Jane**



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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to the wonderfully supportive people I met in Judi McCoy's writing class at the 2008 Romantic Times Convention: Judi, Barb, Maureen, Ashli, Jane, Rhonda, Darlene, Jack & Terry.

## **Acknowledgements**

I have to thank my great friend Sandy who is never afraid to give me her honest opinion as a professional reader of all things romantic.

## Chapter One

“Thank God it’s Friday” had never meant more to her than in this moment, signing in at the security desk and wishing she were anywhere but at work. Darina closed her eyes and let out a deep breath as frustration filled her. She gently lowered the pen onto the clipboard, her fingers grasping the temporary employee badge the security guard had just given her. He’d been flirting again, but she suspected it was more pity than genuine interest.

*No. Don’t think about that.*

She opened her eyes slowly and looked up to see the scene hadn’t changed in the slightest. Marc and Heather, still arm in arm just a few feet away, were gazing at each other like love struck fools. With a quick smile at the sexy security guard, Darina clipped the badge to her blazer and pulled her purse more firmly over her shoulder.

*I can do this.*

Lifting her chin, she tried to concentrate on each step as she walked across the foyer to the elevators ahead. Surprisingly, it was humiliation that filled her, not the pain of rejection she would’ve expected. Straightening her spine made her feel more in control as she pretended not to notice the cuddling couple.

*So far, so good.*

Luckily, Marc hadn’t spotted her yet. The last thing she needed was for him to try to speak to her again. He just didn’t get it. Bad enough the entire

office knew he'd cheated on her and broken her heart, but now he wanted to be friends? She couldn't decide if he was an idiot or a vindictive bastard. Most likely both.

From the corner of her eye, she saw Heather look her way before wrapping an arm in Marc's and tugging him in the opposite direction.

*Good. Keep him busy, you whore.*

She just wished she could say it out loud for everyone to hear. Unfortunately, that would cost her this job, and she enjoyed her position as the head of the accounting department.

Heather's daddy owned Wellington Consulting, and if she ever decided Darina was too much of a distraction for Marc's simple mind, Darina would find herself out of a job faster than she could blink. It would be completely unfair considering the years she'd given the firm, but she doubted fairness would come into play.

She picked up the pace and made it to the elevators without incident, not breathing easy until the doors slid shut and Marc was no longer in view. Her hands were shaking, and she tried to calm her racing pulse. Luckily, the only other person in the elevator got off on the next floor, and Darina was left alone for the rest of the ride. She watched the numbers change as she neared her floor and tried to focus on the day ahead. There was a ton of work to do, aside from the usual reports to type and numbers to balance, she also had two meetings scheduled and a review to finish. Hopefully, all of that would keep her mind on business and off the past few minutes.

The elevator doors opened and Darina walked briskly to her office. She was tired, lonely and aggravated with herself for still being in such a slump over Marc when he had obviously moved on. Pasting on a smile she didn't feel, she finger waved to her co-workers along the way. Everyone smiled back, most even said good morning, completely oblivious to the chaos in her head. Darina wondered what was going through their minds. Were they thinking of the Christmas party three months ago when her world came crashing down? Did any of them wonder how lonely her holiday was since she'd spent it alone?



## Resignation

She'd tried to ignore Christmas to the best of her ability and purposely bought a new wardrobe to raise her spirits. That had helped boost her confidence and made it possible for her to face her co-workers again. However, work was all she had now. She'd taken to working longer hours out of sheer desperation rather than the dedication everyone else suspected.

She took another deep breath and pushed away the self-pity that always made her feel dirty and stupid. She was tougher than the broken woman she'd seen in the mirror in the days following Marc's betrayal and life had to go on. With a sigh, she entered her office and got to work.

~~~

Sol Canova watched as Darina Tanner straightened her spine and walked to the elevators seemingly without a care in the world. He admired her resolve, knowing it must kill her to see her ex-fiancé in the arms of that spoiled bitch, Heather.

*Marc is a complete idiot.*

What Marc saw in Heather that would rip him away from Darina, Sol couldn't even begin to guess. He had fantasies about Darina's long brown hair lying in loose curls over his pillow as she smiled up at him, happiness gleaming from her cocoa-colored eyes. Her curves made his fingers itch to caress them. Her breasts would be a perfect handful and her legs...yummy.

All of her, from head to toe in her fashionable navy business suit, looked like a five and a half foot tall walking fantasy.

Heather, a blonde waif who wouldn't know a healthy meal if someone shoved it down her throat, looked like a typical trophy wife. Her body, the best money could buy, couldn't hide her appalling personality. She had a smile to rival her politician granddaddy and acted as if there wasn't a brain cell left in her pretty head. It was just an act of course, and all the more disgusting because of it. According to the rumor mill, she was conniving and stopped at nothing to get what she wanted, not even an engagement ring.

Sol spotted the rock sitting on Heather's finger from across the foyer and

wondered if Darina had seen it as well. If so, she gave no outward sign, and he felt a surge of pride for her strength. He'd never been engaged—couldn't even think of a single woman he would tie himself to—but suspected Darina's pain couldn't have ended after only three months. He remembered catching her as she stumbled from the conference room that night, tears streaking down her face. Heather had told him to keep everyone downstairs, but he couldn't lie to Darina when she asked if he'd seen Marc head to his office. He'd gone upstairs after her knowing what she might be interrupting. It shamed him to think he could've stopped her, but she deserved to know the truth about that two-timing bastard. The look of pain on her beautiful face had sent a sharp ache through his chest and made the air rush from his lungs.

Sol pushed that awful memory aside, knowing his guilt was irrational.

His musings were interrupted when his partner, Dan, stood from the chair beside him and slapped him on the back.

"Someone's locked in the bathroom on four. You want to get it?"

Sol smiled as he considered the possible scene awaiting upstairs.

"Nah, you go ahead, old man. I'll keep an eye out here."

Dan grinned and shook his head as he walked toward the service elevator. Sol watched him go before turning back to the monitors in front of him. Eight little black and white screens showed the elevator foyer of each floor as well as the small parking lot outside. Ninety-eight hundred Travers Place wasn't the largest building in the heart of downtown, but it housed one of the most successful human resource consulting firms in the south. And Heather's father owned every brick from the ground up.

*Come on, beautiful. Where are you?*

His gaze automatically shot to the monitor for the sixth floor just as Darina's supple form appeared for a brief moment. His breath caught and his body hardened with just that quick glimpse. She had no idea what she did to him every time he saw her, and, as far as he was concerned, she never would. She deserved a hell of a lot more than he could offer. Darina was a goddess who deserved a man that could keep her happy and bathed in jewels.

## Resignation

Sol sighed and shook his head. He'd be doing good to afford a decent restaurant for dinner. No, Darina Tanner was not for him, no matter how many days he spent mooning over her, or how many restless nights he lay awake wishing she was in his arms.

## Chapter Two

Darina finished typing up the last email on her list and hit send with a sigh of satisfaction. Finally, she was done for the day and could head home to her apartment, alone. She forced a smile, determined not to let the thought depress her as it had for the past three months.

*I need to get a cat.*

After turning off her computer and gathering her purse, she headed out the door toward the elevators. She heard the murmur of voices but rounded the corner before realizing they were familiar and froze at the sight.

It was nearly six o'clock on a Friday. The building should've been empty by now, but Heather and Marc stood waiting for an elevator wrapped in each other's arms sharing a searing kiss.

*Oh, God.*

Darina slapped her hand over her mouth to cover a gasp as she silently stepped back around the corner. They hadn't seen her, and she stood trembling, willing herself to go back to her office before they realized she was there.

*I'll just wait until they've had time to leave. No big deal...yeah right.*

~~~

Sol watched the drama unfold on the monitor and swore under his

## Resignation

breath. Something like this was bound to happen. Marc and Darina worked on the same floor. It was inevitable they would eventually run into each other. He watched Darina creep back around the corner just before the elevator doors opened and the happy couple disappeared from view.

*Bastards.*

He wanted to punch Marc in the face when he arrived in the foyer with the whore on his arm but refrained from endangering his job. They walked out into the night arm in arm just as Sol's replacement walked in the door. Sol looked back down at the monitor but Darina didn't reappear.

*Damn. I hate leaving without knowing she's okay.*

He stood slowly and stretched, then took his time handing the reigns over to Andy, the night guard. After twenty minutes had passed and Darina's image still didn't reappear, Sol gave up the idea of simply walking out the door. He scrubbed a hand over his face and sighed, knowing she was hiding in her office alone and hurting.

"Andy, I need to check something up on six before I head out. I'm sure it's nothing. I'll be heading out the back to the parking lot when I'm done."

Andy grunted and went back to reading a magazine as Sol headed for the service elevator. He jammed his key into the slot to call the elevator.

*I'm acting like a fool. She'll probably be gone by the time I get up there. And if not I'll...what? What in the hell can I possibly do?*

Sol ran a hand over his face and stepped into the metal box, stabbing the number six roughly in agitation. The ride up seemed to take three times as long as normal as he shifted from one foot to the next. Sweat beaded on his brow, and he wiped it off roughly, irritated at his nervousness.

*She's just a woman like any other, and I'm just going to see if she's okay. Yeah right.*

Darina wasn't just any woman, she was absolute perfection to him and always would be. His pulse raced and he tried to regulate his breathing as he stepped out of the elevator headed for her office. He prayed she was through crying because if he saw her in tears he didn't think he could be held

responsible for his actions. As a security guard, he had access to the employee database and knew exactly where that bastard Marc lived.

If Sol found Darina crying, he just might have to pay Marc a visit later and put him in tears, too.

## Chapter Three

Darina sat behind her desk rubbing her hands up and down her cold arms. All she wanted was to feel warm again, to feel a man's arms holding her tightly.

The sight of Marc and Heather replayed inside her mind, and she realized there was no longer a sense of painful jealousy but something more akin to...envy? Frowning, her eyes still completely dry, she examined her feelings.

*I can't even cry over him anymore.*

Emptiness clawed at her insides until getting out of her chair seemed like too much effort. She sighed and leaned her head against the back, staring blankly at the dark ceiling. Footsteps sounded in the hallway, but Darina couldn't muster the strength to care who it might be. It wouldn't be Marc, of that she was certain. No way would Heather allow him out of her sight.

Her door opened, and she bolted upright just as the lights flicked on. Her eyes burned at the sudden illumination, and her squinting eyes could only make out a large shape in the doorway.

*What the hell?*

"Ms. Tanner, are you all right?"

The deep voice sounded vaguely familiar, but Darina couldn't place it. It also sounded sexy as hell, piquing her dormant interest as she rubbed her eyes in the hopes of getting a better look. When she opened her eyes, she had to look up a ways before reaching the concerned gaze of the security guard from

downstairs. He stood at least six-four, with broad shoulders and well-defined muscles accentuated by his dark uniform. His thick black hair looked just long enough to run her fingers through, though it didn't touch his collar. Darina blinked as her addled thoughts returned to his question.

"Uh, yes..."

"Solon," he replied at her slightly embarrassed pause. "My name is Solon, Ms. Tanner, but everyone calls me Sol."

"Oh. Um, yes, Sol. I'm fine."

His dark gaze bored into her for a moment before slowly sliding down her body. It lingered at her breasts, where the tops were slightly bared from one too many buttons coming loose when she'd massaged her neck. Darina followed his gaze, and her cheeks flushed when she realized the view he was getting from his impressive height. She barely resisted the urge to cover herself.

*At least he seems to like what he sees.*

Marc had stopped looking at her with lust in his eyes months ago—the first sign of trouble—and Sol's interested gaze sent an unexpected thrill through her. Tingles of anticipation played up and down her spine, and she found it hard to breathe. She tried to relax against the chair, unintentionally thrusting her breasts out, and her nipples hardened under his attentive stare. She watched Sol's Adam's apple bob as he swallowed and stepped further into the small office.

"I know you usually leave by six, Ms. Tanner. I just wanted to make sure everything was okay up here."

His voice sounded huskier than before. She smiled at him and his jaw stiffened as if he was clenching his teeth. A perverse thrill shot through her as she realized her affect on him. It was amazing to know she *could* affect him this way. After Marc threw her away, she'd had her doubts about being able to keep any man's attention, but Sol's hot look blew them away igniting an adventurous spark inside her.

*I must be losing my mind.*



## Resignation

She turned her chair slightly pulling her legs from beneath her desk and into Sol's line of vision. Then she slowly raised one to cross it over the other, causing her skirt to inch up and expose a bit of thigh. She thought she heard Sol's breath stutter. He cleared his throat and shut the office door behind him.

*Oh, my.*

~~~

Sol's breath raced from his lungs, and he swore his heart nearly stopped. Not only was Darina not crying, but she was actually flirting...with him. He suddenly felt like the luckiest man on earth and wondered what he'd done to deserve such a treat. He took slow, even steps toward her, expecting at any moment for her to come to her senses and order him back downstairs.

*God, please don't ask me to leave.*

She sat a little straighter as he approached and halted beside her desk. A mere two feet of space separated them as he took in her calm expression. There was resolve and determination in her pose, as if she'd made a decision about him in the few heartbeats it took for him to cross the room. He stood looking down at her, admiring the sight of her beautiful cleavage, golden skin that looked soft as silk begging for his touch.

"I'm fine, Sol. I was going to leave but..."

She stopped and a flash of doubt crossed her face. He quickly sank to one knee before her, snagging her gaze before she could shut him out completely.

"I know, Darina. I saw them."

Sol knew he took a big risk both in using her first name and in admitting he'd watched her heartbreak unfold. If she reacted in anger, she might cost him his job after all. However, his biggest fear was losing any chance of knowing a few moments of intimacy with the woman of his dreams.

Darina gasped and lowered her head, her bottom lip quivering for a moment. When she looked back up at him, a hint of a smile crossed her lips though unshed tears glistened in her eyes.

"I guess hiding in here must seem foolish," she said quietly.

Sol shook his head and placed a hand over hers where it rested on her knee.

"Not at all. I know the bastard hurt you. I wish I could hurt him for you in return."

Darina looked startled by his admission, and he cursed himself silently for saying too much.

"You do?"

He nodded and caressed the back of her hand with his thumb.

"He was an idiot to think he could find anyone to take your place, Darina. You're so beautiful."

She blushed and let out a slight laugh, a startling sound in the intimate silence that surrounded them. Sol reached up with his other hand and raised her chin. He looked into her golden brown eyes and ran his thumb over her bottom lip.

"It's the truth. I've thought so since the first time I saw you."

Darina breathed out a sigh of surrender and closed her eyes, seemingly lost in the sensation of his gentle caress.

"I think he prefers blondes," she whispered.

"I don't," Sol whispered back as he leaned in and slowly rubbed his lips over her tempting mouth.

Darina gasped into his mouth. Taking that as an invitation, he slipped his tongue between her sweet lips and groaned. She tasted like chocolate and coffee, his new favorite flavors. He moved his hands to the arms of the chair, caging her in with his larger body.

Darina leaned into him and her soft hands found the back of his neck, her fingers sliding into his hair. Sol's cock hardened instantly at the feel of her stiff nipples rubbing against him through their clothing. He didn't think he'd be able to move away from her if his life depended on it.

*Just please don't push me away.*

He slowly placed his hands on her back, waiting for any sign that she

## Resignation

wanted him to stop. When no sign came, he hardly contained his shout of triumph.

Darina pressed her knees into his hips, crossing her ankles behind his thighs. He pulled her flush against him and moaned at the sensation of his erection between her legs. She sat perched at the edge of her chair as Sol held one hand against her lower back and inched the other slowly up her skirt. He gripped her bare thigh as she began to rub against him fervently, mewling like a cat.

“Oh, kitten, you taste so damn good.”

Moaning, he licked from her lips to her delectable neck. Darina’s grip on his hair tightened as she held him to her while he nibbled a path from her ear to the tops of her breasts.

“Sol,” she gasped. “The door...did you lock the door?”

It took several heartbeats for the words to penetrate the lust-filled fog in Sol’s mind, but finally they made it through and he raised his head.

“Uh, no. Just give me a second, kitten.”

He abruptly released her, catching her as she nearly toppled out of the chair, and having to push her gently back into it. She laughed and placed trembling hands on her face.

“Sorry, baby. I didn’t mean to pull you out of your seat.”

“That’s okay,” she replied with a smile.

Sol smiled back and his heart lightened. He hadn’t seen that smile in months and hadn’t realized just how much he’d missed it.

He stood and took the few steps to the door quickly, turning the lock and tugging on the handle for good measure. Then he slowly turned around to look at the woman who had filled his fantasies for nearly a year. He’d only worked for Wellington Consulting for ten months, but in that time he’d dreamt of Darina almost every night. She’d already been engaged when he met her and off limits in so many ways. His fantasies were all he had, and they were about to come true.

## Chapter Four

*I've definitely lost my mind.*

Darina watched Sol look her over as he slowly walked back to her. His rapt attention was like a physical caress that left her breathless. She could see the hunger in his eyes, and it did more for her self-esteem than he could ever know. To see that such a strong, virile, good-looking man like Sol actually wanted her...Darina sat breathless with anticipation.

*Did Marc ever look at me like that?*

She didn't think any man had. The small voice of doubt that had been niggling in the back of her mind since Sol walked through the door finally shut up. Having sex in her office with the security guard would undoubtedly be the most daring thing she'd ever done, but there was no way she would back out now. She remembered meeting Sol months ago when he'd first started working the front desk, and she said hello to him every morning. Knowing he was essentially a stranger only made her want him more. He wouldn't know any of her flaws like Marc did, and, hopefully, he wouldn't be comparing her to another woman.

She raised her hands to the buttons on her blouse, and Sol froze mere inches in front of her. She began to undo them, keeping her gaze locked with his as she pushed her blouse off her shoulders. Sol swallowed hard as she kicked off her shoes and stood, undoing her skirt and shimmying out of it with him standing perfectly still. It was a hot day, so she wore no stockings. She

## Resignation

felt vulnerable in her lingerie and thanked her good sense for wearing a brand new matching set.

Sol appeared to approve, a lot, if the bulge in his slacks was anything to go by. She couldn't suppress a shiver as she remembered the size of that bulge when he'd rubbed against her.

"Are you cold, kitten?"

Sol reached for her, and she stepped willingly into his arms. She raised her face for his kiss, and he plundered her mouth more savagely than before. His urgency thrilled her making her wonder just how long he'd wanted her. He kept one hand in her hair while running the other over the front of her body. Cold air brushed her aching nipples as he removed her bra in one swift move. He stopped kissing her, but before she could protest, he moved his lips over her breasts. He suckled first one then the other as she bit her lip and moaned in ecstasy.

"Sol," she whispered, as his hand slipped into her panties.

"Oh, baby. You're so wet for me. God, do you know how good you feel?"

Sol's breath burned against her wet nipples making her shiver as she clutched his shoulders. He was still completely dressed and that turned her on even more. He moved her forward and pressed her down onto the desk.

She lay on her back expecting Sol to cover her with his warm body, but her hands grasped only air and her eyes flew open. He knelt between her legs, before slowly peeling her panties down and off. Darina bit her lip and fought the self-conscious urge to cover herself as he pushed her knees apart to see his prize.

"So beautiful. You're going to taste just like heaven, aren't you kitten?"

Darina couldn't find the breath to answer as he lowered his head and began to lick.

*Oh, my God.*

She arched her back and nearly screamed at the sensation of his tongue laving her most sensitive flesh. Nearly to the point of tears, she couldn't believe the overwhelming pleasure that shot to her core. Marc had always refused to

do this for her, and she'd never pushed, hating the guilt that assailed her for even wanting it. Sol didn't seem to mind giving her this pleasure, apparently enjoying it as well. Her toes curled, and she wondered how she had ever lived without this ecstasy in her life.

"Mmm, sweet as honey, baby. And so hot," Sol murmured against her before returning to his feast.

He stabbed his tongue into her cunt in imitation of what his cock would be doing shortly, and her body shivered on the verge of climax. She sobbed his name as he ran his tongue over her clit and then circled it while pressing a finger into her. He started pumping his finger in and out, adding a second when she began to thrust against his hand.

"That's it. Come for me, baby. I want to lick you dry, kitten."

"Sol, oh, Sol," she sobbed as her orgasm built with blinding force.

It'd been so long and Marc had never made her feel like this. As Sol continued to thrust his fingers into her cunt, he lightly clamped her clit between his teeth, and that's all it took to send her over the edge.

Darina gasped and nearly came off the desk with the force of her climax. She gripped Sol's head as an anchor. Tremors wracked her frame as Sol sucked every ounce of pleasure from her. He finally sat back on his heels, and she sensed his gaze on her, but couldn't lift her head to acknowledge him. His hands covered hers, and he gently removed her fingers from his hair.

*Oh, wow.*

"I guess you enjoyed that?"

Darina noted the amusement in his voice and tried to laugh, but it came out as a whimper as she fought to catch her breath. Sol stood and wiped an arm across his mouth before leaning over her. She smelled her scent on his breath. The musky fragrance shot a thrill through her, hardening her nipples again and drawing more moisture from her weeping cunt. He rubbed his lips over hers, and she opened for him while wrapping her legs around his waist.

"Sweet, Darina. Baby, I want you more than I want my next breath. But we have a problem."

## Resignation

It took a second for Darina to decipher the comment and then remember how to speak in order to respond.

“Hmm? Problem?”

“Yeah, kitten. I don’t have a condom. I don’t suppose you keep any in your desk?”

The hopeful look on his face made her giggle, and she covered her mouth in horror. Sol grinned and kissed the back of her hand. She lifted it to his face and held it against his cheek, rubbing her thumb across his lips.

“No, I’m so sorry. I don’t.”

He smiled through the disappointment he couldn’t hide.

“Sorry? You think I’d like the idea of you being prepared to have sex in your office all the time? I like the idea of tempting you into it spontaneously more.”

“Oh you’re certainly tempting, Sol.”

He grinned and rubbed his hard cloth covered cock against her wet cunt. Darina moaned and closed her eyes.

“I don’t know how I’m going to be able to walk out of here,” he whispered against her neck.

Darina rocked against him.

“I know a couple of ways to take care of the problem.”

~~~

Sol didn’t think it was possible, but he instantly got harder.

“Just what do you have in mind?” He prayed she didn’t hear the tremor in his voice.

Darina smiled and gently pushed him back as she sat up. He kept his arms wrapped around her, pulling her into a sitting position. Suddenly he was kissing her again. He couldn’t seem to help himself. Darina leaned into him and slipped off the desk. Pulling him with her, she maneuvered his willing body around until the desk bore into his back.

He tried vainly to hold onto her but she laughed, filling him with

frustration and doubt. She'd obviously enjoyed the pleasure he gave, but was she really willing and ready to reciprocate?

"You have to let go of me if you want me to take care of this," she said as she cupped him in her soft hands.

He moaned and closed his eyes, letting his arms fall to his sides onto the top of the desk.

*Oh yes, please take care of it.*

"That's a good boy. That wasn't so hard was it?"

He opened his eyes to find her kneeling before him, her hands opening his pants and pulling them down to his knees.

*Heaven. I've died and gone to heaven.*

She tugged his boxer briefs off with his pants, and his hungry cock sprang free, hard and already glistening with his wetness. Darina cooed and kissed the tip. He nearly exploded.

"Darina, you don't have to do this."

She looked up at him and licked her lips. He gripped the edge of the desk to keep from grabbing her and bending her over, lack of condom be damned.

"I want to, Sol. I want to make you feel as good as you made me feel."

He couldn't respond, merely nodded as she bent her lovely head and went to it. With the first touch of her tongue, he groaned and nearly closed his eyes. But he wanted to watch, and reached over to push her beautiful chestnut hair behind her ear to allow his view. It was breathtaking.

*Perfect.*

Darina moved slowly and a little tentatively at first, as if she wasn't used to giving head. Shivers of pleasure ran through him at the thought, and he hoped she'd never had Marc's cock in her perfect mouth. Her tongue swirled around the head as she sucked him into her mouth and rubbed her hand up and down his shaft. He moaned in sheer bliss, fighting to keep his hips still, not wanting to force her into a rhythm or speed she couldn't handle. She pressed her thumb against the underside of his shaft, bit down lightly, and he



## Resignation

started panting.

“Almost there, baby. God, can I come in your mouth, kitten? Please?”

“Mmmm,” Darina moaned with a little nod, and Sol relaxed into the pleasure she gave him.

She used her free hand to cup his balls and lightly squeezed while sucking him harder into her mouth. The hand on his shaft began to move faster blinding him with need as his climax built to a crescendo.

“I’m coming, baby. I’m coming,” he nearly shouted as her grip tightened possessively.

Sol wondered if the head of his cock had burst with his orgasm as hot jets of semen shot out of him endlessly. Darina moaned loudly, and he looked down to see her head in his hands without even realizing he’d grabbed her. She licked him clean, sending a shiver down his spine as he fought for breath. Darina licked her lips and stood slowly, pulling herself up his body. Holding her close, he kissed her, rubbing his softening cock against her naked belly.

“I guess you enjoyed that?” she asked quietly.

Sol laughed at the echo of his words from her mouth and kissed her again.

“Like is too tame a word, baby. That was mind blowing.”

She giggled and shook her head.

“Blowing being the optimal word.”

He grinned and rubbed his hands up and down her back before grabbing her ass in both and pulling her more tightly against him.

“Tell me we can do this again. Later at my place, yours or a neutral location. I don’t care where.”

Sol fought for patience as uncertainty crossed Darina’s face. He knew this was just rebound sex for her, but if it was the only way to have her, he was willing to be that guy...for a little while. There might never be any more between them. He just didn’t have enough to offer her.

“Sol—”

“Look, Darina, this doesn’t have to go anywhere. I know you’re coming

out of something that broke your heart. Just let me hold you while you heal, baby. We're both adults. We can enjoy each other for a little while with no strings attached. When you get sick of me and decide to move on, I'll be okay with it. I swear."

She still looked uncertain but hadn't stepped out of his arms yet. He took that as a good sign.

*Please say yes.*

The smile on her face as she looked into his eyes was all the answer he needed. He kissed her thoroughly, holding her tightly to his chest while he gripped her perfect ass in both hands. She rubbed against him again, thrusting her tongue against his as if starved for his taste. He finally had to back away in the name of self-preservation.

"Baby, if we're going to continue we need to find a drugstore."

She seemed to come out of a daze at his words and looked down at herself uncertainly.

"Darina?"

"Yeah. Let's, uh...let's go to my place. I don't live too far from here."

Sol barely contained his roar of triumph as she turned away to get dressed. He tucked himself back into his pants and straightened his clothes, admiring the view as she bent over to pick up her panties. Watching her dress heated his blood to near boiling as he imagined removing each piece of clothing all over again.

## Chapter Five

Darina's confidence began to slip as she drove the few blocks to her loft. Her usual restraint spoke up as the wilder side cooled off from the lust-filled haze of being in Sol's arms. She glanced at him, visible in his pick-up truck right behind her, and had a moment of doubt about having a virtual stranger in her bed.

*What am I doing?*

Sol seemed like a really nice guy and he was sexy as hell. He probably had women throwing themselves at him on a nightly basis. Darina figured he just wanted sex like any man, but she wasn't sure if she should be making it so easy. He didn't seem like the type to participate in office gossip, and she didn't think she cared if he did. But after the devastation of Marc's betrayal, she knew she should be careful. Her heart couldn't handle another crack much less an all out assault right now. After being so alone for the past few months, Darina couldn't help hoping she could keep Sol for a little while.

*I just want someone to hold me again.*

She pulled into the parking garage and found two empty spots on the second level. After cutting the engine, she took her time gathering her purse and by the time she reached for the handle, Sol had opened the door for her. She looked up into his smiling face.

"Hey, beautiful. Looks like you're close enough to walk to work."

She smiled back and took his hand.

“In this humidity? I’d have to take a shower as soon as I got there.”

Sol pulled her out of her small Honda and into his arms.

“Mmm, that puts delicious images in my mind.”

Heat stung Darina’s cheeks even as she realized it was ridiculous to be embarrassed in front of a man who’d already seen her naked.

“Get your mind out of the gutter, Sol.”

He nuzzled her neck and placed a warm kiss beneath her ear.

“I can’t help it that you’re irresistible, kitten. Now point me in the direction of the closest drugstore.”

Darina looked away from his hungry gaze.

“That won’t be necessary. I have some in my room.”

Sol raised a brow in question but didn’t comment as Darina closed her door and headed away from the cars. She tried to appear calm and controlled, hoping he wouldn’t realize just how nervous he made her.

*He probably thinks I do this all the time.*

They reached the skywalk connecting the garage to the building of lofts across the street and walked over in silence. Sol placed a hand at the small of her back as Darina fished her keys from her purse. A set of glass doors and a flight of stairs later, they stood before the door to her private domain. She fought to breathe as she let them inside and heard Sol close and lock the door.

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Sol stepped into Darina’s loft and let out a low whistle. It was more than he’d expected. He thought he might have seen a similar spread on a magazine cover, but Darina’s home definitely looked better. Everything matched, from the sienna colored sofa set to the abstract prints on the peach and tan walls. The entire open floor plan spoke of class and style and seemed utterly Darina. He wasn’t surprised.

*She is so out of my league.*

“This is nice,” he said quietly.

Darina looked around as if noticing it for the first time and shrugged.

## Resignation

"Thanks. It's home, for now."

"For now? You plan on moving?"

She walked further into the loft, and he followed her to a set of stairs hidden behind a wall of black and white photographs.

"Perhaps. I can't honestly say I'll be at Wellington much longer."

Sol's steps faltered, and he nearly plowed into her back catching himself on the rail.

*Please don't say you're leaving town.*

He followed her up the stairs to the second level where a short iron rail surrounded her small bedroom.

"Do you already have another job lined up?"

He had to force the words from his mouth as dread crawled through him. He'd finally gotten her into his arms, and the thought of letting her go made his chest ache. Somehow, he was able to keep the emotion from his voice.

Darina hesitated and threw an uncertain glance at him over her shoulder.

"Um, yeah. There's a firm across town that made an impressive offer. I'd be a fool to say no, especially with...what's going on."

Sol walked over to the queen sized bed in the center of the room and looked down at the royal blue bedspread. He sat on the edge and removed his socks and shoes, then removed his tie as he turned to look at Darina. She watched him while she slowly released each button on her blouse, and he couldn't help the wistful pang in his chest at how comfortable it felt to undress in a bedroom with her.

"Are you hungry?" She let her blouse slip from her shoulders to drop at her feet. Sol smiled and raised a brow, making her laugh. "I meant for food, Sol. It's late and I haven't eaten anything since lunch."

"Dinner sounds good, but only if I can have dessert first."

Darina blushed and turned around as she let her skirt drop to the floor.

"I should take a shower," she said quietly.

*Just let me have tonight, please.*

Sol stood and walked over to her as he unbuttoned his sleeves. He wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her to his chest.

"Baby, if you've changed your mind just say so. I promise I won't be angry. Disappointed, yes, but never angry. Not at you."

Darina took a deep breath and let it out slowly, leaned her head against his chest and closed her eyes.

"Tell me you aren't thinking terrible things about me for letting you have me so easily. I swear I've never done this before," she whispered.

Sol chuckled and nipped at her earlobe.

"I would never think badly of you, I swear. Considering I've wanted you for months I certainly don't think you're easy."

Darina opened her mouth as if to comment but then closed it again quickly. Sol watched her expressive face turn neutral.

*What thoughts are running around in that beautiful head?*

He rubbed his face against her hair inhaling the lavender scent. The fragrance stirred his blood, and he fought to control his natural reaction to her. Sol wanted to stay there and just hold Darina away from the world and anything that might hurt her. He wanted to keep her for himself and enjoy everything she had to offer. He wanted...everything.

He gave Darina a slight squeeze before slowly releasing her and taking a step back. She straightened and wrapped her arms around her waist.

"Got anything in your fridge I can use to make dinner?"

Darina turned to him with a smile. "You cook?"

"I'm a man who lives alone, baby. It's cook or starve. I can only handle so much fast food."

She laughed as he rubbed a hand over his stomach.

"There should be some vegetables and chicken in there."

"Perfect. Why don't you take a shower while I make dinner? I promise to run up here and grab you if I set the kitchen on fire."

Darina's smile warmed his heart.

"Should I be worried?"

## Resignation

Sol grinned and shook his head.

“Nah. You have a fire extinguisher, right?”

She giggled and turned away. He ushered her into the bathroom and stopped at the door.

“Just relax, baby, and let me take care of you tonight, okay?”

Before she could answer, he pulled the door shut. He stood holding the doorknob, his forehead pressed to the cool wood.

*You can't keep her, you idiot. This is just for tonight.*

He straightened and headed for the stairs, hoping he could keep things between them light and friendly, but knowing the pangs in his chest were only going to get worse.

## Chapter Six

Consciousness returned slowly while Darina became aware of sunlight beating against her eyelids. She groaned and tried to stretch, but something heavy and warm held her in place.

*What?*

Achy and sore in various parts of her anatomy that hadn't been so well used in ages, the night's events rushed through her mind. Wide awake now, her pulse sped up and heat suffused her sensitized flesh.

*Sol.*

The delicious security guard from work lay in bed with her, licking a path from her collarbone to her belly button. She smiled with her eyes still closed and rolled more fully onto her back.

Sol's lips fluttered against her left breast, and she fisted the sheets on either side of her head as he took her nipple between his teeth. He suckled her while massaging her thighs with his fingers, and she moaned his name.

"Mmm, good morning, gorgeous," he murmured in his deep, sexy voice.

"Morning, oh please don't stop doing that."

Breathless, barely able to form a coherent thought, much less speak aloud, she arched against him.

Chuckling, Sol licked a wet path to her right nipple. Darina squirmed, rubbing her body against his until he moved between her thighs. She couldn't believe she needed him so much after their three bouts last night.



## Resignation

Sol had returned upstairs to let her know dinner was ready just as she'd stepped from the shower. He'd licked her dry then fucked her up against the wall of her bedroom. They somehow managed to eat the delicious stir-fry he'd cooked before he took her on the kitchen table.

As Darina caught her breath, he'd actually cleared the dishes before carrying her up to bed where they took their time learning each other's bodies from head to toe.

A morning love session was just what she needed to start the weekend right. She opened her eyes and looked down at his dark head as he laved her breasts. His fingers, trailing between her thighs, made her fight to prolong the inevitable fall into oblivion. Her body trembled with need and her breathing became labored. She was close to begging without having any idea of what to ask for, but Sol seemed to know.

"Come for me, sweetheart. I want to feel you come on my hand." His husky voice was all it took to push her over the edge.

"Oh, Sol."

She moaned, arching her back and pushing her sex into his hand more fully. He chuckled and kissed her deeply while keeping his hand in place as her body trembled through aftershocks of pleasure.

"Mmm, that felt good," he whispered against her neck.

The warmth of his breath felt cool against her fevered skin. She burned from his touch, craving more of it, more of him. Excitement shot through her even as doubt reared its ugly head. She pushed her concerns aside vowing that, for now, she would enjoy Sol without doubt or guilt.

"It felt good to me, too. Now it's your turn," she whispered back.

Sol suckled her neck and growled low in his throat. She wiggled out from beneath him and reached over to the nightstand where the half-empty box of condoms sat waiting.

"We might need to run to the store," he murmured.

She laughed as she ripped open the foil.

"I guess that depends on how long you plan on hanging around here."

Sol closed his eyes and moaned as she rolled the condom on his stiffened cock. She kissed the tip and lay down with her legs spread open for him. Wanton and sexy, the quiet, modest seriousness she was known for didn't even exist in his arms. She watched his eyes slowly open and turn darker as he looked down at her offering.

*Oh, don't ever stop looking at me like that.*

His heated gaze centered on her moist cunt, and she shivered in anticipation.

"God, you're so beautiful, Darina. Do you have any idea how damn sexy you are?"

The smile slipped off her face as self-consciousness tried to overtake her. She couldn't remember the last time anyone had called her sexy.

*Only with you.*

She didn't want to think right now. She just wanted to enjoy and explore all the sensations of Sol's skin against hers. He seemed to sense her change in mood as he slowly lowered himself to rest between her legs. She wrapped them around his hips and put her arms around his neck to pull him down for a kiss. He allowed her embrace, but she sensed a heartbeat of hesitation that made her worry before he lowered his head.

"Sol? I need you inside me...now."

He grinned wolfishly and reached between them to lay his cock at her entrance.

"As my lady wishes."

In one swift thrust, he filled her, and they both moaned in satisfaction. He wrapped his arms beneath her shoulders and threaded his fingers through her hair, pinning her in place. She smiled up at him as he found his rhythm, pumping his cock deep. He filled her more than Marc ever had. Sol felt incredible, stretching and rubbing in all the right places, sensitizing nerves endings that lay dormant for too long.

Her panting breaths made the act more erotic, as she reveled in the animalistic sounds of their coupling. Her climax began to build, and she

## Resignation

grabbed Sol's muscular ass with both hands, urging him to pump faster.

"Harder...oh...faster," she gasped.

Sol's hips sped up, pistoning in and out. The slapping of their bodies echoed in the otherwise silent room. She suddenly wished there was a mirror on her ceiling so she could see all of his glorious body as he drove her crazy with the best sex of her life.

"Oh, baby. I'm coming, baby. I'm coming," he murmured in her ear, just as he found the perfect angle.

Darina dug her nails into his ass, and he growled as they both came as one. Her grip kept them glued together, panting while their heart rates returned to normal.

"Mmm, that's the best breakfast I've ever had," Sol said with a grin.

Darina's face warmed as she looked up at him and ran her fingers through his hair.

"That was pretty good."

Sol frowned in mock indignation.

"Only pretty good, huh? Well then, Ms. Tanner, I guess I'm just going to have to make it my goal to impress you with great sex before the weekend is through. Tell me you don't have other plans."

"I don't have other plans."

"Seriously? Can I have you to myself the entire weekend?"

She swallowed a lump in her throat as she watched his gaze follow his fingertips drifting over the features of her face, as if memorizing every facet.

*You really want to be with me all weekend?*

His weight pressed down on top of her, her legs around his hips, his softening cock resting just inside her. His obvious contentment with their position bought an ache to her chest. She'd been alone and felt unwanted for too long. The unexpected surge of emotions filled her near to bursting with longing. Somehow, she was able to reply in a steady voice.

"Seriously. I don't have any plans for the weekend. Do you?"

"Oh, yeah. I plan to stay in bed with a gorgeous woman who works in

the same building as me. I need to prove to her just how delectable she is after some asshole was foolish enough to let her go. Lucky me, huh?”

Darina smiled and looked away. Sol started nibbling on her jaw, as she closed her eyes and moaned in contentment.

“I think I’m definitely the lucky one,” she whispered.

“Oh, no, kitten. I’ve been aching for you for months. I just don’t know how long it’s going to take to get my fill.” He tilted her head back toward him with a finger on her chin and kissed her deeply. Then he slowly left the bed. “Be right back. Don’t move.”

Darina watched him walk into her bathroom, and the grin on her face slowly melted as she considered what Monday morning might be like.

*What am I doing?*

She still didn’t know where in the hell her name badge was, which meant she would have to sign in again and face Sol over the clipboard. Would he give her his usual polite smile and pretend this didn’t happen? Should he? She had no idea how to act or what to expect, and she hated that feeling.

*Just go with the flow and enjoy what you can.*

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Sol discarded the used condom and cleaned himself up quickly before grabbing a clean washcloth for Darina. He wanted to take care of her and show her how she deserved to be treated. He ran the cloth under warm water and rung it out before returning to the bed. She lay sprawled out on the mattress just as he’d left her, making him smile in satisfaction.

*Picture perfect.*

It was a sight he wished he could see every morning for the rest of his life. He knelt beside her and slowly rubbed the wet cloth between her legs. She moaned as she watched him. The sound escaped her lips and slithered down his spine to his cock, which easily rose to the challenge. He found her clit hidden among her curls and softly rubbed it with the cloth.

“How’s that, baby?”

## Resignation

“Mmm, that feels really good, Sol. You should probably stop before we get started all over again. I’m hungry.”

He looked at his fingers, resting against her tempting flesh, and licked his lips. “Me, too.”

Darina giggled.

“I need breakfast if you’re going to keep working me out this way,” she said as she pushed his hand away.

“Do you want me to make you breakfast in bed or would you like to go out?”

She sighed contentedly and smiled up at him. The sight made his chest ache with longing. If she always looked at him like that, he’d never want for anything more.

“You cooked last night. It’s only fair for me to make you breakfast in bed.”

He was shaking his head in denial before she even finished speaking. “Darina, baby, didn’t you hear me say I plan on taking care of you this weekend? You stay here and conserve your energy and I’ll make breakfast.”

Before she could argue, he was off the bed and pulling on his slacks. He headed to the kitchen without a backward glance, knowing the sight of her still sprawled on the bed would be his undoing. Depression gnawed at him as he thought of being forced back into the professional courtesy they normally shared come Monday morning. *Will she even need to sign in again?*

She hadn’t had her badge for days, and he looked forward to talking to her every morning. The thought of her avoiding him at work stilled his hands as he looked around her kitchen.

*Damn, I hope that doesn’t happen.*

Sol closed his eyes and wondered if this wasn’t the biggest mistake of his life. He wanted Darina so much it hurt but having her only to lose her again would hurt worse. There was no way he could ask for more right now. He knew her pain was still too fresh. He shrugged the tension from his shoulders and began to rummage through her refrigerator. After locating a few staples,

he set about making breakfast.

*Just get through the weekend and enjoy it as much as possible.*

As soon as everything finished cooking, Sol filled their plates and set them on the kitchen table. He absently cleaned up the mess and headed back upstairs to the bedroom. A trail of sheets led from the bed to the open bathroom door. Heat rushed to his cock at the moans he heard coming from within.

“Hey, gorgeous, you’re not starting again without me are you?”

Darina’s eyes flew open while Sol’s gaze ran over her naked flesh. She was reclining in her bathtub with her legs spread open. His heart raced at the sight of her pink skin glistening with moisture. Her hair was pinned in a loose knot on the top of her head, a few silky tendrils caressing the sides of her face. Beads of water slid down her graceful neck, calling to his aching tongue.

“No,” she replied.

Kitten, I’m trying to be good here and feed you first. But, if you don’t cover up, we could very well starve to death this weekend.”

She laughed and sat up slowly. Sol reached down and gently grasped her arms, raising her from the water.

“Sol, you’re getting all wet,” she said with a laugh.

“That’s all right, baby. I don’t plan on keeping these pants on much longer.”

She stepped away from him and wrapped a large towel around her body, covering herself from breast to calf. An exaggerated sigh escaped him making her laugh again as he followed her into the bedroom. He raised a brow in surprise when she headed straight for the stairs in just her towel and took a seat at the table, but he decided not to comment in the hopes the towel would slip off sometime during their meal.

After breakfast, Sol took a quick shower and was more than a little disappointed to find Darina dressed when he came out. She approached him with a shy smile that he found irresistible as he pulled her into his arms for a scorching kiss. Before long, she was mewling like a kitten again and rubbing

## Resignation

up against him. The towel wrapped around his waist did nothing to hide his swollen erection when she pulled away.

“Mmm, I see you’re still up for more,” she said with a breathless sigh.

Sol didn’t think he could verbally respond, as all coherent thought fled in the face of her sensual onslaught. His tongue tingled with the taste of her skin, his nostrils flared as her feminine musk filled him. He tried to pull her to him again but she resisted.

“Not so fast, hotshot. If you plan to stay for dinner, I need to go to the store. We’ve pretty much gone through what I had left from my last shopping trip.”

Sol groaned in frustration and took a deep breath.

“Give me a minute, baby. I won’t be able to walk around a store like this.”

Darina looked down at him and licked her lips. Her hot look forced a groan from his throat.

“Let me see what I can do to help you,” she said with a mischievous grin.

Sol watched in silence as she slowly unwrapped the towel from his waist and dropped it to the floor. He let her push him backward to the sofa and sat in silence as she climbed onto his lap.

“One of us is wearing too many clothes,” he whispered as he leaned forward for a kiss.

She allowed a quick meshing of lips before pulling back to look down at his stiff cock standing proudly between them. Sol watched her contemplate his manhood for a moment as he leaned back into the sofa and tried to relax. If she wanted to play, he was more than willing to let her do whatever she wished. He lifted his arms and clasped his hands behind the back of his head, showing his willingness to sit at her tender mercy. She smiled slyly and gently wrapped both hands around his erection. Sol groaned in pleasure and closed his eyes.

*God, her hands are so soft.*

“Mmm, baby. Your hands feel so good.”

He could hear her panting as she moved her hands up and down his shaft in an ever-increasing rhythm until she was furiously rubbing his cock. He fought the urge to buck his hips, wanting to give her complete control. He opened his eyes and watched as Darina kept her full concentration on pleasuring him. She licked her lips, making him gasp as the urge to come crept up his spine.

“That’s it, baby. I’m almost there.”

She stroked a finger over his glistening tip, spreading the moisture around, and he went off like a rocket.

“Darina, baby, yes!” he shouted as hot jets of come shot out of his cock and over her hands and his belly.

Her movements slowed, but she kept rubbing over him, as if mesmerized by the feel of his seed in her hands. Sol had to force himself to look away from her rapt expression and still her busy hands before he grew hard all over again.

“Okay, baby. I can get dressed now,” he said as he gently pulled on her delicate wrists.

She grinned as she climbed off his lap and picked up the discarded towel. She wiped her hands then tossed it onto his lap.

“I’ll make a list while you clean up and get dressed.”

She leaned over and kissed him softly on the mouth. Sol fought the haze of afterglow as he looked up into her beautiful face.

“Condoms,” he panted. “We definitely need more condoms.”



## Chapter Seven

Darina tried to ignore the warmth creeping up her spine from Sol's hand on her waist. He'd been touching her the entire time they walked through the store and even now, as they stood waiting to check out, he seemed reluctant to let her go. She loved the sensation of being wanted so much. He touched her with gentle caresses, as if she was precious to him, even as the look of longing in his eyes set her blood on fire. No man had ever treated her this way and even though she barely knew Sol, she found herself thinking of future outings with him.

*I wonder if he'd always be this touchy with me in public, or if the novelty of having me would wear off.*

That happened with Marc sooner than she would've expected, especially once they were engaged.

"What's wrong?"

Darina looked up as the deep, sexy rumble slid down her spine, and she found Sol's deep brown eyes staring back at her. His look was so full of concern it nearly brought tears to her eyes. Suddenly, she found herself cradled in his arms. "Darina, baby, what's wrong?"

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, inhaling the scent of warm, clean male. The pleasing aroma made her smile and the heat of his hand rubbing soothing circles on her back chased away the depressing thoughts.

"Nothing, Sol. I'm fine." He pulled back enough to look down at her and

raised a brow in question. Her smile widened. "Sorry to go drama queen on you for a second there, but I'm fine, really."

His embrace tightened before he let go of her and they moved forward in the line.

"Penny for your thoughts," he said quietly.

She laughed and shook her head.

"I promise they aren't worth even that much. Let's just say I was thinking of past mistakes and hoping for a smarter future."

Sol simply nodded and began loading their food onto the conveyor belt. Darina wanted to kick herself for even mentioning the word future.

*Idiot. Who knows where this thing between us is going, if anywhere.*

The last thing she needed was to get him thinking about their future. She knew the smartest move would be to concentrate on the present and just enjoy him while he was willing to stick around. That might be the best she could hope for if he only wanted a weekend fling.

They drove back to her loft in silence with only the soft jazz emanating from her speakers as background noise. It was a comfortable silence, and Darina realized she never really knew what that term meant until now. Marc liked to hear himself talk, especially on subjects she knew little about. They'd had many conversations that ended in her feeling like an idiot while he sat with a triumphant grin on his face as if he'd won some type of contest between them. Darina always hated that but chalked it up to his competitive nature. Sol didn't seem to need to compete with her in any way, a refreshing change.

They reached her loft where he insisted on carrying all three bags of groceries, so she hurried before him to open the door. He just laughed.

"Don't I look like I can handle three bags?"

"Of course, but I know how awkward those things are when full. I hate grocery shopping because getting everything in the house is such a pain."

Sol's smile slipped off his face as he placed everything on the kitchen counter.

"Living alone does have its down side," he said quietly.

## Resignation

Darina nodded as she began putting the food away. As soon as the last item was safely stored, he grasped her hips from behind and kissed his way up the back of her neck.

“Mmm, that feels good,” she whispered, as she leaned back into him.

Sol began to move his lips on her skin, licking and nibbling along her throat, as he slipped his hands beneath her shirt. Darina fought for breath as he began to knead her breasts. Her nipples stiffened immediately, and she moaned at the heat streaking from the aching tips straight to her core.

“Table or bed?”

His voice was a low growl that made her tremble in anticipation. She gasped as a shiver snaked up her spine at the memory of what he’d done to her on that table.

“T-table.”

Closing her eyes, she began to pant in anticipation when Sol turned her around and gently pushed her onto the hard, flat surface. Her lids drifted open with the need to watch him pleasuring her. She stilled at the look of complete concentration on his face as he quickly undressed her. He grabbed the new box of condoms from where she’d left them on the kitchen counter and set them next to her legs. Darina’s breath caught as she watched him strip off his shirt and unbutton his jeans. She was glad they’d decided to stop by his apartment for a change of clothes before heading to the store. Sol’s ass in jeans was not a sight to be missed.

“I can’t believe how much I want you again, kitten. I swear you’re going to kill me before Monday.”

Before she could respond, he leaned over and took command of her mouth. The kiss streaked like lightning through her body, curling her toes and soaking her cunt as she wiggled against him. They both moaned in hunger, while she grabbed at his jeans in a futile attempt to remove them. Her efforts finally seemed to get through to him as Sol let go of her to push his jeans off his hips. Darina opened her eyes when he stood and watched him roll a condom onto his hardened cock. She licked her lips in invitation, smiling hotly

as his eyes caught the movement and followed it.

“What’s taking so long, hotshot?”

He grinned as he grabbed her beneath the knees and lifted her legs. His hardness probed her entrance and she tried not to squirm in anticipation.

Then he entered her slowly, keeping his gaze locked with hers.

“You are so damned beautiful,” he whispered as he began to thrust.

Darina couldn’t find the breath to respond as he took command of her body and set her on fire. She began to thrust against him as he changed the angle just enough to rub against her clit.

*Oh. So good. It’s so good.*

Within seconds, she was screaming his name as her orgasm burst through her. She dug her nails into his thighs and continued to moan through the aftershocks. Her eyes began to drift closed when Sol stopped thrusting and released her legs. She looked up at him and caught a mischievous grin on his face.

“Time for a change of scenery.”

“Oh?” she asked breathlessly.

“On your feet, kitten. I want to see that delectable ass of yours.”

~ ~ ~

Sol got Darina turned around and bent over the table in record time. He’d worried for a second that she might protest, but then she hopped up to do his bidding without a word. Her eager response to him set his pulse racing and made him feel invincible. He loved it and knew he’d never cared for any woman this deeply, but quickly shoved those thoughts aside. Darina was special, but this weekend might be all they had.

He let his hands glide over the smooth skin of her beautiful ass as he massaged a cheek in each hand. Darina gasped and pushed back against him, driving all thought from his mind in his body’s desire to ravage her. He took a deep breath.

*Take your time, savor each second.*

## Resignation

Leaning forward, he kissed a path up her spine until his body blanketed hers against the table.

“Sol, please. I need you.”

Darina’s softly spoken plea shot like an arrow through his chest shredding the last of his control. Any thought of teasing her became lost in the haze of lust that gripped him. He grabbed his cock in one hand while testing her readiness with the other. She was still wet and eager for him as he filled her with one full thrust.

They moaned in unison when he began to buck against her, shaking the table violently. He vaguely wondered if it was sturdy enough for their play before his thoughts disappeared completely, consumed with Darina’s soft walls squeezing his hard shaft. The sensation drove him to the edge of climax in an instant, and he knew he couldn’t last long. He stood upright while still thrusting, Darina pushed back against him, and he grabbed her hips to steady her.

“Darina, oh, baby, you feel so good.”

“Sol, oh, Sol...”

The sound of his name, nearly incoherent due to her breathless panting, finally pushed him over the edge. With one final strong thrust, he came hard, shouting her name. He dropped his hands to the table on either side of her shoulders as he fought to catch his breath and steady his weakening knees. Below him, Darina lay panting with her eyes closed, a look of satisfaction on her face.

He smiled, knowing he put that look there and hoping he could do it again soon.

“So... that’s doggy style, isn’t it?”

Sol stared for a second at Darina’s face, but her eyes remained closed. He bit back a laugh at her question.

*Is she joking?*

“Uh, yeah. Did you like it?”

“Mmhmm. I’ve never tried it before, but now I wish I had.”

He frowned while jealousy reared its ugly head at the thought of her trying any positions with anyone but him as he slowly stepped away from her. He discarded the condom in the kitchen trash then returned to lift Darina gently from the table. She sighed as she lazily looped her arms around his neck and, he kissed the top of her head.

“What other positions are you curious about?”

She opened her eyes and looked up at him, but he couldn’t read the expression on her face. Darina shrugged, closing her eyes again and burying her face in his chest. He didn’t expect an answer.

“All of them I guess. I’ve only tried missionary before now.”

Her response was muffled, but Sol heard her hesitation well enough.

“Grab those condoms, kitten, and I’ll see what I can do to change that.”

Darina looked up at him, uncertainty clear on her face, but she quickly grabbed the box of condoms. Uneasiness rolled off her in waves, and Sol decided not to make it worse by talking about it. He ended the discussion to carry her into the bedroom for an afternoon of mind-bending pleasure. Knowing he would be her first in sexual exploration had him all but bursting with raw, male pride. He wanted to growl and beat on his chest but simply held her to him possessively.

*I want to show you everything.*

## Chapter Eight

Sunday came and went in a blur as Sol taught Darina more about her body than she'd ever thought possible. He quickly learned her likes and dislikes and used his knowledge ruthlessly, making her come repeatedly until she lay exhausted in her tangled sheets. That evening, he carried her to the bathtub, washed her body from head to toe, and then dried her gently while she lay in satiated bliss. She watched as he dried his own body, standing at the foot of her bed. He kept his back to her, but she certainly couldn't complain about the view.

*The man is yummy from any angle.*

"Will you be going in at your usual time tomorrow?"

Darina started at the unexpected sound of his voice and realized she'd begun to doze off.

She cleared her throat. "Most likely. I don't have anything until nine, but I usually try to get an early start on Mondays."

She watched his muscular back flex with his movements, unable to read his expression. Sol slowly continued to run the towel over his body in a caress that teased Darina mercilessly. Dread seized her as she realized the inevitable conversation was officially underway. She'd hoped for at least a full week of fantasy before the reality of life intruded. This would be a short week for her, since her week-long vacation started on Friday. Originally, she would've married Marc on Saturday and headed for their honeymoon in Jamaica. She'd

decided not to change her vacation, knowing she'd be depressed on that date anyway. Bitterness and anger reared their ugly heads as she remembered Marc in Heather's arms. The betrayal of their relationship ran deep.

"Don't you go on vacation this week?" Sol asked, finally turning to face her.

For a moment, a drop of water he'd missed distracted her as it ran a slow path down his muscular chest. She latched onto the sight, which thankfully shut out all thoughts of Marc. Sol grinned as her gaze traveled down to his erection. Darina unconsciously licked her lips before remembering his question. When she looked up to find his hot gaze devouring her, sparks shot through her body and hardened her nipples while moisture pooled between her thighs.

"What?"

Sol chuckled, a deep masculine sound that made her want to whimper. He climbed onto the bed and crawled toward her, his beautiful cock swinging heavily between his strong thighs. Darina licked her lips again and he growled.

"Kitten, I'm trying to have a conversation here. But, if you keep licking those perfect lips I'm going to devour them, and we won't be able to speak again until morning."

She sighed and welcomed him into her open arms.

*I don't want to talk about this.*

Sol lay on top of the covers while she remained beneath them. Even through the cloth, his hardness pressed between her thighs. He rested his elbows on either side of her head, looking down into her eyes as he threaded his fingers through her damp hair.

"Yes, my vacation begins on Friday. How did you know?"

"You told me a couple of weeks ago. Don't you remember?"

Darina winced with a twinge of embarrassment. "I'm sorry, I guess I forgot."

She tried to turn away to hide the emotions on her face, but he captured it between his hands. Humiliation suffused her expression.



## Resignation

“What, kitten? What’s wrong?”

*I can’t imagine what you think of me.*

She looked into his eyes wondering what to say. What wouldn’t reveal too much to this man, who was virtually a stranger?

“Nothing. It’s just...I was thinking I should’ve rescheduled,” she replied quietly.

A fleeting smile crossed his lips, but there was no real humor in his expression.

“Liar. We might barely know each other, but I can still read your face, baby. Tell me what you’re thinking. You don’t have to be wary of me.”

Though he spoke gently, for a moment anger surged within Darina.

*How dare you call me a liar!*

She tried to feed the anger his words initially sparked, but it died a quick death. Not only was he absolutely right, but he deserved better from her. He’d just given her a weekend of the best sex of her life and taken such good care of her. The least she could do in return was tell him the truth. She took a deep breath as unexpected tears stung her eyes. This time, he let her turn away and settled for nibbling on her ear consolingly.

“I’m going to be alone for a week,” she whispered.

It seemed so much easier to say with her eyes closed. Sol stilled for a moment before his lips moved down to her jaw. He kissed the corner of her mouth, using his lips to encourage her to face him again.

“You don’t have to be,” he whispered against her skin.

Darina opened her eyes slowly, the tears breaking free and sliding down her face. Sol kissed one side then the other, sipping at her tears.

“What are you saying?”

“I can take my vacation anytime I wish. We’re almost overstaffed, and I have two weeks to get rid of before the end of the year.”

“You would take your vacation to be with me?”

Her heart sped up as a ridiculous surge of fear gripped her. Sol tightened his hold on her head.

“Baby, it’s just one option. If you don’t want me to, I won’t. I’m not going to become your stalker.”

Darina sensed the truth of his words in the relaxed expression on his face. She took his grin at face value and smiled back.

“You’re certain you can give such short notice?”

“Positive, baby. Of course, once you’ve spent an entire week with me, you might become addicted. I can be quite alluring.”

Sol wiggled his eyebrows, and Darina laughed breathlessly under his weight.

“So long as you don’t get sick of me.” She tried to make it sound like a joke but couldn’t hide the doubt in her eyes.

They might not be a couple, but she really wanted to spend time with Sol. Maybe then, he would decide to stick around for more than just great sex. Darina mentally grimaced at the thought.

*It’s still too soon for another relationship.*

She didn’t want this to be a rebound thing between them. That would ensure failure, even if it didn’t happen right away. Sol deserved better than that. Everything he’d shown her so far indicated he was a good man.

“I promise, baby, no one will care if I take vacation next week, and there’s no way in hell I could get sick of you. It took ten months to get you right where I want you.”

Darina sighed contentedly as she watched the amusement in Sol’s eyes turn to something deeper and more intimate. He pushed his lower body against hers, and she moaned at the sensation of his hardness. He kissed her gently while rubbing his fingers along the sides of her face.

“I can go in late tomorrow. Do you mind if I stay the night again?” he asked against her lips.

“Please do.”

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Sol groaned as he fought to go slow in his latest seduction of the nearly

## Resignation

inexperienced angel in his arms. He knew she had to be sore after the past forty-eight hours. He was certainly aching from muscles used more this weekend than in the past few years. But nothing short of death would keep him from pleasing Darina as often as possible in their time together. His heart was full to bursting knowing he would be spending the next week with her. He had the perfect trip in mind and already planned to spend his lunch break making the final preparations.

*I don't think one week will be enough to get my fill.*

Sol stood long enough to peel the covers back and then slid into her welcoming arms. He took his time savoring the taste of her skin as he worshipped her body. Pressing small kisses into the path traversed by his massaging fingers, he gloried in her taste on his tongue. Darina moaned beneath him, wiggling as he tickled her belly with his heated breath. He nipped at her skin until she tugged on his hair, pulling him back to her mouth.

*"You taste so good, baby. I don't think I'll ever get enough."*

She stilled, and he cursed himself silently for saying that.

*Keep it light and temporary, dumbass. You don't get to keep her.*

Rather than saying anything else to startle her, he showed her with his body exactly how much he wanted her. When they were both sated and exhausted, he curled around her warm body and rubbed his hand over her belly until she fell asleep. Sol's mind was racing too quickly to follow her into slumber, as he tried to think of a way out of this mess. How could he show her how much he wanted to keep her?

*I have so little to offer, should I even try?*

## Chapter Nine

The week passed in a blur while Darina kept busy as far away from Marc as possible. Every evening she worked late enough to follow Sol home. He would make a delicious dinner then pleasure her long into the night. Sol protested the first night, wanting to follow her home, but she insisted on heading to his place instead. She would never admit her fear that he might slip out after she fell asleep and couldn't imagine him having the same concern. It seemed easier for her to rise early and stop home for a quick shower before making her way in to work.

Thursday evening finally arrived and Darina rode the elevator to the lobby alone. She smiled to herself as she remembered Monday morning. He'd lain in her bed, watching her dress for work and giving his opinion on every article of clothing she'd donned from her panties to her shoes. It was the most intimate moment between them yet, even after having tasted and touched every inch of each other's skin.

*I'm becoming addicted to him.*

The memory stung her face with a blush and she pressed her hands to her heated cheeks as the doors opened to allow someone on from the third floor. Darina kept her eyes on the floor as she fought to control her thoughts.

"Darina? Sweetheart, are you all right?"

Her breath caught in her throat as the familiar voice washed over her. Months had passed since he'd spoken such an endearment, but she knew

## Resignation

Marc's voice as well as her own. It wasn't a deep sexy timbre like Sol's, but it held a hint of concern that threw her off guard. She dropped her hands and looked up to find Marc studying her. She cleared her throat and straightened her shoulders.

"I'm fine, Marc."

"You don't look fine. What's wrong, sweetheart? You know you can still tell me anything."

*You've got to be kidding me.*

She looked at him and hoped her face conveyed her astonishment at that ridiculous statement. She'd successfully avoided him all week. Were a few more minutes too much to ask?

"I said I'm fine, Marc. And even if I'm not, my state of being is no longer any of your concern."

He looked surprised by the venom in her voice and even took a step back.

"I'm sorry, Darina. I can't help it if I haven't forgotten our two years together. I still care about you."

She snorted and crossed her arms over her chest indignantly. *Right.*

"Funny how you show it. Humiliating me in front of all our co-workers and parading around with the boss' daughter. Tell me something, did you already have her ring picked out while you were still whispering promises in my ear?"

His face turned red, and she saw the telltale signs of anger creep over his normally calm façade. Her stomach lurched, but from the elevator stopping or Marc's sudden anger, she wasn't sure. His fists balled at his sides, and he moved as if to take a step in her direction as the door quietly slid open. Suddenly a hand slapped down on his shoulder, pinning him in place.

"Mr. Powell, Miss Wellington is looking for you. She's been waiting in the foyer for nearly fifteen minutes."

Marc froze and Darina watched his anger turn into annoyance. She couldn't believe Sol actually put his hands on Marc. Sol had to know what a

chance he was taking with his job. He dropped his hand but didn't back away until Marc turned around. Darina couldn't see their faces, but it took a moment for both men to step off the elevator. Apprehension overwhelmed her at the thought of Sol losing his job because of Marc. Her uneasiness was quickly replaced by a wash of anger at Marc for acting as if he still cared for her. She walked out briskly and headed straight for the security desk to turn in her temporary badge. Heather stood watching the scene unfold. It was obvious that Darina and Marc rode downstairs together. Darina wondered how long the doors had stood open while Marc's misplaced concern distracted her.

"Marc? Marc, darling, is everything all right?"

Darina ignored Heather as best she could while signing out on the security log. A warm presence appeared behind her, and she inhaled Sol's masculine scent.

"Are you okay? Did he touch you?"

The anger in his voice sent chills down her spine. She suppressed the urge to shiver as she turned to face him.

"No, he didn't. I'm fine," she whispered.

From the corner of her eye, she saw Heather fussing at Marc, her anger still flaring hotly despite her hushed voice. Marc looked over at Darina, and Heather grabbed his arm. Sol took a step closer, blocking her view of them with bulk of his body.

"Darina? Darina, is that guard bothering you?" Both Sol and Darina turned to scowl at Marc. He was walking toward them, despite Heather holding onto his arm in an attempt to pull him away. "You there, what's your name? You had no business on that elevator. I want to know yours and your supervisor's names right now."

Darina's eyes widened and she reflexively put her hand on Sol's arm. The look on Marc's face instantly told her that was a mistake. Jealousy and anger flickered across his features completely throwing her off guard.

"Sol, perhaps you should go back behind the desk—"

"No, Darina. It's all right. I did nothing wrong."

## Resignation

“What the hell is going on? You two seem awfully familiar with each other,” Marc said angrily.

Darina looked from him to Sol then finally at Heather. The absurdity of his statement almost made her laugh, but suddenly she was too pissed off to care anymore.

*Hypocritical asshole.*

“What the hell does it matter, Marc? It’s not as if you can say a damn thing about office relationships,” she blurted out.

Marc and Heather looked shocked at her sudden outburst, but she also noted Sol’s look of pride. The warmth in his gaze gave her the courage to lift her chin and continue to glare at Marc defiantly. He stopped walking toward them and suddenly seemed to notice Heather hanging off his arm.

“Um, I just wanted to make sure you’re all right, Darina. This man hasn’t worked here very long.”

Heather dropped her hand from his arm and huffed angrily.

“I’ve been here nearly eleven months, Mr. Powell,” Sol answered.

His relaxed appearance helped Darina breathe easier. Heather took a step toward Marc, effectively blocking his path to Darina.

“Yes, Marc. He’s proven to be a trustworthy security guard. What’s the issue?” Heather’s irate tone seemed to get Marc’s attention, and he visibly paled.

“Nothing, sweetheart. Nothing at all. Ready to go?”

Darina watched as he wrapped an arm around Heather’s shoulder and guided her to the front door.

*Was it only a week ago that same sight turned me into a weeping mess of self-pity?*

Now she only felt relief as Heather pulled him out the door, and hopefully out of her thoughts. Marc obviously wasn’t for her. She was suddenly grateful that she’d discovered that before it was too late.

Sol moved away from her and she turned to watch him step behind the security desk and shuffle through some paperwork. It was after five and he

was supposed to follow her home. The plan was for him to stay at her house tonight since he had to work for a few hours the next morning. Darina watched as he slowly finished his tasks for the day. He almost seemed reluctant to go, and she tried to fight down the surge of panic and overwhelming dread threatening to burst her calm.

*Everything's fine. He just has some things to finish.*

~ ~ ~

"Sol? Are you done?"

Darina's quiet voice held a hint of uncertainty that twisted his gut. He didn't want her to be upset because of him. Bad enough that asshole Marc was playing around with her emotions, he sure as hell wouldn't stoop that low. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly before turning to face her.

"Yeah. Just give me a second to brief Andy and I'll walk you out."

They'd spent the past three days acting as if he only walked her to her car on his way out. Office gossip was terrible at the firm, and though relationships were tolerated among co-workers Darina still worried. He assured her it wouldn't be a problem. His supervisor liked him, and Sol took his job very seriously. He was confident an office fling wouldn't mar his perfect record.

He finished up with Andy quickly and headed to the front doors. Darina stood looking out the glass, with her back to him. He slowed down to admire the perfect view as long as possible before reaching her.

*How did I get so damned lucky?*

Placing a hand at the small of her back, he nudged her forward, ignoring the look she gave him over her shoulder. He was afraid if he looked into her cocoa eyes, he wouldn't be able to stop himself from pulling her into a kiss. His supervisor would overlook a lot of things, but kissing in the foyer wasn't one of them.

They stepped into the night air and walked to their cars in silence. Possessive jealousy coiled inside him, lingering from the episode on the



## Resignation

elevator. Unfortunately, he couldn't erase the image of Darina backed into a corner of the elevator, Marc standing angrily in front of her. He'd known she was on that elevator when he watched Marc step onto it from the third floor. Before he could even think about it, he was stepping around the desk and heading for the door. He knew exactly how long it would take to reach the ground floor. The moment the doors opened, he'd searched for her, almost afraid of what he would find.

Seeing Marc angry had been a relief. He knew the man wasn't the violent type, and Darina would never goad him into actually hitting her. What his overactive imagination kept telling him, as the seconds ticked by and the elevator doors remained closed, was quite different. Sol's fear had been of finding them in an embrace. Every time he looked at Darina's beautiful lips, he barely restrained himself from stealing a taste. He didn't know what he would've done if Marc felt the same way. One thing was for certain, Sol wouldn't have given a damn about his job.

*I would've beat the hell out of him without a second thought. Damn, I'm getting way too attached here.*

## Chapter Ten

Darina had sensed the shift in Sol's mood from the moment she'd turned her attention away from him to Marc. She wished she could undo whatever action upset him, but she had no clue what had set him off.

*Does he know I was trying to protect him?*

Marc could easily cost Sol his job—whispering negativity into Heather's ear out of spite—and there wouldn't be a damn thing either of them could do about it. Sol didn't seem exactly angry, but he certainly wasn't happy either. She would've given up chocolate for a year to be able to hear his thoughts as they walked out to the parking lot. Unfortunately no one was offering that deal, and Sol seemed so lost in thought she was surprised he remembered to open her door for her.

She mumbled her thanks and moved to slip into her car when he gently grabbed her arm stopping her. She turned to look at him and found herself pulled into his embrace, his warm lips capturing hers in a hungry kiss. He moaned with longing, and she echoed it as his tongue slid against hers, his embrace tightening. He pulled back and rested his forehead against hers, panting slightly.

"Darina, baby, I'm sorry if I upset you back there."

His apology confused her, but before she could question him, he turned her around and gently pushed her into the car. She went willingly, tucking herself in so he could close her door. He smiled at her through the window and

## Resignation

mouthed, "See you soon," before heading to his truck. She watched him walk away before putting on her seatbelt and turning the key in the ignition, still with no clue why he'd apologized.

*We have all night to straighten it out.*

~~~

Sol closed the door and locked it, then turned to find Darina facing him with a wary look on her face.

"Hey, baby. You okay?" he asked quietly, stepping toward her slowly with his hands stretched out as if she was a frightened animal.

He almost expected her to scurry away like one, or to yell at him for his possessive behavior in the foyer. He'd felt like a caveman but was completely helpless in the face of Marc's actions.

She bit her bottom lip and it took all of his control to keep from pulling her close enough to do the same. He stopped a breath away, leaving the final millimeter up to her. If she wasn't angry and wanted to be in his arms, he had them ready to receive her. Somehow he feared they were about to have their first official fight.

"Yeah, I'm okay. Why wouldn't I be?"

Sol heard something in her voice he couldn't quite place. He widened his stance and clasped his hands behind his back to keep from grabbing her. They needed to have this discussion without the distraction of sex.

"You seem upset. Did I make you mad when I interfered on the elevator?"

He saw the surprise on her face but didn't know if that was a good sign or not.

"Um, no, not exactly. I mean, I wasn't angry with you for interfering between me and Marc. I'm just worried about you losing your job. Remember I have something else lined up if I go off the deep end with him. You don't...do you?"

He smiled and shook his head. "No, baby, I don't."

“Well, see. You need to keep your temper with him, even if he is a complete dumbass.”

Sol chuckled and finally gave into the urge to pull her into his arms. He breathed in the scent of her hair and closed his eyes as she wrapped her slender arms around him. He squeezed her for a second, just to show her how much he enjoyed holding her, then pulled back to look into her eyes.

“I promise to keep my temper so I don’t lose my job. Okay?”

The smile she gifted him with lit up her face, robbing Sol of breath. He leaned down and kissed her, the last of his control finally slipping away.

*So beautiful. So perfect.*

“Why did you do it?” she asked as he drifted from her lips down to the side of her neck.

Consumed with rubbing his lips against her warm skin, Sol struggled to concentrate on her comment. “Do what, kitten?”

“Grab Marc like that on the elevator. How long had the doors been open?”

Sol ran both hands down her back to squeeze her ass. He loved filling each hand with one delectable cheek as he gently ground his cock against her.

“Only a second or two. But I couldn’t stand the thought of you on that elevator with him...alone.”

He let her digest that declaration as he kissed along her collarbone, bringing one hand forward to unbutton her blouse. She was holding onto his shoulders, not helping in any way, but not stopping him either. Sol tried not to worry.

“H-how did you know we were on the elevator together? Were you watching me on the monitors?”

“Yes. Every day for the past ten months, I’ve watched you round the corner to wait for the elevators at just a few minutes past five. Then I wait for what feels like an eternity to see you walk out of that metal box and come past my desk. I love it when you lose your name badge. That’s when I know I’ll get to speak to you both in the morning and the afternoon.”

## Resignation

She shivered as he pushed her blouse off her shoulders and pulled down a bra strap. Her nipple popped into view and he immediately devoured it, delighting in the moan that escaped her.

“Sol...I... Oh, I can’t think when you’re doing that.”

“Don’t think, baby. Just feel what I’m doing to you.”

Darina shivered again as Sol released the clasp on her bra in one swift move. He lavished the other nipple with the same rapt attention he’d given the first.

“Sol, you don’t have to worry about Marc. I don’t want him anymore, even if he decided he didn’t want Heather.”

“I don’t want to talk about Marc.”

“I...oh my God...I d-don’t either, but—”

“But nothing. Darina, baby, just relax and let me love you.”

Darina gasped at his use of the word love, but Sol kept going as if he hadn’t said anything earth shattering. He hadn’t meant to use that particular word, but this felt like so much more than just sex, and he’d be damned if he’d use any of the other crude analogies to name the magic between them.

*This is love. I’d be a fool to deny it.*

The groping reached another level, and Sol finally gave into the urge to lift Darina into his arms. He swiftly carried her up the stairs to her bed and gently placed her in the center. As he crawled over her, she ran her hands through his thick hair, pulling ever so slightly and making him shiver. He loved it when she played with his hair. Hell, he loved it when she played with his anything. Just having her hands on him was a pleasure he’d never expected in his lifetime.

*I’m so damn lucky.*

Sol ran his lips softly over her skin from neck to navel, causing the flesh to ripple in small bumps as his warm breath hissed out quiet endearments. He wanted to say all he felt out loud. He wanted to shout it from the rooftops, acknowledging to himself that he was falling in love with her. Sol paused over Darina’s belly button and let a smile spread across his face at the thought.

Yup, he was definitely falling in love with her. Would he be able to hide it from her?

*Do I truly want to?*

He mentally shook his head at the thought and finished licking his way down her writhing body. Darina's moans grew louder, making his cock harder by the heartbeat. He slipped a hand between her thighs and touched the moisture pooled between her lips, all for him. He smiled as he raised himself up to slip on a condom before aligning his rock hard erection with her soft, glistening pussy.

"Ready, kitten?"

"Yes. Oh, yes, Sol. Please, please, please."

Warmth blossomed in his chest at her words and the desire he heard in them. He slid into her in one solid thrust, closing his eyes as his balls pressed against her ass. He groaned in intense satisfaction as her body enclosed him in bliss, and opened his eyes as he rested his elbows on either side of her head.

"You don't have to beg me, baby, ever. Just tell me what you want, and I'll always give it to you, I promise."

Darina smiled mischievously at him, and his heart sped up in time with his thrusting hips.

"I want you on your back, Sol. Let me pleasure you."

Closing his eyes briefly, he fought for control after the image her words put in his head.

"Next time?"

He was too far gone to relinquish control now.

"Y-yes. Next time."

He pumped into her heat while he devoured her lips. He loved the mewling noises escaping unbidden from her as he nipped at her jaw and threaded his fingers through her hair. She was so beautiful, his emotions welled up, tenderness flooding him as he longed to have her in his arms endlessly. Shaking his head to dislodge that thought, he grabbed her thighs and pulled them over his hips for a better angle.

## Resignation

Darina thrashed her head back and forth on the pillow, her brown curls cascading around her head.

Sol groaned as his climax came rushing forth, trying to hold off as long as possible. He continued thrusting and pressed his thumb on Darina's glistening clit. She moaned in approval and bucked her hips harder. Sol moved his finger slow and steady, somehow in a calmer rhythm than his hips. Within heartbeats, Darina screamed his name as her juices washed over his cock.

"God, baby," he growled, coming hard enough to see stars.

He peered down at her face, smiling at the dazed look in her eyes.

## Chapter Eleven

Darina woke shivering with cold and reached her hand out to find emptiness beside her. She immediately turned to see Sol gone and the morning sunlight spilling between the blinds. Dropping her head back onto the pillow, she sighed in frustration. Sol's absence echoed through the room, surprising her with a deep sense of unease. Her stomach fluttered in nervousness and her heart rate sped up. Confusion filled her as she truthfully tried to examine her feelings for Sol.

*Why can't I seem to be truthful with myself?*

She closed her eyes and imagined his touch, his kisses, his scent, the sound of his voice. All of those warmed her inside and out and she was suddenly starved for him. Had she ever fallen for a guy so quickly?

*No. Not even Marc made me crave him like this after so short a time.*

She tried to remember what it had been like to be touched by Marc but couldn't. Sol now consumed her thoughts and her heart. She smiled.

"That look isn't for me, is it?"

Startled, Darina sat up and yanked the sheet to her chin.

"Marc! What the hell are you doing here? How did you even get in?"

His eyes roamed over her body, head to toe, and he took his time answering as he leaned back against the closed bedroom door.

"Remember how I lost the key you gave me a few months back? I found it last week in my gym bag. Just thought I should return it to you."



## Resignation

Darina stood slowly, careful to wrap the sheet around her body completely. Anger flashed across her face as she took a step toward him.

“Good. Give it to me.”

A look she’d never seen appeared on Marc’s face and turned into what she could only think of as an evil smile.

“Be careful what you ask for, sweetheart. You just might get it.”

*Oh, shit.*

Darina dropped her hand and took a step back. The nightstand pressed against her lower back. She nonchalantly reached a hand back and found her cell phone, pressing the button programmed to call Sol.

“That’s not funny, Marc. I want you to give me my key then turn around and leave.”

He uncrossed his arms and straightened to his full height, towering over her even at a distance. Darina fought the panic building inside, the Marc she knew would never physically hurt her.

*But that Marc never would’ve cheated on me either.*

“Just thought I’d drop in to check on you, sweetheart. I knew you’d be all alone on what should’ve been the beginning of our wedding weekend, and I wanted to make sure you’re okay.”

His face didn’t match his words or the concerned tone of his voice. He looked angry, and Darina tried to imagine the image she presented to him in the harsh morning light. Her rumpled bed and the love bites still stinging her skin stood as a testament to the fact that she’d spent the night with her lover. She didn’t know how much was obvious or what he might make of it, but Marc seemed to be staring at her too intently for a man who no longer wanted her.

“I’m fine. I need to get dressed to go out. Just give me the key and go so I can get on with my day.”

“Where are you going?”

“It’s none of your damn business where I’m going. You need to leave—”

“So you can be with him? Where is your precious security guard this morning, Darina? He sure as hell isn’t at work. I made certain of that over an

hour ago.”

Everything in Darina froze and her panic turned to anger.

*You son of a bitch.*

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Marc chuckled and took the few remaining steps toward her, crowding her against the nightstand.

“It seems we no longer have a need for two daytime guards. You know how it is, sweetheart, with the way the economy is right now, layoffs are a fact of life.”

“You bastard,” she whispered, as she pressed the speaker button on her phone.

“I might be a bastard, but at least I’m a man worthy of you. What the hell were you thinking fucking security? I really thought you were better than that.”

“Oh I don’t know, Marc. Seems I’ll fuck just about anything seeing as I fucked you for two years.”

“Bitch,” he hissed between clenched teeth as he grabbed her upper arms violently.

“Let go! You’re hurting me!”

“You think this is pain? What do you think I felt when I saw you touch him, huh?”

“It shouldn’t matter, you son of a bitch. You’re with Heather now, not me.”

“Heather is nothing but a means to an end, Darina. It’s you I want. You’re what I’ve always wanted. You just couldn’t wait for me to make it to the top and come back for you, could you? You just had to start fucking around with someone else.”

He began to shake her, causing the phone to fall from her hand and hit the ground. Darina prayed Sol had answered and could hear the trouble she was in. This was a side to Marc she’d never seen, never suspected existed. She had no idea how to get out of this on her own. The sheet she held in a

## Resignation

death grip by one fist began to loosen, and Darina used her other hand to push against Marc's chest.

"You're hurting me. Marc, let go!"

His grip tightened, bruising her flesh, and she opened her mouth to scream. Just as she took in a deep breath, he suddenly lifted her and tossed her onto the bed. The impact knocked the air out of her, and she fought to breathe.

"All I wanted was to be successful, Darina, to show you I could make it to the top. Girls like Heather never stick around for long anyway. She would've gotten sick of me eventually, but I wanted to be her father's right hand man before that happened."

Darina scooted to the other side of the bed, as far away from Marc as she could get. He approached the bed slowly, unbuckling his belt on the way. Finally able to draw in enough air, she gasped as she began to shake her head.

"You're insane. How could you think I would ever take you back after you cheated on me?"

Marc removed his belt and pulled his shirt from his pants. He stopped at the side of the bed and toed off his shoes, still watching her.

"You love me, Darina. We had two good years together. I know you hate to be alone. If I came back to you with an apology on my lips, I knew you'd take me back."

She shook her head more adamantly and gripped the sheet tighter.

*Oh God, he's insane.*

"No. Never, you asshole. I would never trust you again and nothing you could say would change that."

Marc's face flushed crimson with anger before he yanked his shirt off and dropped it on the floor.

"Perhaps not, so what do you say I fuck you one last time then?"

Darina opened her mouth to scream as Marc placed a knee on the bed. Before he could move toward her, a hand grabbed his shoulder, pulling him violently away from the bed. He fell back against a wall as Sol stood between

Marc and the bed.

“You.”

Darina heard the venom in Marc’s voice and couldn’t help but shiver. She wanted to burst into tears of relief, but fought to remain calm until this was over.

“What the hell are you doing here, Marc? You aren’t welcome here anymore,” Sol replied calmly.

Marc laughed, and it sounded bitter and angry. Darina wanted to cry at the strange sound coming from the man she thought she knew so well.

“That isn’t for you to say, security guard. Oh, wait, you’re not even that anymore are you?”

“Oh, I don’t know. There’s always a job waiting for men who are hard working and...honest.”

Marc chuckled and tightened his hands into fists.

“I don’t know what you think you heard, security man, but what’s going on between me and Darina is none of your business.”

“There’s nothing between us—”

“Shut up, Darina. You don’t know what you’re saying. As soon as I get this garbage out of here, we’ll straighten things out between us, sweetheart. I promise.”

“You sure are good at making promises aren’t you, Marc? Just really bad at keeping them.”

All eyes turned to the new voice in the room, just as Heather walked through the door.

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Sol’s anger began to recede slightly as Marc seemed to realize what had just happened. Heather had heard everything, just as she’d heard everything from Sol’s phone while they stood in her office. He’d been trying to get his job back when Darina’s call came through. Heather had been more than willing to listen in when he told her who was on the other end.

## Resignation

“Heather, honey, what are you doing here?”

The look she gave Marc should have made him burst into flame. He simply paled and took a step back, looking down at himself as if suddenly realizing the picture he made. Sol was furiously clenching his fists, but knew his main concern needed to be for Darina. He glanced behind him to find her still on the bed, watching Marc warily.

“You need to leave,” Sol said to Marc.

Marc looked like he might argue until Heather abruptly walked out the door. He immediately grabbed his shirt, shoes and belt and pursued her. Sol followed them out of the room to make certain they left and found Heather holding the door open with Marc already walking out. She looked at Sol, and he noted the pain in her watery eyes. For a heartbeat, he pitied her, but then he remembered that same pain in Darina’s eyes at Heather’s hand and a grim satisfaction filled him.

*Karma is a bitch.*

“You’ll be expected back at work next week, Sol. Enjoy your vacation.”

He raised an eyebrow but said nothing as Heather followed Marc out the door, closing it silently behind her.

Sol took a deep breath and ran his hands over his face, trying to calm his nerves before facing Darina. He locked the door and slowly walked back toward the bedroom. He couldn’t imagine what was going through her head right now, but the last thing he wanted was to scare her further.

*I should’ve fucking hit him.*

“Sol?”

He cringed at the pain filled sound of her voice, more whimper than anything. Her voice trembled with uncertainty, and that had him rushing back to her side.

“I’m here, baby. I’m here.”

He reached for her, and she flung herself into his arms, nearly making him stagger as she gripped him tightly. He held her shaking body and sat on the bed, positioning her in his lap like a child as he cradled her to his chest.

She was sobbing violently, and anger surged within him all over again.

*I should've fucking hit him repeatedly.*

“Oh, kitten, don’t cry. I swear I’ll never let him near you again.”

“I’m s-sorry. I didn’t know he had a key. I swear I didn’t let him in, I swear—”

“Oh, baby, you think I blame you?” Sol pulled back just far enough to look into Darina’s tear-filled eyes as he lifted her chin with one hand. “Baby, I heard everything that son of a bitch said to you. I know exactly what happened, and I swear I’m having your locks changed first thing in the morning.”

Darina’s laugh turned into a sob, and he pulled her back to his chest. He let her cry away her fear as he rubbed slow circles on her back with one hand, gripping her tightly with the other.

*I’m never letting you go.*

A few minutes later, she’d calmed down enough to speak and relayed the whole story. From the moment she woke, to the moment Sol walked in, she repeated every second of her harrowing experience. Sol hated to make her relive it, but she seemed to need to get the whole story out into the open. Gripping his shirt in her small fists, she repeated the words Marc said to her still trembling slightly.

“Is it true? Did he really get you fired?” she asked, biting her lower lip in concern.

Sol ran a hand through her hair before wiping the last of her tears from her eyes. He leaned forward and kissed her gently on the lips.

“Yes. When I arrived, I was told to gather my belongings. But just before she left, Heather told me I still have a job.”

Darina let out a sigh of relief and leaned into him.

“I’d never forgive myself for getting you fired.”

Sol laughed humorlessly. “It wasn’t you at all, baby. It was Marc. Luckily that dumbass is in too much trouble now to have time for either of us.”  
“I hope.”

## Resignation

“He didn’t hand over that key did he?”

Darina looked startled for a moment.

“No, he didn’t. Oh, my God, I just wasn’t even thinking about it there at the end.”

Sol hated the look of fear in her eyes. No way in hell would he let Marc hurt her.

“Pack a bag, baby. You’re staying at my place for a few days until we can get the locks changed and find out what’s going on with him back at work.”

She looked surprised by the offer and perhaps a little uncertain. Sol tried not to worry. He would protect her no matter who tried to stop him...even Darina herself.

“Um, okay. Are you sure you don’t mind? I mean, I can get a hotel room or something. I don’t want to intrude.”

Sol gave her a look of annoyance before his eyes were drawn to the tempting lip she held clamped between her teeth.

“I’ll be spending the entire weekend with you either way. It’s your call on which bed we sleep in.”

A smile finally lit her face and chased away the chill he’d felt since answering the phone to hear Marc’s voice.

“Okay, if you insist.”

“I most certainly do, kitten. I can come back tonight and change the locks or do it first thing in the morning. Whatever makes you happy.”

Darina sighed and smiled wanly before leaning into his chest again.

“You do, Sol. You make me happy. This could’ve been one of the worst days of my life, but with you it’s going to be so much better.”

Sol wondered if she heard his heartbeat speed up beneath her head as he squeezed her tightly. Marc’s threat brought home the depth of his feelings for her and pushed away the doubts. Now there was no way he would give her up without a fight.

*Nothing will make me give you up...nothing.*

## Chapter Twelve

Darina forced a smile to her lips and tried to feign interest as Sol's mother recited her popular recipe for the stuffed grape leaves they'd had for dinner. Though all of the women in the kitchen seemed riveted by the exotic blend of ingredients, Darina could care less. She was a little annoyed at being relegated to the kitchen as the women cleared up the dinner dishes but had to admit it did make her feel accepted by them. Sol's mother and sisters were easy to like. Quick to laugh and willing to hug a perfect stranger, they took her in like a long lost cousin as soon as Sol walked in with her. She'd tried to remain silent during the meal out of fear of saying the wrong thing. Sol had introduced her as his friend and kept his arm on the back of her chair. She didn't protest, and the women took that to heart. Now, she was afraid they might start planning a wedding soon.

"Darina, honey, where did you meet my baby, Sol?"

Darina startled at the sound of her name from Sol's mother as the question interrupted her musings. She looked up to find every feminine eye in the kitchen on her.

"Oh, uh, we work in the same building, Mrs. Canova."

She tried not to grimace at the squeaking sound of her voice and prayed they couldn't hear her nervousness.

"Oh? The building where he works security?"

This came from his sister, Hanna, a short woman with dark brown hair.



## Resignation

She resembled Sol more than his other two sisters.

“Um, yes. I work there too. I’ve known him for a few months.”

Sol’s three sisters shared a look Darina couldn’t decipher, and his mother cleared her throat.

“Well, he seems to really like that job. What do you do there?” his mother asked.

“I manage the accounting department.”

The other women tittered over that as if it moved Darina a step up in their eyes. She looked around and realized they all appeared to be homemakers. Sol had said his mother did a lot of volunteer work and was supported by his brother who lived with her. One of his sisters was in her last year of high school but the other two were married.

“Well, that’s very interesting,” Hanna said slyly.

“Yes, you must be a very smart girl,” her mother added.

Heat stung Darina’s cheeks and she took a drink of iced tea to hide her burning face, a little overwhelmed by their attention. Parched throat and sweaty hands aside, she thought she was hiding her nervousness quite well. When Sol suggested this dinner, she’d been horrified at the thought of meeting his family so soon, but didn’t voice her concerns. Keeping Sol was becoming more appealing with each passing minute, and she refused to jeopardize her chances.

“Mother, she’s a woman not a girl,” piped in Korina before turning her attention to Darina. “And I want to know how serious you are about Sol.”

Darina turned to face Sol’s youngest sister. At five-five, Korina was the tallest woman in his family, and seemingly the most outspoken. She’d begun interrogating Darina at dinner, but Sol told her to mind her own business before playfully throwing a dinner roll at her.

“We just started...seeing each other. But I think he’s really great.”

Darina bit her lip nervously, hoping they hadn’t noticed her pause while she mentally filled in the blank as the past weekend of sex flittered through her mind.

“Oh yeah, he is really great. He’s the greatest brother a girl could ever have, and I’ll bet he’d make a great husband, too.”

Darina choked on her tea, coughing into her hand just as Sol entered the kitchen. His gaze immediately settled on her, and he was by her side in a heartbeat.

“Hey, you okay, sweetheart? Mom what are you letting them do to her in here?”

He began rubbing one of his large, warm hands in circles on her back as Darina tried to breathe normally.

*Oh, my.*

“Korina said the ‘h’ word. She’ll be okay.”

Sol looked over at his oldest sister, Melina, sliding his arm around Darina’s waist and pulling against his side.

“The ‘h’ word?” he asked.

Darina nearly choked again at the confused look on his face and cleared her throat.

“It’s nothing. I’m fine.”

“Does she mean hell? Cause, honey, I know I’ve said worse around you.”

All of the women burst into peals of laughter, and Darina’s cheeks warmed into a blush. She laughed too, placing a hand on Sol’s chest without a thought. He settled his hand on hers and moved it over his heart. Darina noticed his mother watching from the corner of her eye and tried to pull her hand away. When Sol frowned down at her, she instantly regretted the action.

“Really, baby, what’s wrong? Do we need to leave?”

Shocked, Darina opened her mouth, but no words came out. She couldn’t believe he would leave his family early to ease her discomfort.

*He really cares about me.*

“No. I’m okay. I don’t want to go yet.”

He studied her intensely for another heartbeat before nodding in acceptance.

“Okay. So long as you’re sure. We can leave whenever you want.”

## Resignation

Darina sighed as Sol lifted her hand to his mouth, kissing her knuckles with a slow sweep of his warm lips. She sensed the other women watching even as they spoke amongst themselves, but it didn't bother her. Sol's generous smile caused a flutter in her stomach. After so much loneliness and confusion, everything finally seemed right in her world.

*How can I possibly give him up?*

~ ~ ~

Sol knew his mom watched every move he made around Darina, and he fought not to laugh. He'd never brought a woman home for their monthly Saturday gathering before, and the women in his family were having a field day. He didn't know how much longer he had before they broke out the baby pictures, but he wanted to get Darina alone before they scared her away.

They'd moved from the kitchen to the living room, and his two older sisters had gone home. Dinner was superb as usual, and Sol felt better than ever, a soul deep contentment settling in as Darina sat beside him on his mother's sofa. His brother, Hektor, sat in what had been their father's favorite recliner before he passed away, Sol's baby sister on the floor at his feet. Their mother was telling Darina a story about Sol as a child, and he watched the play of expressions on her lovely face. He couldn't get enough of her. His chest grew tight as he sat with his arm lying comfortably across her shoulders, her feminine laugh tickling his ear.

*This is what every Saturday should be like.*

"We should go, mom. It's getting late."

"Aww, Sol, don't go yet. I didn't get to tell Darina any embarrassing stories about you," Korina whined.

Smiling, Sol shook his head in amusement as he rose from the sofa, tugging Darina up with him. His mother and sister hugged her before hugging him, which he took as a sign of their approval. He slapped his brother on the back and kissed his mom on the cheek.

"I'll call you later, mom. We're heading out of town together so it might

be a couple of days. Don't worry, I'll have my cell phone on me."

Darina glanced at him with a questioning look, but he ignored it. All three of his family members wore similar expressions of curiosity, making him want to laugh. He just waved and ushered Darina toward the door, guiding her with a hand on her lower back. He loved to touch her every chance he got, and being at his mom's house for most of the day had nearly killed him. Soon he'd be able to take her home and have her naked again. Sweat beaded on his brow and his jeans grew tight just thinking about it.

*Just a little longer.*

They drove to his house in near silence. She made a few comments about his family, all positive, and he was relieved by her acceptance of them. Darina never spoke of having family nearby, and he'd refrained from prying, but now his curiosity got the better of him.

"Kitten?"

"Hmm?"

"Do you have anyone in the city? Any family?"

She turned away to look out the window, and he thought she wasn't going to answer. Then she cleared her throat, and he heard her take a deep breath. He instantly regretted his question and opened his mouth to take it back when she spoke.

"My father left us when I was five and died a couple of years later. My mom died when I was eighteen. I was an only child and neither of my parents ever spoke of family. But my mom wasn't a very good person, so I think her parents disowned her or something. I've never looked for them."

*She's been all alone.*

Sol didn't know what to say as he pulled into his parking space. He got out of the car and opened Darina's door for her, still trying to think of how to take away the pain in her eyes. She stood silently watching as he pulled her bag from the trunk.

"Do you want to find out if you have family?" he finally asked.

She bit her lip, and he gently turned her toward his door. It was times

## Resignation

like this that he was grateful for his first floor apartment, with his door only a few steps from the parking lot. He quickly ushered her inside and locked the door, letting out a relieved breath once again to have her in his home, his space.

“I don’t know,” she answered quietly. “I mean...I would like to know if I still have family, but what if they... What if they don’t want to know me?”

Sol placed her bag on the floor and walked over to where she’d hopped up onto a barstool, part of his bachelor décor. He put a hand on the counter behind her, pinning her in place as he gazed into her eyes. He hoped she’d be able to read the sincerity in his expression as he spoke from his heart.

“Darina, any one of them would be damned lucky to know you. You are an intelligent, funny, warm, caring and sexy woman. I can’t think of anyone I can even compare you to because you’d blow them all away.”

She blushed at his praise and looked down at their feet.

“I think your opinion is a little biased,” she muttered with a little laugh.

Sol gently gripped her chin in his fingers and tilted her head back up.

“No, baby, it’s not. Even before I ever saw you naked, I felt this way. I know I’m the luckiest man on earth because you want to spend time with me.” She smiled, but it didn’t quite reach her eyes. Sol barely suppressed a growl of frustration. “I was going to make it a surprise, but I guess I may as well tell you where we’re headed tomorrow.”

She raised a brow in question but didn’t say anything about the change of subject.

“I was wondering when I heard you mention it to your mother.”

She tried to give him a stern look in reprimand, but he diminished it with a quick kiss on her nose.

“I’ve made reservations for us at a bed and breakfast up in the hill country. You and I are going to take a Texas road trip for a few days and forget about everyone else.”

“Oh, Sol.” He barely caught her as she unexpectedly jumped off the stool and into his arms. He hugged her tightly. “You’ve already given me more than

you can imagine. I never thought I'd be happy again after Marc, but you keep proving me wrong."

She leaned back and looked up into his face, the love in her eyes shocking him to his core. He thought maybe he was projecting and only seeing what he was so desperate for, but then she grasped his face in both hands and kissed him.

"Darina, sweetheart—"

"Sol, I know you only wanted this to be temporary, and I can respect that. I mean it's been fun and we barely know each other, but I feel so much for you already. I just want you to know that I really care about you."

Elation sped through him at her confession. He hugged her tighter, lifting her off her feet and swinging her in circle. She gasped as he set her back down, but he refused to let her go.

"Darina, you have no idea how good it is to hear you say that. I never really wanted temporary, kitten. I just didn't want to scare you away."

"R-really?"

The look she gave him said so much, he couldn't help the words that slipped out of his mouth. "I love you, Darina Tanner. I've loved you for months."

Sol couldn't believe he'd said it, and from the look on Darina's face, he guessed she couldn't either. For a second, he considered taking it back and telling her he was just kidding.

*God, I hope I didn't just fuck this up.*

He didn't expect her to believe that, but his breaking heart told him he needed some form of self-preservation quickly. He slowly released her and opened his mouth to apologize when Darina burst into tears and threw her arms around him.

~ ~ ~

"Sol, I-I love you too."

Darina knew she was making a fool of herself, but she couldn't seem to

## Resignation

stop. Relief had sunk into her bones at his announcement, making her giddy with emotion. She clung to him with all of her strength, his tension seeming to ease at her words. She'd hurt him by hesitating, and she felt terrible about it, but she'd been so afraid. Intellectually, she knew Sol was nothing like Marc. Now she just had to convince her heart.

"Don't cry, baby. Please, please, don't cry."

She sniffled and tried to compose herself, keeping her face averted from Sol's probing gaze.

"I'm sorry. I just wasn't expecting you to say that. I'd hoped of course, but hadn't really expected it."

"I was afraid it was too soon."

Darina looked up into his worried expression and smiled through her tears.

"It probably is, but we have all the time in the world to work on it."

Sol chuckled. "Yeah, we do."

"When I get back from vacation, I'm turning in my resignation. No one will be able to complain about us working together in any capacity."

"The only one who might do that is Marc, and I think he has enough of his own problems right now."

Darina let out a short laugh.

"Yeah, he definitely does. I just want to make a clean break, Sol. Besides, the new job will be closer to your place."

"Hmm, I definitely like the sound of that."

He gently rubbed her back with his large hands, and Darina sighed in contentment.

"I guess there won't be any more office sex then," she said with a giggle.

"Once we no longer work together, absolutely not."

She laughed louder at his stern declaration, surprised she wasn't glowing with the happiness radiating from her.

"And to think I was so sure my vacation would be terrible this year."

Sol squeezed her tighter. "Not if I can help it, kitten. You deserve the

very best of everything, and I'm going to spend all of my free time giving it to you."

"I think I like the sound of that."

"Me too," he replied, before kissing her senseless.

They came up for air and the hunger in Sol's eyes sent a shiver up her spine. She bit her lip but he dived in and took over, sucking her bottom lip between his teeth. The gentle tugging shot lust through her body and she whimpered in surrender. He took that as his cue to pull off her clothes and within moments, she stood naked before his heated gaze.

"So fucking perfect."

Gasping for breath, Darina's heartbeat raced as Sol slowly removed his clothes. His sinuous grace enhanced his movements, while Darina tried to see every detail. He stepped in, crowding her against the counter as she slid back onto the barstool. Without a word, he dropped to his knees, and Darina flashed back to their first moments together.

"Sol," she whispered.

He licked a line up her thigh that burned in sweet ecstasy. Her breath caught and she gripped the stool until her knuckles turned white.

"I'll never grow tired of your taste, your scent, the sounds you make. Everything you do, baby, makes me burn."

She opened her mouth to reply but all that came out was a moan as he swiped his tongue slowly through her curls. He found her clit easily, hard and throbbing in readiness for a long overdue orgasm. Sol wasted no time taking her to the edge of climax as he pushed his tongue into her slick cunt. Darina called out his name, barely coherent through her whimpering mewls. Unable to help herself, she moved her hips forward, pushing her quivering flesh into his mouth.

"Mmmm."

The vibration of his voice against her skin started a tidal wave as she peaked. Darina screamed and he gripped her thighs tightly to keep them open while he suckled her clit.



## Resignation

“Oh, stop! It’s too much. Too much, Sol.”

With a growl, he reached up and gripped her hips, pulling her off the stool and into his lap. Darina barely registered the movement before he impaled her on his stiffened cock, gliding between her sleek walls without hesitation.

“I love you, Darina.”

She grabbed his shoulders as he used his grip on her hips to move her up and down. It didn’t take long for her to join the effort and use her legs to thrust against him.

“Love...you...too.”

His skin gliding against hers, his moans in her ears, the scent and taste of his skin in her mouth elevated Darina to a place she’d never expected to find. She came a second time hard and fast, taking Sol over the edge with her. His seed filled her as he thrust his tongue into her mouth, gripping the nape of her neck in one large hand. The kiss ended, and he leaned his forehead against hers as they both tried to catch their breath.

“Baby, I forgot—”

“Sol, we didn’t—”

They both stopped to let the other finish, wearing identical looks of caution.

“A condom. I know better than to be so out of control. I didn’t stop for a condom.”

Darina smiled and smoothed away his wrinkled frown with a shaky finger.

“Don’t worry. I know I’m protected and clean.”

He let out a relieved breath.

“I swear this is the only time I’ve done that. Only with you.”

She kissed his nose and ran her fingers through his hair.

“I wasn’t worried.”

“No?”

“No. I trust you, Sol, with my body and my heart.”

He kissed her hard before rising to his feet with her still in his arms. Darina wrapped her legs around his waist and held on as he slowly walked to his bedroom.

“You’ll never have to worry about either, kitten. I plan to take care of both for a very long time.”

Waves of contentment washed through her at the promise in his eyes, and she hugged him tightly, never wanting to let go.

*What a perfect start to my vacation.*

# **Missy Jane**

## **Author**

Ms. Missy Jane is the alter ego of a Texas mother of four who has been married to the same wonderful man for thirteen years. About five years ago Missy finished reading a book by Mercedes Lackey and thought "Now, what if..." and a monster was created.

Missy now spends most of her time lost in worlds of her own making alternately loving and hating such creatures as vampires, shape-shifters and gargoyles (to name a few). When not writing, she spends her time reading, taking photos of her beautiful daughters and training her husband to believe she's always right.

Excerpts from Missy's work can be found at [www.msmissyjane.com](http://www.msmissyjane.com).



Enjoy this sneak peek at [The Path to Freedom](#) from Sapphire Blue Publishing...

## Chapter One

It was one hundred and four degrees in the shade, and the Algerian sun was taking no prisoners. Vince was soaked in his own sweat and anxious to get out of this place and into a nice dark bar somewhere. Something about this extraction made him itch.

His gut told him something was off.

Vince couldn't understand why he hadn't heard from Chris yet. Chris was a communications expert. The only time he was ever quiet was when there was bad news. Vince adjusted his radio earpiece and checked his ammunition one more time. Crouching behind a gardener's shed wasn't the most comfortable position he'd ever been in, but he'd set up ambushes in worse places.

"Chris, I know you're four miles away, sitting in front of a radio console, in an air conditioned room but we could use some communications out here. Do you have radio contact with Dana? She knows we're here, right?"

"Jesus, boss. You're not gonna believe this. She's telling him."

Despite the heat, Vince's blood turned to ice. If Dana blew her cover, the whole mission would be scrapped and they'd never get her out without a firefight. "Say again?"

"Her radio works fine." Chris let out a deep sigh that came through loud and clear on the radio. "She's ignoring my communications. She told him. She fucking told Carlos!"

Vince heard the confusion in Chris' voice. Years in Force Recon taught him to keep a cool head when everything went sideways. "Okay, boys, change in plans. Drug dealers aren't known for their compassion. We gotta get her the hell out of there before they kill her...or worse."

“They’re moving,” Jason’s voice came over the radio as a whisper.

Vince knew Jason would have a clear shot at the chopper on the helipad from his position on the beach, just out of the sightline from the glass front of Carlos’ mansion. He took a mental inventory of Jason’s gear. The M-60 machine gun would do some serious damage and the Stinger missile launcher was a last resort.

Vince watched as Dana and Carlos left the mansion, arm in arm, and walked toward the helipad. “Damnit, she’s right next to Carlos. I can’t get the shot. Can anybody take out Carlos? Jason?”

Jason’s cool, confident voice came through on Vince’s earpiece. “I can take Carlos out easy, but a 7.62 is gonna go through Dana, too. That’s the smallest round I’m packin’ today, Major.”

Vince knew Brian was positioned behind a well, ten yards to his right, between the gardener’s shed and the house. “We need to try to get her out of there alive. You got a clear shot, Brian?”

Brian’s voice came back over the radio. “Negative, Vince. I’ve got bodyguards in the way.”

*Shit!* What the hell was Dana thinking? Did she honestly believe a drug dealer would fall in love with a CIA agent? Did Dana really think Carlos would let her live after being told she had shared his secrets with the CIA for the past three months?

Vince checked the magazine in his machine gun and then the handgun on his left hip. “Okay, Chris. If she’s still listening, tell her to stay out of the way. Carlos needs to be taken out with or without her help. If we don’t get the shot now, they’re going to take her up in that chopper and we all know she’ll be dumped before they land.”

Vince watched Dana carefully for the slightest opening to shoot Carlos.

Vince’s team had been tracking Carlos for months before they managed to plant Dana undercover as his lover. Dana had been in deep cover with Carlos for three months now. The team finally had the information they needed about how Al Qaeda had raised their most recent infusion of cash.

Vince and the rest of the team were here to pull Dana out and clean up the bad guys.

Now the stupid bitch had gone too far and fallen in love with the guy.

*What does she think, they'll fly off into the sunset together?*

His gut had told him she'd never complete the mission, but she had all the training with high scores so the Agency green-lighted her.

Chris had briefed Dana on where the team would be set up so she could get away from Carlos safely.

Vince expected her to duck and cover but she stopped on her way to the chopper with Carlos and turned directly toward Vince's position. She yelled to be heard over the noisy coastline. "Don't do it, Vince! I'm going with him. I don't want to go back."

Too many years as a U.S. Marine gave a man certain instincts. The hairs on the back of Vince's neck stood up. He knew this operation was going to end ugly.

Carlos smirked and held Dana as close to him as possible.

*It ain't love, honey. You're a hostage now and everybody knows it but you.*

Jesus! How could the agency hire such a fool?

*I should have followed my gut when I met her. She was wrong for the mission.*

No time for regrets now.

Carlos' bodyguards opened fire on the gardener's shack that Vince was crouched behind. The dry wooden walls offered no cover. Splinters flew at Vince but he felt nothing but the adrenaline powering through his body. His senses heightened. He could smell the gunpowder in the air and heard the *buzz* of each bullet that flew past him. His eyes focused only on the enemy. His body responded the way it had been trained to in combat. Steady hands returned fire with his Mac-10 as he instinctively rolled away from the shack and just below the ridgeline where he had more cover but could still see Dana and Carlos. The air was thick with dust and bullets as Vince's team, set up in

a semi-circle around Carlos' complex, rained hell on Carlos' bodyguards, who returned as much fire as they could.

Vince slapped his left hand over his combination earpiece and microphone to block out the noise from bullets overhead and ricocheting rocks. "She's getting on the chopper! Somebody kill that son of a bitch now!"

An audible *pop* rang out and one of Carlos' bodyguards dropped like a wet rag. A second crumpled to the ground as Carlos dashed into the chopper, pulling Dana with him.

Another bodyguard dropped. Brian was taking out whoever he could.

"Take the rotor, Jason! Take it out before it climbs." They couldn't let Carlos escape.

The familiar *dug-dug-dug* of Jason's M-60 was all the response Vince needed. He'd seen Jason hit running rabbits with that gun, but somehow the chopper lifted off the ground in spite of the hundreds of bullets assaulting its most vulnerable parts.

The decision had been made. Vince couldn't change the course of history now. "Carlos will torture her for whatever he can get and then finish her. We can't get her back, boys." Vince passed his hand over his clean-shaven head. "Jason, finish it."

The sand in the center of the compound swirled as the chopper rose into the clear azure sky.

*What's going on in there?*

Vince's gut dropped into his boots as Dana's familiar form fell from the chopper. While she flailed in mid-air, a stinger missile hissed toward the helicopter.

Dana landed fifty feet from the beach and hit the water like a stone. Hitting the sea from that height would be the same as hitting concrete, and every bone in her body would be crushed.

*Oh, Jesus Christ.*

The Stinger missile sliced the chopper in two. Both pieces fell in flames on top of Dana's broken body.



Vince closed his eyes and let out a disappointed sigh. The sweet smell of burnt fuel from the chopper, gunpowder and salt mixed to seal yet another combat memory in Vince's mind. Yes, they found the information they needed on Al Qaeda and Carlos was out of the picture, but they'd lost an agent. Vince would need months to find a woman with enough training to replace her, and after this one's serious lack of good judgment, Vince wasn't too keen on going through the process again.

The next female they chose had to be tough as nails and cold as ice. They'd never find the right "swallow" for another Honey Pot mission.

Brian broke the radio's silence. "Hey, boss?"

"Yeah?" Vince dusted his cargo pants off. He noticed with surprise several wooden splinters had flown like tiny darts into his shoulder. He plucked the bloody bits of wood out of his right shoulder as one might remove lint from a sweater. He pulled his canteen from his belt to wash the tiny wounds, thought better of it and drank the water instead.

"Wasn't that chopper our extraction plan?"

"Yeah." Vince shook his head and stretched his legs for the walk into town.