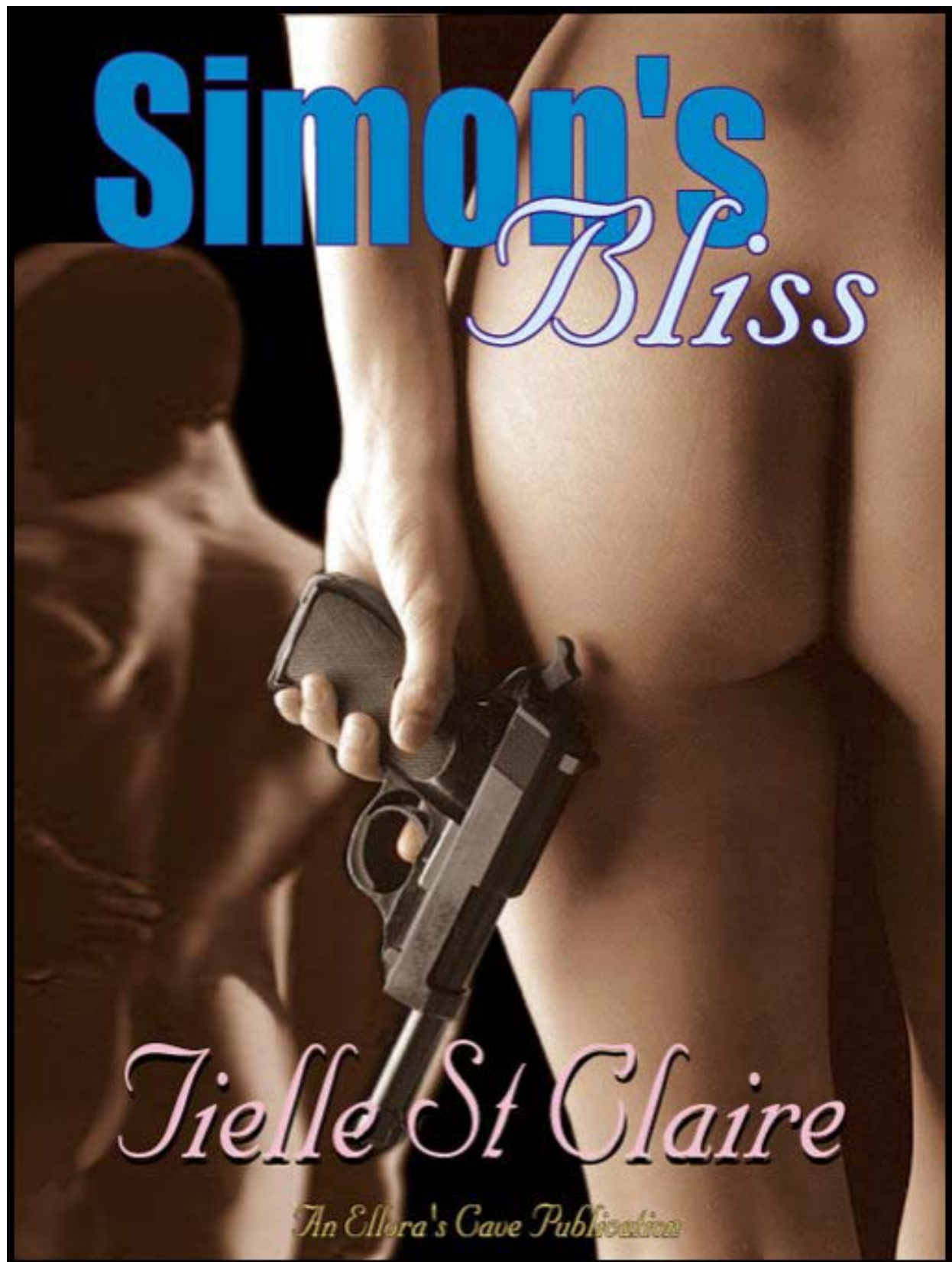




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## **SIMON'S BLISS**

**An Ellora's Cave publication written by**

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**MS Reader (LIT) ISBN # 1-84360-383-7**

**Mobipocket (PRC) ISBN # 1-84360-384-5**

**Other available formats (no ISBNs are assigned):**

**Adobe (PDF), Rocketbook (RB), & HTML**

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**Ellora's Cave Ltd, UK**

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**Warning:**

The following material contains strong sexual content meant for mature readers. SIMON'S BLISS has been rated NC17, erotic, by three individual reviewers. We strongly suggest storing this electronic file in a place where young readers not meant to view this ebook are unlikely to happen upon it. That said, enjoy...

## Chapter 1

Jocelyn Bliss stared at the woman lying face up on the carpet and released a heavy sigh.

"I'm getting *really* tired of looking at dead bodies," Jocelyn mumbled. She waited for Frank, her partner for a year and a half, to respond. When he didn't, she glanced his way without turning her head.

He shrugged. "I don't know what to tell you. You're a homicide detective."

"I know." Jocelyn sighed again but kept it quiet. It was all part of the job, but it never got any easier. The woman on the floor was dressed in a pale pink and silver nightgown, designed for seduction, not sleep. The bodice was made up of elegant, expensive-looking lace that fell away into waves of satin that would have reached the floor if she'd been standing. She looked like a perfect little doll—a broken doll.

Jocelyn shuddered. *Maybe it's time for a career change.* She blocked that thought and reviewed the scene. One shot to the chest. A gun lay on the floor next to the body.

"Victim's name?"

"Catarina Simons, wife of Zachary Simons."

Everyone knew the name of Zachary Simons. Businessman, entrepreneur, philanthropist. Jocelyn felt the muscles in the back of her neck tighten. Any case among the wealthy and powerful meant extra political crap she hated dealing with.

"Who found her?" she asked.

"Well, Mr. Simons is the one who called us."

Jocelyn raised one eyebrow. "Meaning, you don't think he found her like this?"

"Word has it she was soon to be his *ex*-wife. The divorce was getting very messy."

"Aren't they all?" She looked around the room. The forensics team was collecting bits and pieces from everywhere. It was going to be a long night. "Have you talked to him?"

"Just the basics when he let us in. Doesn't seem too upset to have found his wife dead. He's across the hall."

Jocelyn flashed Frank a false smile. "Isn't that nice? Let's go talk to him."

They walked into the entryway and stopped. Jocelyn took a deep breath and rolled her shoulders back. Then, calm and focused, she opened the door. The room was empty. No one sat on the delicate floral-print love seat or the matching high-backed chair. A barrage of lace curtains covered the windows, giving the room a fussy atmosphere that sent horrified shivers up Jocelyn's spine.

*Too much lace and too many printed flowers.*

Sudden commotion behind her held Jocelyn at the edge of the room. She turned in the doorway and watched.

"Please. Just let me pass," a tall, wiry man said to the uniformed cop stationed at the door. The request was a strange mixture of command and whine. "I'm a friend of the family," he insisted.

Something about the way he carried himself—the tone of his voice, the set of his shoulders—warned Jocelyn he would be the tenacious sort. *Interesting. The victim's husband has already called in reinforcements.*

"Let him in," she said to the officer. The man stalked into the house and planted himself in front of Jocelyn. "Can I help you?" she asked after a moment.

"I'm Mr. Simons' lawyer, Jonathan Street." Jocelyn shared a meaningful look with Frank. She didn't know why she was surprised. Zachary Simons probably didn't sneeze without legal advice. Still, it made it convenient. They could skip the "I demand to see my lawyer" theatrics so popular now on TV cop shows.

"What's happened?" the lawyer demanded. "Is everyone alright? Catarina just called me a few minutes ago," he announced.

Jocelyn's forehead wrinkled with her confusion.

"Catarina? But I thought Catarina was—" She stopped just short of saying it.

"Dead." The single, stark word came from behind her. Jocelyn spun around at the deep voice. "Yes, it would seem so."

She mentally filtered out the gasp and questions from the sputtering lawyer and Frank's calm replies. Her heart pounded a furious rhythm as she absorbed the image of the man in front of her. He stood beside the loveseat, a sharp contrast to the feminine decor around him. He was tall. Jocelyn had always considered herself more than tall enough at five-foot nine, but she had to look up at him. Her mind instantly formed the overall image, then narrowed down to specifics.

He wore black jeans and a crisp white button-down shirt. His broad chest rippled under the stark material as he reached up and brushed a stray lock of deep brown hair from his grim eyes. She skimmed her gaze down to the floor, taking in his strong thighs and lean legs, stopping at his feet, encased in black boots hidden beneath his pants. The woman inside the detective couldn't resist acknowledging the near-perfection of his form, and the strength and confidence with which he stood.

The whole survey took less than three seconds but his image was burned into her mind. She looked up to his face. He was waiting for her. Her green eyes met the raging blue in his and she lost herself, as if he'd reached into her soul and claimed it for his own. Breath locked in her throat, slivers of heat raced down her spine and pooled between her legs.

A captivating sensuality poured from his eyes as he watched her. It hovered just beneath his skin. This was a man who loved women and sex. She wanted him. Now. Hard.

A flutter of panic moved through her stomach. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Never like this. No one had ever stared at her with such instant lust before. He didn't need to speak—she knew. He wanted her. The image of being stretched out on the floor, naked, under his thrusting body formed in her mind. Fire flickered in his eyes

telling her he was thinking of a similar scene. Her nipples tightened under the lace of her bra. It was all she could do not to let her eyes fall to his crotch. She wanted, *needed*, to see if he was reacting physically to her, or if the lust was a trick of his eyes.

Sheer strength of will kept her from walking to him and wrapping her body around his. She squeezed her legs together to hold herself steady. The need between her thighs tightened. Tiny warnings in the back of her mind tried to assert themselves, but she ignored them.

"Jocelyn?" She heard Frank's call as background noise in her thoughts and ignored it. "Jocelyn." The voice was more insistent this time and accompanied by a tap on her shoulder.

She ripped her attention free and turned to her partner. Impatience, irritation, reprimand—they all marked Frank's face. How long had she stood there lusting after the primary suspect? It couldn't have been long, but it was enough.

Had Catarina Simons been lured by the fire in Zachary Simons' eyes? And when that fire had burned out—had he eliminated her?

Now, prepared for the impact of his gaze, Jocelyn looked back to the victim's husband. He slid a hand into his trouser pocket and settled into a casual pose that still carried strength and power in it. He owned the room. She looked into his eyes, bracing herself against the fire that had blazed so hot moments before.

It was gone. A stoic mask had settled on his face, the heat in his eyes covered over like a glass-shielded fireplace—making the fire pretty but with no warming effect.

The edge of his mouth curled up in an arrogant smile. She was still fighting the strange desire that had assaulted her—and he appeared perfectly calm.

Irritation electrified the hairs on the back of Jocelyn's neck. *He can just lock desire away without a second thought? I don't think so.*

"Mr. Simons?" Jocelyn asked, plotting a suitable revenge for his withdrawal. It had to be subtle. Something only he would see and something that could be misinterpreted if she got caught.



He nodded and offered his hand. "Zachary Simons." She placed her hand in his with a firm, professional grip. Rough calluses marked his palms. It was too easy to imagine his hands on her skin. Warmth sparkled between her legs. She met his eyes. Then for one brief moment, she glanced down, below his belt. Knowing he watched her, she trailed her tongue along the inside edge of her upper lip. His grip tightened compulsively on hers and the fire in his eyes sizzled again. *Perfect*. She dropped his hand and stepped back, ready to return to her role as a detective.

"I'm sorry for your loss, Mr. Simons," she began, ignoring the ache between her thighs. "I believe you've met my partner, Detective Carroll." Again the suspect nodded.

Think of him as *the suspect*, she commanded silently. "We need to ask you a few questions, Mr. Simons."

"Yes."

The low intimate sound of his voice swept over her body like a physical caress. She shivered. Jocelyn gave herself a mental shake. She had to get control of her hormones or she'd be busted down to traffic cop. If they let her stay on the force. One mistake was all you were allowed. And she'd had hers.

"When did you arrive home?" she asked, taking out her notebook and pen and regaining her professional demeanor.

"You mean, when did I arrive here?"

Jocelyn nodded.

Zachary looked at the clock on the wall. "About thirty-minutes ago."

She glanced at the clock and marked down the time he'd arrived—7:30 p.m.

"You don't live here then?"

"No. Catarina and I were getting divorced. I moved out about six months ago."

"Tell me you weren't renewing your *relationship* with her," the lawyer whined. "Zach, I warned you about that."

Jocelyn noted the comment—and the tensing of Zachary's jaw. *So, was Simons*

*sleeping with his soon to be ex-wife?* It wasn't unusual. Happened all the time. A warm familiar body when the stress got too much. *Or had one of the Simonses been trying to create a reconciliation?*

Zachary ignored his lawyer and continued to stare at Jocelyn. His eyes were flat and cold. All traces of the fire were gone. Was it because of his lawyer's question, or hers?

"Why *did* you come over here tonight, Mr. Simons?"

He rubbed his fingertips across his forehead and sighed. "Catarina called me. Said she wanted to talk about the settlement and didn't want to do it on the phone."

"We were getting very frustrated with the way the dissolution was proceeding," Jonathan interjected.

*Now that was interesting.* "How frustrated?" Jocelyn asked casually.

"Pretty frustrated. She was being completely unreasonable. She —"

"Thank you, Jonathan," Zachary interrupted. "I'm the one being questioned. Can we just get this over with?"

"What happened when you got here?"

Zachary quickly led them through the evening. He'd arrived at the house, found his wife on the floor, and called the police.

"Why didn't you call for an ambulance?"

"It was clear an ambulance wasn't going to help."

"Did you touch anything?" Frank asked.

"No."

"Take us through exactly what you did tonight. And be specific," Frank commanded.

For the first time since they'd started, Zachary looked away from her. Jocelyn sighed with relief to be out from under his watchful gaze.

Now she could observe him without caution.

Her mind was strangely divided—one side calmly listening to his answers, the other hearing his voice whisper of cool sheets and hot bodies. She glanced down at his thighs.

She had a thing for strong, powerful legs. Legs strong enough to hold up while he fucked her against a wall. It was a juvenile fantasy, she knew, but she loved the idea that a man wanted her so badly he was unwilling to wait. She drew breath in through her slightly opened mouth.

“Did you recognize the gun beside your wife’s body?”

Jocelyn snapped back to the present with Frank’s question.

Zachary nodded. “It looks like mine. I left it here when I moved out.”

Frank noted his answer then looked to her. Jocelyn nodded and closed her notebook. “Thank you for your time, Mr. Simons.” She was pleased her words came out clear and professional.

“Zach, do you want me to stay with you?” Street offered, placing a comforting hand on Simons’ shoulder.

Zachary shook his head and subtly shifted away from the other man’s touch. “I’ll be fine.”

The lawyer pursed his lips and nodded. “If you need anything, call me.”

Jocelyn watched the interaction between the two men. Jonathan Street seemed very comfortable around his client. Zachary didn’t reciprocate. It probably meant nothing, but Jocelyn filed it away for later. Nothing could be ruled out at this point.

“We’ll finish up here shortly,” she announced. “Someone will contact you later from the Medical Examiner’s Office.”

Zachary nodded, but didn’t speak. His face was impassive. Either he was grief stricken, very smart, or just didn’t care that his wife was lying in a pool of blood on their living room floor. No easy answer came to mind. She stared at him for a moment longer, then followed Frank and the lawyer to the door.

"I didn't get your name." Zachary's voice pulled Jocelyn to a stop. The others were already in the hall. She turned to face him, mentally kicking herself. In her stunned state, she'd forgotten to introduce herself.

"Jocelyn Bliss," she answered. He walked to her, stopping inches away. Insane as it was, she felt the urge to retreat, to back away from the powerful man who stalked her. Her heart accelerated to a rapid patter.

"It was a pleasure to meet you, Detective Bliss." He offered his hand once more and she reached out to accept it. A shaft of pure desire raced from the point where their hands met to the deep center of her body. "I'm sure we'll be seeing each other again." His voice was seductive and low, and she knew he wasn't thinking about the investigation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Zachary watched the door close with a snap. *Hell of a way to spend an evening.* Finding Catarina had been bad enough. Now, it was obvious he was the prime suspect in her murder. He wiped his hand across his eyes. Damn.

It was hard to believe that Catarina was dead. He didn't love her, hadn't been able to feel any emotion but anger and distrust for almost a year now, but to find her dead...

The pit of his stomach clenched at the memory of her on the floor. Worse, that he couldn't feel more remorse. He'd been married to her for almost six years and all he could summon was a remote sadness that a human life was gone.

He sat down on the love seat. The short couch was hard and uncomfortable. The only person who'd ever liked sitting on it was Catarina. She'd designed this room for her use. Zach hated it. Too much lace, too many bits of glass on the tabletops. It made him feel huge and awkward. It was feeling Catarina had excelled at creating.

Catarina had loved all things pretty and fragile. And she'd made sure the world viewed her in the same way. In the early days of their relationship, Zach had found it attractive. He could admit now that he'd like playing the role of the strong, protective

husband for his dainty, delicate wife. It had made him feel manly and heroic. Now, he could see it was Catarina's way of controlling everything in her world, including him.

He dropped his head back and stared up at the floral print on the ceiling. He'd been anxiously awaiting the divorce.

Now the waiting was over. He was free to indulge himself. He grimaced at his own thoughts. Catarina was dead and all he could think about was sex.

*And Detective Bliss.* With that body, she was aptly named. She carried herself with the air of a woman used to dealing with power. Her tall, strong body looked like it could hold up no matter how long or hard the ride. He closed his eyes. It was too easy to imagine the good detective kneeling above him, his cock buried deep inside her, her breasts swaying as she rode him. Or better yet, him on his knees in front of her, tasting her sweet flesh. He'd been six years without that pleasure.

*Yes, the detective would do nicely.*

He shifted on the love seat to loosen the material around his crotch that had grown tight with his thoughts. His fingers trailed along his semi-erect penis and a tremor went through his body. *Anticipation.* He wanted to enjoy the tension, see how tight he could make it, until he couldn't stand it any longer. And neither could Detective Bliss.

The instant connection between them amazed him. He hadn't felt anything like it since he'd first discovered naked women during his teenage years. She'd recognized the power between them. Her eyes had glistened with hunger. Zach smiled and let his mind drift into fantasy. He didn't know anything about her—that would come later. No need to spoil the surprise yet. He was going to be very disappointed if she had a husband or lover waiting at home.

Of course, the fact that she was investigating his wife's murder and he was the prime suspect might cause some problems. Zach ignored the voice of caution going through his head. He wanted the detective. And he was used to getting what he wanted.

The sound of glass shattering in the hall was followed by a quiet "oops". Zach

wincing. He wasn't ready to abandon the house to the police just yet. What he really wanted was a drink, but Catarina had gotten rid of everything related to him when he'd moved out, including the twenty-year old scotch.

She'd gotten rid of everything it seemed but that gun. Zach stared at the empty room. This was not going to be pleasant. The only upside was the delectable Detective Bliss. A silver lining for every cloud and he had a feeling Jocelyn Bliss was going to be his.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What just happened in there?" Frank growled as Jocelyn left the room. Zachary's lawyer paced the entryway, glancing toward the living room. And the body.

"I don't know what you mean," Jocelyn answered

"You practically jumped the man in the first two minutes."

She scoffed, putting as much disgust into the sigh as she could. "I did not." Inwardly, she cringed. She had only vague memories of those first few minutes, and all of them were filled with Zachary Simons.

Frank stepped in front of her. She had no choice but to look at him. He didn't say anything.

Finally, she sighed. "It was nothing, okay? Don't worry about it." She turned and walked to the living room entrance. The forensics team was almost finished.

"It was not 'nothing'. You can't afford this, J.B. Not after last time."

Jocelyn clenched her hands. Frank was right. After all these years, they still watched her. She couldn't afford to show any partiality to a suspect. She couldn't lust after one, and she damn well couldn't sleep with one. Not again.

"Listen, I'm not going to—" Her promise to stay clear of Zachary Simons was stopped by the arrival of the Medical Examiner.

He walked out of the living room, pulling off latex gloves.

"Anything you can tell us?" Jocelyn asked, pleased to have something to distract Frank.

"Gun shot wound. I'll do the autopsy, of course, but that's what killed her."

"Any idea about the time of death?"

"Sometime in the last two hours but my guess is seven-thirty."

"Exactly? Isn't that a little precise?"

The doctor cocked his head toward the room indicating she should follow. Frank trailed behind, staring over her shoulder.

"Broken watch. Looks like it was broken when she fell."

Jocelyn raised her eyebrows in a silent question to the photographer. He nodded and stepped out of the way. She took a pair of gloves from the box and knelt beside the body. She lifted the woman's arm. The crystal of the elegant gold watch was shattered, locking the hands in place. Everything about the victim looked expensive—the watch, the silver and diamond earrings that glittered through her blond hair. Even the pale nightgown, shot with silver thread, looked expensive.

"Anyway, that might not be the exact the time but it's probably pretty close. She hasn't been dead long."

Jocelyn straightened and nodded. She snapped the gloves off.

"Can you tell if—" Her question was swallowed by loud voices and angry shouts at the front entrance. "God, what now? It's like we're running an open house."

She stepped over the body and stalked out of the room.

The uniformed police officer blocked the door to a woman with tears streaming down her face. Jonathan Street had beat Jocelyn and Frank to the door.

"Now, Leona," Jonathan said. The lawyer slipped around the officer and put his hands on the woman's shoulders. "Calm down."

"Don't tell me to calm down." She jerked from his grip. "I want to see my sister. She's dead. Oh, Johnny, she's dead. He finally killed her." She sagged against Jonathan.

After a dramatic gasp, she raised her eyes, a desperate pleading on her face. "Have they arrested him?"

Jocelyn stepped forward. "Can I help you?"

"Detective, this is Leona Van Wyse. She is, was, Catarina's sister." Jonathan spoke over the woman's head.

"How do you do, Ms. Van Wyse? I'm sorry for your loss."

The woman lifted her head enough so that her chin and nose were firmly pointed up. The delicate, dramatic pleading was gone and her eyes were diamond hard. "It's Mrs. Van Wyse," she corrected. "Have you arrested him?"

"Arrested who?"

"Zachary. Her *husband*."

"We've just begun collecting information about your sister's death. We have no evidence to support that he killed your sister, ma'am."

"He's bought you off, hasn't he?"

Jocelyn felt the hair on the back of her neck stand on end. She'd spent six months enduring the sidelong stares of people who thought she was a dirty cop—she wasn't about to go through it again. "No, ma'am. If you have some information that would assist in the investigation—"

"He's been threatening her for months. She wasn't giving him the divorce he wanted and things were turning nasty. That bastard gets to keep what rightfully belonged to my sister."

"Now, Leona—" Jonathan cautioned.

"No, it's true. Our family contacts got him established. And when Catarina wanted what she deserved, what she *earned*, living with him all these years, he refused. No doubt to spend it all on some bimbo."

"Mr. Simons has a girlfriend?" Jocelyn latched onto that bit of information. Everything was interesting when murder was involved.



The tears evaporated from Leona's eyes and hate spewed out. "I'm sure he's got someone waiting to take her place. He was never faithful to her. He's insane." Jocelyn raised her eyebrows. "He's a sexual deviant. You wouldn't believe some of the things he demanded she do to him. She tried to get him psychological help, but the therapist said he couldn't be cured if he didn't want to be." The woman took a deep breath. "He killed my sister. I demand you arrest him!"

"Leona, now let's be sensible."

"I don't want to be sensible," she hissed. "I want him arrested!" Jocelyn didn't move. Leona finally nodded. "I'll be talking to your Chief." She spun away and stalked off.

"I'm sorry, Detective. Leona's always been a little high strung," Jonathan apologized. He grimaced. "And prone to drama."

"You seem friendly with the whole family."

"I've been the attorney for Catarina and her family for a number of years now."

*But he represents the husband in the divorce. Curious.*

"You said Mrs. Simons called you tonight?"

"Yes."

"What time was that?"

He flipped his cell phone open. "7:23."

*And she was dead by 7:30.* Jocelyn nodded.

"Thank you. Could you give Detective Carroll the phone numbers and addresses of the rest of the deceased's family?" She left Frank to gather the necessary information and returned inside to check the progress of the crime scene team.

Zachary Simons leaned against the doorway to the salon, waiting.

"Your sister-in-law stopped by," Jocelyn said.

"I heard."

"She had quite a lot to say."

Zachary nodded. "Some of it's even true." His blue eyes captured hers, and with a single look, sent flutters through her stomach.

"Which part?" she asked when she found her voice.

"Well, not the part about killing my wife."

## Chapter 2

"This is ridiculous," Jocelyn snapped. She took a sip from the delicate china cup.

"I know," Frank agreed.

"It's embarrassing."

"Yes."

"It's a *funeral*."

"Technically, it's not. It's a reception."

Jocelyn grimaced. It was too much like a funeral for her comfort. The Chief had insisted they attend, along with him, in case anyone had any questions. Supposedly, it was part of the Chief's "open public communication" plan.

In truth, it was a fundraiser. These were the people who would re-elect Chief Bradley.

And strangely enough, the police had been welcomed. Unlike the typical murder investigation, everyone in this crowd seemed eager to talk to the police—even eager to be considered a suspect, at least for a brief period of time. Mainly, everyone wanted to gossip—be the first with the juiciest piece of information, usually about the intimate relationship between Catarina and her husband. Jocelyn had heard more about their sex life, or lack thereof, in the past hour than she'd ever wanted.

*The man's been without sex for a while. He'll be hungry.*

Jocelyn crushed the wayward thought before it got any further. "It's *tacky*," Jocelyn said, meaning her own thoughts and the present situation.

"I know."

Jocelyn shook her head. "It's like we're part of the entertainment." She stared out over the crowd milling around the living room of Zachary Simons' condo. The well-dressed mass gathered in clumps around the room, talking, sipping champagne. Not a tear in the place. It looked more like a garden party than a memorial reception. Obviously, only those who looked good in black had dressed for mourning. The others were in a mixture of elegant colors designed to complement and stand out.

Zachary stood across the room. Jocelyn had spotted him the moment she'd entered and no amount of persuading seemed able to stop her from watching him. He listened intently to a young woman with sympathetic eyes. A small crowd of women stood nearby, waiting their turns to speak to the grieving husband. The calculating look on each face warned they wanted to do more than talk.

Jocelyn hadn't seen him since the night his wife was killed. At least not in person. He'd appeared in her dreams and had starred prominently in more than a few rebellious fantasies. She hadn't been able to shake him from her thoughts—the fire glittering in his eyes, the sexy rumble of his voice. Damn, she'd only spoken with him for a few minutes, but his voice lingered in her head. She pressed her hand against her stomach, trying to crush the sudden ache of desire.

Today, he carried himself with an air of composed sorrow, nodding to those offering condolences, listening as they spoke to him. He rarely responded—seemingly content to let others talk. Frank thought Zachary was cold. Jocelyn wasn't sure. Something in the set of his jaw and the grim light in his eyes—she saw real regret there. But was it regret for killing his wife? That's what she had to find out.

She hoped that when they met face to face, she would have control over her excited hormones. Whatever else happened, she couldn't have another episode like the first night. Frank was watching too closely.

"If it's any consolation," Frank said, interrupting her thoughts. "I don't think most of these people have feelings."

"I still don't like it."

"Just remember, the Chief is here and it's his idea that we attend. He's getting a lot of pressure from the rich-folk to solve this."

"I don't know why. Everyone we've spoken to so far is thrilled to be part of a scandal. God, I hope I never get that bored." Jocelyn arched her shoulders trying to loosen the tension that had crept in days ago and showed no sign of retreating. "Well, let's get back at it. My coffee is cold." She looked for somewhere to set her cup down. The young woman who'd been talking with Zachary approached. Fury and a deep red blush marred her face as she pushed by them, bumping into Jocelyn as she passed. The woman snapped an unmeant apology and stalked out of the room. Jocelyn felt a cold wet spread across her chest. She looked down. The remainder of her coffee decorated the lapels of her light brown suit-dress.

"The department is paying for this," she growled.

What had started out as a difficult day was fast moving toward intolerable.

Not waiting for Frank, she turned and headed for the kitchen. She had to get the coffee rinsed out before it stained. She had two good suits—this was one of them. She couldn't afford to ruin it.

A cool, superior voice stopped her hand as she reached for the faucet.

"May I help you, miss?"

Stunned by the arrogant tone, Jocelyn glanced to her left and almost choked. The mold for the stereotypical British butler had obviously been made from this man.

"I—I just need to rinse out this coffee," she explained.

Only then did the man's eyes drop to Jocelyn's chest. He nodded.

"My name is Tate, miss. I work for Mr. Simons." He indicated her suit. "Allow me to take care of that. Go upstairs, get out of the dress, and you," he waved to Frank, "bring it back down."

"Really. It's no big deal. I'll just rinse it out."

"It will stain." The butler enunciated each word.

"I'll get it cleaned."

"Detective," he said with a patronizing sigh. "If you want to be able to talk with the people in this house, you must be presentable." He'd obviously been apprised of their presence. "It will only take me fifteen minutes, once you get out of that dress. Please."

"Come on," Frank said, pulling on her arm. "He'll work on your dress, I'll work the crowd, we'll get done, and if you're good, I'll take you out for fried food."

"Go up the back way," the butler instructed. "The room at the top of the stairs will not be in use."

Jocelyn sighed but let Frank lead her up the stairs. "I could just as easily go home," she offered. It would be the perfect excuse to escape the torture of the reception.

Frank opened the door and pushed her inside.

"And leave me here alone? I don't think so." The door closed behind her with a snap. Jocelyn looked around, making sure the room was empty before she began stripping her clothes off. The room was an office, probably Zachary's. She opened the top two buttons and started to peel the dress off her shoulders. She froze.

What was she thinking? She was naked under the suit. The only thing between her and the dress was a garter belt and stockings.

The erotic dreams that had plagued her all week had continued through last night. She'd woken up tired and aroused, her body still caught in the sensual dream. The smooth glide of her dress across her skin had been too tempting to ignore, teasing her breasts, brushing against her bared pussy. No one would ever know she wore nothing underneath.

And it had given her a certain confidence, knowing she would soon face Zachary Simons.

"Frank, I can't do this," Jocelyn hissed through the door.

"Why not?" Exasperation laced his voice.

"I'm practically naked under this dress."

"No one can see you, now let's have it so I can get to work."

Modesty battled productivity for a few seconds but she finally decided Frank was right. She opened the dress and slid it off her shoulders. Hiding behind the door, she handed it out. "Get back here as soon as you can."

"Find something to put on. I'll be back in a bit."

Jocelyn leaned against the back of the door. After a few deep breaths, the insanity of the situation hit her—she was naked in a stranger's house. It should have made her laugh.

But she knew the owner.

She wasn't in a stranger's house—she was in *his* house. Her breasts felt heavy and her nipples ached. Everything about Zachary Simons invoked a sexual response in her.

A cool breeze brushed across her flesh as she strolled around the office, inspecting the world of Zachary Simons. The room was tastefully decorated in masculine dark and light brown. There was a desk, a couch, and two high-backed chairs. The overall look was comfort. He spent a lot of time in this room. The desk was old, with scars across its grain from years of hard use. This wasn't a frilly antique desk. Work was done at this desk. She trailed her fingers across the surface.

Work—and maybe a little play. Her other hand slid up her body and cupped her breast, teasing the nipple with her thumb. The desk was solid and would hold up to some hard pounding.

Jocelyn smiled at her own thoughts. Being fucked in an office had never been one of her top ten fantasies, but something about this desk moved it up a few slots. She arched her back and let her mind wander.

Zachary would come in, find her there, wonder why she was naked in his office. It wouldn't matter. The sight of her sleek body would excite him. He'd stalk across the room, lift her onto the desk and plunge inside her, hard and deep. Long steady strokes.

She grew wet at the thought and waved her hand in front of her face to cool the growing blush. *Why is it so easy to fantasize about him? Why not –*

A quiet "snick" echoed through the room.

Jocelyn froze.

*This cannot be happening.*

*What deity did I piss off to deserve this?* She crossed her fingers and silently hoped the sound she'd heard hadn't been the door opening.

"Is this a new investigative technique, Detective? I'm curious what you're hoping to discover this way."

She quickly ran through her options and they weren't many. In fantasy, Zachary finding her here was exciting. In reality, it was...

Damn, in reality, it was exciting as well.

Moving slowly, unwilling to cower, even under the mocking tone of his voice, she turned to face Zachary Simons.

He looked at home in the elegant gray suit he wore. He met her gaze for a moment then his eyes skipped down her bared body. Her skin, already heated from her fantasy, turned to fire under the touch of his eyes.

A quiet corner of her mind screamed that she should cover herself. But she couldn't bring herself to hide from the caress of his stare. The piercing blue gaze that had claimed her the first time they'd met now lingered over her bare skin. She stood there, virtually naked in front of him. Embarrassment was gone from the equation; she couldn't even find a sliver of modesty. She straightened her back, pushing her breasts up and forward. She'd worked hard on her body. And she wanted him to see.

Her nipples tightened painfully as his eyes lingered on her breasts. Too easy was the fantasy of his lips sucking and tonguing the peaks of her breasts. His eyes continued down. They stopped on the brown curls that protected her femininity. The white satin garter belt provided a frame for her mound. His chest rose in a tense breath. He licked his lips, as if anticipating the taste of her.

Slowly, seductively, because she knew he was watching, she slid her hands across her skin. Her right forearm came to rest across her heavy breasts as her left hand



slipped down her stomach to cover the brown curls between her thighs. The movement could have been an act of modesty, but they both knew it wasn't. It was temptation. She was taking away what he wanted.

A flicker of irritation marked the edges of his eyes and she smirked a bit when he finally dragged his gaze from her body. He recovered quickly and smiled back.

"Very nice, Detective." Even those simple words created a caress against her skin. God knew what would happen if he actually touched her.

The warmth between her thighs turned liquid. Jocelyn clenched her legs to stall the sensation. The light brush of her own hand against the soft tendrils of hair covering her sex served to tease her further. It was outrageous. And dangerous.

She took a deep breath. The movement brushed her erect nipples against the soft skin of her arm. She bit her lips together to contain the groan. She had to take control of the situation. And that included her raging hormones.

"You could offer me your coat," she suggested, cringing at the breathless sound of her own voice.

He looked down her body. "Why would I want to do that?"

"Common courtesy? Politeness?" She was pleased that she sounded just a little sarcastic. It created a nice buffer to the urge to drop her arms and throw herself at the man.

"I must have missed this chapter when I was studying proper etiquette."

She thought for a moment he was just going to stand there, but then he moved, peeling his jacket off his shoulders with the ease of a stripper, baring one tantalizing inch at a time. Her mouth started to water, just seeing the white silk shirt he wore. And the hint of muscles underneath. She felt each breath as she tried to capture enough air. He took two steps forward, and held the jacket just out of her reach.

"But let's be honest, I wasn't born a gentleman." Jocelyn had studied his life, a true rags to riches story. "So before I go back to acting like one, I want one more look. Lower your arms." She didn't move. "Really, Detective, your arm is pitifully inadequate to

cover your lovely tits." He held up the jacket. "Wouldn't you be more comfortable in this?"

Jocelyn considered trying to wait him out. Frank would be returning in a few minutes. But the look on Zachary's face told her she'd lose any waiting game with him. *The patience of a saint.* It was probably the only virtue the man had.

Conscious that his eyes were on her, she reversed the trail of her hands, smoothing over her stomach and sliding down her hips until she was bared once again before him.

His lips opened just a little, as if trying to draw enough air into constricted lungs. Jocelyn straightened and inched her feet apart. The tiny movement created a small space between her thighs. Zachary's gaze dropped and stayed there. The urge to lean against the desk and open herself to him swelled inside her.

He lowered the suit coat and stepped forward, reaching out for her.

Internal alarms went off. Almost too late.

She backed up against the desk and held out her hand. "The coat?"

He stopped. "You're only delaying the inevitable, you know."

"The coat, please."

He held the jacket open to her and smiled. She had to go to him to get it. She could have taken it from him but the challenge in his eyes was too much. This had somehow become a game—and she didn't want to lose. Not this early in the play.

She stepped forward and gingerly slipped her arm in one sleeve. The warmth from his body lingered in the silk lining of the jacket and she closed her eyes for just a moment, steeling her reactions against this new sensual onslaught.

She opened her eyes and saw a picture frame on the bookshelf—one that looked like it should hold a wedding photo. It probably once held his and Catarina's. It was the reminder Jocelyn needed. He was the suspect in a murder she was investigating.

She walked across the room, pulling the edges of his jacket to her body. What was his game? Seduce the lead officer? Maybe he thought to follow in another's footsteps.

Did he know? How could he?

She avoided looking at him, focusing instead on the room.

"Are you dressed, or should I say, undressed, like this to seduce a confession out of me?"

"Of course not!"

He smiled and Jocelyn realized he was teasing. She mentally slapped herself for being so gullible.

"Too bad. It might have worked." He strolled across the room to her. "Of course, I wouldn't be the only one seduced, would I?"

Jocelyn chose to ignore his question and give him a real answer.

"My clothes are downstairs. I spilt coffee down the front of my dress. Your butler thought he could help."

Zach nodded. "He's very good at that sort of thing. Now, what should we do while we're waiting?"

A myriad of options immediately jumped into her mind. None of them were, of course, appropriate for a cop and a suspected murderer.

"Mr. Simons —"

The tap of high-heeled shoes on a wood floor stopped her protest.

"Is there anything else at this end of the hall?" She didn't recall any rooms near this one.

"No."

"We're about to have company."

"Your partner?" Zach suggested.

"Not unless he's started cross-dressing."

"Come here," Zachary commanded, walking to the only other door in the room. Jocelyn hadn't noticed it earlier. Zach whipped the door open and guided her inside. The light from his office illuminated stacks of pens and pads of paper. The shelves were

deep, leaving little space between them and the door.

She pressed her back against the shelves and reached for the doorknob. Zach brushed her hand away and stepped into the supply closet with her. He pulled the door closed behind him, plunging the closet into darkness.

"What are you doing?" she hissed. "It's not a big deal for you to be in there. It's *your* office and *you're* dressed."

His palm covered her mouth. The office door had opened. Jocelyn froze. The only thing worse than being caught in his office, without clothes, would be being found in a tiny supply cabinet, with no clothes and a murder suspect. She would have growled in frustration but whoever was in the office might have heard.

They waited. Silence settled between them until only the sound of their quiet breath could be heard. With no other distractions, Jocelyn's body began to take notice of its precarious situation. The tiny room left her plastered, chest to knees, against Zachary.

*Oh-oh, say can you see, by the dawn's early –*

She forced herself to mentally sing through the Star Spangled Banner, hoping it would keep her mind occupied and away from thoughts of how easy it would be to wrap her leg around Zach's hip and pull him against her pussy. *So close. He was so close.* Her heart started to pound and she swallowed, trying to clear the cotton that seemed to clog her mouth. All she had to do was spread her legs and he would be touching her. Jocelyn kept her eyes focused on a dark spot above Zachary's shoulder. Whatever she did, she couldn't look at him. Not now. Not this close.

Soft thumps reverberated through the door and gave Jocelyn something to think about besides the body pressed against hers. It was the sound of drawers opening and closing. Zachary tensed, pulling inches away from Jocelyn. All remnants of sex and seduction faded from his body. She knew the moment his attention left her and turned to the searcher in the other room.

After a few moments, the drawers fell silent.

"Hi baby," a deliberately husky female voice said. "Yes, I'm in his office. I have it

right here."

The dim light in the closet was barely enough for Jocelyn to see Zachary's face.

"Who?" She mouthed silently.

"My secretary" came Zach's silent response. He lowered his eyes and listened intently.

"Why do you want this stuff anyway? Okay, okay. Never mind. I was just asking. Here it is. Two million to the hospital and five-hundred thousand to some church in Mexico."

Zachary looked up and Jocelyn could see the questions in his eyes.

"Wait," the woman called. "Don't I get something? I gave you what you wanted, how about helping me out? It's a real turn-on to be in his office. At his desk." There were three beats of silence and then the sighs began. The sighs turned to groans, then to breathless words.

"Yes, I'm naked and waiting for you. Ooh baby, more."

Jocelyn might have rolled her eyes—if she hadn't been standing naked with the sexiest man she'd ever met. Even the woman's overdone moans were arousing.

As the secretary continued to sigh, Jocelyn's attention returned to the tight press of the male body against hers. A pen stabbed her lower back. She shifted slightly to see if she could shove it to the side. The movement caused the jacket to open. The light in the closet was enough to show the pale slopes of her breasts.

She held her breath and wondered if Zach would notice. His warm hand on her stomach told her he had. And that his focus was back on her.

"Well, we can't leave until she comes." His voice was almost silent against the sensitive skin of her ear. "What should we do with the time?" The slow glide of his hand across her skin combined with his words and sent a lazy shiver down her spine. "You must be very quiet. I know that's going to be a challenge. I'll bet you scream down the walls when you come." Her breath came out in tiny pants. His hand moved up her

stomach and cupped her breast, then his thumb flicked the peaked flesh of her nipple. "But quiet can be fun, too. Can you do that for me, sweetheart? Let me make you come and you see how quiet can you be."

Jocelyn opened her mouth to tell him to stop but her mind seemed incapable of forming the words.

All thoughts of murder and investigations slipped away as he pressed a kiss on her neck, scraping her flesh lightly with his teeth. She bit her lower lip and crushed the groan that wanted to escape. His hand continued to move between their bodies, easing across her stomach, trailing downward.

She could have resisted him—she was pretty sure she was being honest about that—if only he'd grabbed or forced his hand between her legs. She could have fought that. Instead, he traced light teasing touches on the very top edge of her sex. He stayed there, playing with her curls, tempting her with feather light touches until she arched her hips, wanting more. She felt his smile against her throat.

"You're wet just waiting for me."

She dug her fingernails into the back of his neck. How her hands had gotten around his neck she wasn't sure, but she held on, using his strength to support her weakening knees.

One finger slid between her nether lips and drew tiny circles. Zach watched her, his eyes glittering in the dark, seducing her as much as his touch. No man had ever watched her with such desire. It was impossible to resist.

In the vague distance, Zach's secretary continued her groans and exaggerated whimpers. The sounds slipped into the tiny closet, blending with the other stimuli. It all mixed in Jocelyn's mind—the other woman's moans became the ones she couldn't release herself. Needing to feel him against her skin, Jocelyn opened the edges of the borrowed coat and leaned into his chest. His silk shirt massaged her nipples, tightening them further. She rubbed against him, watching her flesh skimming across the cool white silk.

"Damn," Zach whispered. He pushed one finger inside her pussy. Jocelyn tensed, shocked by the slow intrusion. There was no pain. She drenched his hand.

He was inside her.

"You're so wet," he whispered in her ear. She could barely grab her breath. "I can't wait to feel you come against my mouth." He knew just how to seduce her. A tiny whimper filled the space between them. "Shhh. You must be quiet." He pressed the heel of his hand against her mound, rubbing circles. Heat began to spiral through her body, moving in time to the steady pulses of his palm while his finger made shallow penetrations. "I want to taste you, fuck you with my tongue, licking all this sweet cream you give for me." He spoke the words as a promise. Jocelyn gulped and focused on silence. It was so hard. She wanted to moan and scream and oh God, she wanted his cock inside her. She arched her hips against the solid strength of his hand, wanting more of him.

"That's it, honey. Move against me. Take what you want." His almost silent, encouraging words spurred her on. She was so close but she needed more, just a little harder.

"Please," she finally begged with a whisper, the first word she'd spoken since they entered the closet. Zach's eyes drilled into hers. His thumb slid over her clitoris, light at first and then with quickly increasing pressure. Shards of hot pleasure erupted inside her. Zach covered her lips with his, catching her groan. His tongue thrust into her mouth and she welcomed it, sucking on it and holding him inside her in some small way. His clever fingers kept teasing, drawing out another wave.

Jocelyn whimpered into his mouth and sagged against him, waiting for the tremors to subside. She hung there, suspended, until the snap of a door closing jerked her back. The secretary was gone. Jocelyn had no memory of the woman's climax – too caught up in her own.

She stared across the small space. He eased his finger from between her legs. While she watched, Zachary raised his hand to his mouth and placed the tip of his finger

against his lips. She couldn't look away as his tongue darted out and tasted her essence.

"Next time," he said.

A punch of need hit her low in the stomach. She wanted what he promised. Wanted to feel his mouth on her.

The desire was quickly replaced by panic and reality. What the hell had she done?

"This won't ever happen again."

"This? No, probably not." He reached behind him, opened the door and glanced outside. "I'm sure it was mildly uncomfortable being pressed up against those shelves." He paused. "And I like a little more light when I fuck." He stepped outside, pulling Jocelyn behind him. He walked to his desk and stopped. Her sex clenched when he turned and faced her. Lust and power rushed at her through his dark eyes. "Investigation or not, I have every intention of having you—long, hard, and on a frequent basis." He looked down at her opened jacket. Her nipples still stood straight up and her thighs were pressed together to contain the hot vibrations his words were creating. She couldn't hide her own reaction. It was too obvious.

"You did very well, Detective, staying quiet," he complimented casually. "Next time, I'll try to arrange it so you can scream the walls down."

He turned away and picked up the phone. Jocelyn felt her mouth fall open. *He has to make a call right now? We're kind of involved in something here.*

"What are you doing?"

"I'm curious who my secretary is feeding information to *and* who she's fucking on my time."

"Only the boss gets to fuck during business hours." Jocelyn winced at the snide comment. It was bitchy but she wanted some sort of reaction. Zachary seemed to have forgotten that moments ago he had his hand between her legs.

"That wasn't exactly fucking," he countered, "and I'm not being paid to be here. She is."

Something about his words made her stop. How had he chosen *this* moment to



come upstairs? The coincidence was a little hard to believe. "Why are you up here?"

He smiled as he hit the re-dial button.

"I heard your partner handing your dress over to Tate to be cleaned. I couldn't resist the opportunity of finding you almost naked in my office." His eyes followed the familiar path of her body. "I did expect a little more in the way of underwear but I definitely approve of the choice you made." Jocelyn pressed her lips together to keep from snarling at him.

"Damn," Zach whispered as he looked at the phone and immediately disconnected the line. The numbers disappeared before Jocelyn could read them.

"You know who it is?" She was sure he'd tell her it was none of her business. Murder suspects tended to do that with cops.

Zach nodded. "Jonathan Street." He looked up at Jocelyn. "For some reason it makes me uncomfortable that my secretary is fucking my lawyer and I didn't know about it."

"And what was that information she gave him? Why did he want it?" The questions came out without thought or expectation of an answer.

Zachary nodded. "Those are questions I'd like answered as well."

He wasn't pleased. She didn't know if it meant anything, but like all other bits of seemingly worthless knowledge, she filed it away. 'You just never know' was her motto behind evidence gathering.

"Knock, knock, I'm coming in." The door swung open and Jocelyn's dress entered the room. Frank walked behind it, shielding his face with the brown material. "Cover yourself, I'm opening my eyes." He lowered the dress and stared. Jocelyn could see the thoughts race through his mind. She hadn't bothered to close the jacket after they'd come out of the cabinet. It seemed pointless. Zach had seen and touched almost everything she had. Frank looked from Zachary to Jocelyn. "Did I interrupt something I shouldn't have?"

"No," she snapped, whipping the jacket closed. "It's nothing." She spoke distinctly

and turned from Frank to Zachary. "Nothing happened and this will go no further. You got me?"

"Sure," Frank answered.

"Almost." She heard the underlying message of Zach's comment but ignored it. The promise he'd made about having her was too close to the edge of her memory.

She started to tell them to both get out, but it wasn't necessary. They headed toward the door without her command. It closed behind them. She dropped the dress and sagged against the desk. What had she done?

If Zachary Simons was playing a game, he'd certainly won that round. She had to get out from under this—close the investigation and get the hell out of his life.

Knowing work waited downstairs, she pulled on the dress. The stain was gone, erased by the efficient Tate. The rough material scraped against her tight nipples, reminding her of Zach, and—

She stopped. *Don't go there.* She needed a date. That was it. Long-term celibacy was obviously making her overly susceptible to this man. But she'd been without sex for long stretches before. Longer than this. It wasn't the situation.

It was him.

There was something about Zachary Simons that was tempting her beyond wisdom.

\* \* \* \* \*

Zach stepped into the hall and closed the door behind him. Disapproval radiated from the man next to him. Was it jealousy from a lover? Or the cop-suspect thing that was upsetting him?

Without speaking, Zach turned away and headed for the stairs. He didn't care what her partner thought. He was going to have the delightful detective. The episode in the closet had only increased his appetite. Now that he'd had one tiny sample, he wanted to

immerse his senses in Jocelyn Bliss. A slow seduction followed by long nights in his bed. He didn't know how long it would last, but something told him the detective would not be a one-nighter. She had staying power.

Zach smiled privately. So did he.

## Chapter 3

"What have we got?" Jocelyn asked, dropping her head back against the wall behind her desk.

Frank flipped through pages of notes. "The same thing we had yesterday. Zachary Simons, Zachary Simons, Zachary Simons. No one else profits from her death."

Jocelyn closed her eyes for a moment. Two days had passed since the reception and nothing had changed. Zachary still appeared nightly in her dreams, daily in her fantasies, and at the top of her suspect list. He had the most to gain from his wife's death, but dammit, Jocelyn couldn't see it.

*Or maybe you just don't want to see it.* The memory of his touch slammed into her. Was that it? Was she just blind to the truth because he had fire in his hands? Or was her intuition right and something was wrong?

Days later, she still didn't know how it had happened. It would have only taken a little self-control to tell him to stop. He would have. He didn't want to force the pleasure on her—he wanted her to submit to it. And she had.

"They were divorcing." She threw out the protest. "Why kill her?"

"Money. Power. Revenge." Frank pushed a file across the desk. "I've done some research on your Mr. Simons. He doesn't like to lose."

"He's not *my* Mr. Simons," she clarified through clenched teeth. "And no one likes to lose. It doesn't make them killers."

Frank leaned back in his chair, the grim look on his face reflecting what she was feeling. "We know Catarina called the lawyer at 7:23. Neighbors put Zachary Simons at the scene at seven-thirty," Frank said, repeating what was in the file. "Simons' 911 call came in at seven-thirty-five. He either killed her or he was in the house when it

happened." Frank shook his head. "Zachary Simons has it all. Motive, means and opportunity."

"Then why haven't we arrested him?" Jocelyn asked. Frank looked up. "If it seems so logical, why are we still sitting here? Why hasn't either of us called for a warrant?" Frank raised his eyebrows and his lips curled into a smirk. Jocelyn shook her head. "*That* has nothing to do with it." She said it with as much conviction as she could. She didn't think her attraction to Zachary was affecting her objectivity. But, then, she'd never expected to be naked in a supply closet with the man either. Life was full of little surprises.

"Really?"

Frank's mocking question strengthened her resolve. She would make it true. She would look at everything and if Zachary was guilty, she would arrest him.

"Yes, really." She dropped the front legs of her chair to the floor and propped her elbows on the desk. "It's too easy."

"We usually like easy."

"That's because most criminals are stupid. 'Easy' just proves how stupid. Zachary Simons is *not* stupid."

"No. He's arrogant, and sometimes that amounts to the same thing."

Jocelyn couldn't deny that. Zachary didn't lack confidence.

"Well, either way, we'd better move soon," Frank added. "It's been a week and Bradley's getting pressure."

Jocelyn snarled at the mention of the Police Chief. They'd never bonded. He didn't like women on his police force and she didn't like assholes. It strained their relationship.

"He wants action."

"What does he want me to do? Pull the killer out of my ass?"

"If that's where Mrs. Simons' killer happens to be hiding, then yes, that's exactly what I expect."

Jocelyn froze, tightening down her muscles to stop the instinctive flinch. Damn, for

such a big man, he moved silently.

"Uh, Chief, what she meant —"

Bradley held up his hand, stopping Frank's explanation.

"I'm sure I know what Detective Bliss meant."

Jocelyn followed Frank as he stood. Bradley didn't demand military precision with his detectives, but she hated to look up at the Chief. He liked to intimidate with height.

"I was hoping you'd have an update, some *new* information. What have you been doing with your time?" He directed the question to Jocelyn and for a moment she thought he knew about upstairs at Zachary's house. But the Chief just shook his head.

"We need to move on this. I want progress, Detective."

"Sir, it looks like Mr. Simons —"

Bradley cut her off. "You'd better have more than 'looks like' before you come to me with his name. He's a leader in the community." *And a major donor*, Jocelyn added silently. "And I don't want him embarrassed. If and when, you can prove it, you come to me. Until then, stay away from him."

Jocelyn lifted her chin and stared Bradley in the eye. "And if we get that proof, will we be allowed to move on him?"

The Chief nodded. "Definitely. The rich don't have different rules." It sounded good and for a moment, Jocelyn wondered if she'd misjudged the Chief. Then she saw the light in his eyes. If Zachary Simons was arrested and convicted, Bradley wouldn't need money to get re-elected—he'd be raised up as a hero of the working class and elected by the people.

The Chief tossed an envelope on the desktop. "Here. It's a fundraiser for the Children's Hospital. I expect you both to be there and give the impression you're not sitting around with your thumbs up your asses." He glared at Jocelyn. "Zachary Simons will be there. You will treat him with respect."

"Do we dress in uniform?"

"Don't be an idiot, Detective Bliss. It's a formal affair. Dress for it." The Chief of Police turned on his heel and left.

"Is he kidding? We have to go to some party? He's got to be joking."

Frank shook his head. "The Chief doesn't joke."

*Great. Like circus animals on display.* Jocelyn dropped back into her chair and picked up the file. There was something there – something she wasn't seeing.

"It's late," Frank sighed. "I'm going home." Jocelyn nodded and watched him leave.

She'd stay and go over it one more time. Maybe twice.

After the third time through, Jocelyn gave up for the day.

She ended the evening on her couch, staring blankly at the television.

"I am down for the night," Jocelyn announced. Her roommate, Karen, looked up. "I'm not moving, I'm not thinking, I'm sitting here all night and watching sitcom reruns."

"It's nice to have goals in life."

Jocelyn raised her soda in salute. "Reach for the stars." She let her head fall against the back of the couch, too tired to hold it up any longer. It had been a hell of a day. Her mind buzzed with facts and times and witnesses' words. And Zachary Simons.

Again the scene in his closet popped into her head, distracting her. Was it distracting her so much that she wasn't looking closely enough at him? Was he just a murderer with really sexy eyes and a voice that could make her come?

No. She trusted her instincts. She had to. And her instincts said while Zachary Simons could probably kill someone, he either would admit it, or hide the crime better. Or maybe, he had another plan – seduce the investigating officer into believing him.

"Well, I'm going to go do the dishes." Karen pushed herself to her feet and walked into the kitchen. Jocelyn considered feeling guilty about not helping but it faded quickly. She and Karen had a pretty clear line of duties in the house: Karen cleaned and Jocelyn stayed out of the way while she did it.

Jocelyn leaned forward and stretched. Her fingertips had just reached the remote control when the doorbell chimed. Karen's hands would be covered in soapsuds.

Jocelyn rolled off the couch, groaning. "I'll get it."

*Maybe it's a neighbor kid selling chocolate.* That was the only kind of interruption she'd welcome.

Habit and training made her look out the front window to see who was there. Her heart plunged to her stomach. The doorbell chimed again. What the hell was he doing here?

"Are you getting the door?" Karen called.

"I've got it." And she had to get rid of it. Now. She jerked the door open. "What are you doing here?" she hissed. "Zach, you can't be seen here."

He smiled. She'd called him "Zach". She wasn't thinking like a cop. He stepped into her entryway, giving her no choice but to back up.

"What are you doing?" she asked again.

"I thought you didn't want me to be seen," he pointed out logically. She shut the door and glanced upstairs. The roommate. But no significant other. He'd done some checking on the delectable Detective Bliss.

"I want you to leave."

"I don't want to be a suspect in my wife's murder." He shrugged, acting more casual than he felt. "We can't always get what we want." Fury and confusion flashed in her eyes. He felt his lips pull into a reluctant smile. He liked provoking her. Her deliberate distance challenged him.

There was something about Jocelyn. She was intriguing. Seductive, even when she didn't want to be. Just standing there, in a dull blue skirt that almost reached her knees and a wrinkled cotton blouse, she aroused him. Her strength an aphrodisiac he'd never expected.

The soft clink of dishes from upstairs reminded him the roommate was here. He only had a few minutes with her. Just enough to tease her, keep her off balance—and tempt them both with the promise of more.



She'd inspired his fantasies and tonight, he wanted a taste—just a taste—of the reality. He moved toward her. She stiffened, but she didn't back up. She lifted her chin and dared him with her steady gaze.

God, he wanted her, wanted to press her up against the wall and fuck her until her legs gave out, until he filled her mind as well as her body, until he was her only thought. He caught the back of her head in his hands and pulled her to him. She didn't resist.

His lips met hers, open, wet. Welcoming. Her taste filled his senses.

"My roommate is here," she moaned when he pulled his mouth from hers and licked the sweet spot on her neck. He knew from their adventure in the closet that she could be seduced. She liked it dangerous and exciting. "She's a cop. She can't see you." She sighed the words.

He walked her backwards, turning her, pressing her against the front door, keeping her distracted with kisses, light and hard, soft and tempting. Sensation replaced thought. She was delicious. The taste of her sex was a warm musky memory from his office. He wanted more. Kissing her became the center of his world.

She hooked her fingers into the belt loops of his jeans and pulled him down, leveling his cock with her sex, rubbing her clothed pussy against him. He lifted his head and ground his teeth together. Even through their clothes, he could feel her—she was hot, wet. His skin burned with the need to feel her. He wrapped his arm around her hips and pulled her forward. Their bodies moved together, trying to twist themselves into each other. He watched her, loving the expressiveness of her eyes, each reaction mirrored and revealed. A soft hitch in her breath encouraged him. She was with him, there—

"J.B.?" The call was a distant intrusion Zach was willing to ignore. Jocelyn tensed beneath his hands. "Who was at the door?" Footsteps clipped across the second floor. Jocelyn's eyes widened. Going faster than he'd ever seen her move, she slipped out of his arms, opened a door next to them, and shoved Zach that direction. He stumbled,

falling into a tiny closet. Jackets and coats muffled his yelp as he tripped over a pair of boots. The door closed with a snap behind him, leaving him in almost total darkness.

Jocelyn planted herself against the closet door. "Uh, paperboy," she finally answered, her voice more breathless than she'd like. She brushed her hair out of her face and tried to look casual.

Karen came to the landing and looked down. "What are you doing?" she asked.

Jocelyn waved her hand over her shoulder. "I thought I'd straighten up the closet. It's getting a little cluttered."

"What happened to crashing on the couch all night?"

"I got a sudden burst of energy." She giggled. Then she cringed. She never giggled.

"And you're going to clean the coat closet?" Karen's eyes squinted with suspicion.

"Yeah," Jocelyn squeaked.

"Are you all right?"

"I'm fine. I'll be back upstairs in a bit."

"After you've cleaned the closet." Dismay filled Karen's voice.

"Right. After I've cleaned the closet."

Karen looked for a moment like she wasn't going to leave but finally she shrugged and walked away.

"Okay."

Jocelyn watched for a moment and then waited—checking to see if Karen was suspicious enough to return. She didn't.

Jocelyn shook her head in disgust. "It's almost hard to believe she's a cop."

Knowing Karen was safe in the kitchen, for the moment, Jocelyn turned and faced the door. He was in there. Waiting for her. She pressed her lips together to crush the moan that threatened—he'd been hard, ready for her. The outline of his cock through the rough material of his jeans—Jocelyn leaned against the wall, waiting for the memory, and the ache between her legs, to pass. He'd be long and thick inside her.

She shook her head. It didn't matter. She would never find out what he felt like. She was going to get him out of her closet and then out of her life. Permanently.

She took a deep breath. It was time for Mr. Simons to leave. Exhaling, she opened the door.

She started to tell Zach to get out but stopped.

How did he do it? No one should be able to look elegant and attractive while stuffed in a coat closet.

Somehow Zach did. He'd pushed the line of jackets aside and leaned against the wall with his arms folded on his chest. Waiting for her.

His lips kicked up into a mischievous smile. "I'm betting there really is no roommate. You just have a thing for closets."

Jocelyn had to work to keep her own grin from forming. "No, there really is a roommate and she really can't find you here—"

The words turned into an "eek" as he snagged her arm and pulled her inside. She landed hard against his chest. It was solid beneath her touch. She stared at her hands, his tight pectoral muscles warming her palms. Uncommanded, her fingers curled, testing the strength and firmness of his body. She had to feel him. Her hands moved of their own volition, slowly sliding down his rib cage. She might have stopped, if she hadn't looked into his eyes, the deep blue darkening at her touch.

Her mind battled between "you can't do this" and "this might be your only chance". His hands dropped to her ass and pulled her forward, cuddling her against his hard shaft. He moved against her, slipping between her legs, the tight stretch of her skirt blocking a full contact.

Jocelyn could read the lure of his gaze—he was calling her out to play. The fact that her roommate was upstairs faded from her consciousness.

She pressed up on her toes, trying for a closer fit. The feeling was delicious but the need for more chased at her.

He held her hips in place and moved against her.

"Zach." His name was her plea.

"Not yet, honey. You'll come when I'm inside you."

"Oh God." The painfully sweet pull down the center of her body warned of a quick, stunning orgasm, just out of reach.

"Deep inside you," he added. "Every inch of your body against mine, filled with mine." His words painted the picture.

She focused on her breath, trying to keep it steady, but his words brought up the fantasy she'd imagined too many times in the past week.

All thoughts of murder and roommates vanished.

She fumbled behind her and pulled the door shut.

Zach's mouth covered the pulse at the base of her neck and began to suck, tiny pulses, timed with the beat of her blood. He didn't linger long—his hands moving, his mouth constant yet ever changing. He knew just where to touch, the tiny points that ignited her whole body.

"Is there a light in here?" he whispered. His lips trailed teasing kisses along the column of her throat. Jocelyn nodded, unable to speak. She fumbled around and found the switch.

The light flickered on and she met his eyes. *I like a little more light when I fuck.*

A band around her chest made it hard to breathe. He was a dangerous man—tempting her with what she knew was wrong. But it didn't matter. She wanted him.

His hands left her butt, skimming down her legs as he slowly sank to his knees, watching her until he came eye level with her pussy.

She stared down at his brown hair, caution fighting one last time to be heard. She could lose her job. Zach smoothed his hands across the material of her skirt and his fingers tightened on her thighs. He leaned forward and placed a single, soft kiss on her mound.

Through two layers of clothes, it shouldn't have affected her, but her knees wobbled. It was like he was paying homage to her pussy, thanking her cunt for opening to him.

His strong fingers slid up her thighs, carrying the material of her skirt with them, and grasped the elastic band of her white cotton panties.

"You *are* full of surprises, Detective Bliss." The smile in his voice was impossible to disguise. "A bit of the schoolgirl in you, is there?" He pulled the underwear to the floor.

He lifted her leg and placed her foot on his thigh, opening her to his sight. Her breath caught as he raised her skirt and looked at her cunt. He stroked the line of her thighs, the light abrasion sending vibrations through her body. Slow and seductive, he placed his thumbs on the edges of her sex and spread her open. He leaned forward and placed one kiss on her clit.

His warm, wet tongue flicked across the sensitive nub like he couldn't resist having one taste. Jocelyn bit her lips together, waiting for more. The pressure built, radiating from her dripping sex.

His thumbs circled her hard flesh, a slow steady massage that didn't hit her clit but sparked the area around it. She leaned back against the hangers and coats and let his touch control her body.

"I want to taste you, Detective." His voice was husky and deep, almost silent. She nodded. God, she loved his voice. It was a caress all its own. His whisper filled the tiny room. His breath teased the sensitive skin of her thigh, his words tempting her mind. She looked down. He stared at his hands on her sex. Jocelyn couldn't seem to catch her breath. Never before had anyone focused so intently on her.

"I want to spend long hours with my tongue in your wet cunt, licking you, sucking this sweet little clit." He tickled it with one finger, timed to the rhythm of his words. Jocelyn whimpered as the tender touch shot pleasure up her spine. His voice blinded her to anything but him. "Hours, feeling you come against my mouth." Jocelyn squeezed her eyes shut to try to block out the image—it was too late. "And then I'll fuck

you," he promised. "I'll slide inside you. Your body will remember me, welcome me. God, you'll be so wet and needy, begging me to fuck you." His words fired deep in her center.

She grabbed his head and tried to push his face into her pussy. She needed him. Now.

His masculine chuckle rumbled against her flesh. "Unfortunately, I don't think we have time for it all tonight."

"No!" She dug her fingers into his shoulders, ready to stop him if he moved away.

"I won't leave you, honey." He kissed the very top of her mound as his fingers flicked along her swollen lips. "What do you want tonight, Detective? My mouth." He dipped two fingers into opening of her sex. "Or my cock."

She gasped and grabbed the coats around her, holding herself up as her legs weakened. A surplus of sensation swamped her body. He stroked her inside, soft, tiny caresses — his breath ruffling the hair that lined her sex.

Inside her. She needed him filling her.

"C-cock," she gasped. "Your cock."

Moving quickly, he stood and stepped between her thighs. She opened to him, wrapping her leg around his hip, pulling him against her pussy. Desperation blurred the edges of her pride. She rubbed against him, trying to work some of him inside her.

His hands landed on her hips, holding her still. It took a moment for her to realize how frantic she'd appeared. She waited for his teasing, his laughter, but there was none.

The glowing light of his eyes wasn't from triumph—it was desire. The last bit of fear released its hold on her mind. He was as deep in this as she was. She grabbed his head and pulled him down, taking his mouth, conquering it as he'd conquered her.

Zach tried to crush the growl that threatened as she sucked on his tongue. She was hungry. For him. It had been six years since a woman had ached for his touch. She was beautiful. Her desire only enhanced that beauty.

She licked the side of his throat and struggled against his hold, arching toward him, needing the connection to his cock. Zach ripped open his fly.

A wild freedom raced through his veins and laughter broke from his lips. Six years of quiet, restrained fucks and now a hot, sexy woman who wanted it hard and fast.

Jocelyn lifted her eyes. Freedom like he hadn't felt in years overwhelmed him. She'd given that to him. He would do the same for her.

He took her mouth—pouring himself into that kiss, keeping her mind locked in the passion that had had the courage to ask for his cock.

He reached into his pocket and removed a condom. He rolled on the protection, his attention split between practicality and the sweet feel of her mouth against his skin.

"You always carry condoms around in your pocket?" she asked.

"I have since I met you," he muttered before taking her mouth in a quick, hard kiss.

He held her ass in his hands and pulled her forward, bumping against the edge of her sex. And stopped.

"Oh yes." Her sigh entered his head and slowed his world. He didn't have long—he knew that once he was inside her, his control would burst, but he wanted to enjoy her. He slid between her legs, feeling her pussy, letting her juices cover his cock. He kept his movements slow, savoring the feel of her body, clothed and pressed against him. There was something decidedly illicit about fucking fully dressed.

He didn't try to enter her, just moved between her thighs, sliding across her opening. He listened to the tiny whimpers that escaped her lips with each thrust.

The glide of his cock rubbed against her clit. Tiny spikes of pain and pleasure pierced her stomach with every stroke, winding tighter through her center.

She tried to move, tried to shift to slip him into her.

"Soon, honey. Soon."

She groaned in frustration. She was tired of waiting, tired of him being in control.

He started forward again. She stopped his thrust, wrapping her fingers around his

cock and placing it against her dripping opening. Their eyes clashed and she silently dared him to resist her. Zach took her butt in his huge hands, lifting her. Jocelyn wrapped her other leg around his waist, fully supported by his strength. Holding his gaze, she pressed her heels against his ass, bringing his hips forward, pushing his erection into her sex. Zach didn't fight her but he didn't help. The thick head of his cock slipped into her pussy, stretching her tight passage. He would fill her, more than fill her, and she wanted it, wanted to feel him inside her. She took a deep breath and eased more of his length inside her.

She was enthralled by the changing heat in his gaze as the pressure in her body built. His eyes began to blur as she pushed him inside. The tension that vibrated through his body was the only sign of a struggle. He wanted to thrust. She could see it.

But he wouldn't. Not until she'd let him all the way in.

With each inch, she held his shaft, massaging it, guiding it into her.

She felt full but there was more, just another inch, just one more rock of her hips was all it would take to have him completely inside her. She stared into the blue depths of his eyes. He was waiting for her, waiting for her to take all of him.

The challenge was too great to resist. She took a deep breath and relaxed her cunt, pulling him forward.

Zach thrust with her, giving power to that final inch. She gasped.

He was in, balls deep.

Jocelyn buried her face in his coat, gripping it as her body adjusted to the fullness, the depth. It was tight, but good, so good. His whispered nonsense words of comfort blended with sensation, easing the lingering twinge of pain.

She raised her eyes to his and gasped. The edge of his control was visible. He was waiting, fighting an urge she wasn't sure she understood. The man who seemed so controlled, so powerful—she'd done this to him, she'd pushed him to the edge. And now it was time to bring him back. She took a deep breath and nodded.

He pulled out, the movement slow and measured. He stopped at the entrance to her



body and waited. Instinctively, she knew it wasn't for her sake but his. The hold he had on his body was tenuous. And she loved it. But she wanted to break it, wanted him so out of his mind he couldn't think about control.

She urged him with her heel but he held himself steady. Then, on his own pace, he slid back inside her. It was slow, too slow. She needed him, hard and fast.

Sweat dotted the edges of his forehead. He was fighting it.

Physical wouldn't work. He was a man who controlled his physical world. It had to be something more. And she remembered the deep timbre of his voice seducing her.

"Please," she begged, her tone husky and raw. "Fuck me. I need you." He arched back and thrust forward, filling her and massaging her clit. Fire spread across her body, clouding her thoughts but then it cleared when he stopped. "Oh, God. Don't stop. Sink your cock into my cunt, please, I need it."

The hot, sexy words pumped him as they did her and he thrust, hard, deep. A tiny scream escaped before she could stop it. He felt so good. He held her hip with one hand and turned her face to him with the other, covering her mouth for a fierce kiss. Then he lifted his head and watched her, like he needed to see her reaction. His fingers tightened into her flesh as he pounded into her.

She lost all ability to think, to respond. She clung to him, welcoming his cock's assault on her pussy.

There was no slow build up. The climax hit her fast—slamming through her body with the power of his thrusts. "Ahh." She bit the wool of his jacket to muffle the rest of her scream.

She tightened her legs around his waist and pulled him deeper, as she flung herself back against the closet wall. He held her and pushed her, drawing out each bright shimmer of orgasm.

His eyes glowed as he watched her—the edge of insanity glittering in their depths. He was fighting his own climax, holding back while his body fought for the pleasure.

The truth hit her.

He hadn't made love to a woman since his wife died. Probably before that. How long had it been since he'd come while inside a woman?

"Come for me," she begged, wanting to give him release. "Please, Zach, come inside me."

For one moment, he opened to her. Their eyes locked. Zach growled and thrust harder, once, twice and then again. He filled her completely and tensed, his body trapped in its orgasm. Though she didn't feel his cum, she felt him. The tension fell from his body and Zach dropped his forehead against the wall beside her head, his ragged breath on her neck. Jocelyn smiled to herself, triumphant in his climax. *Oh, the power of this man.*

She smoothed his hair with her hand, wanting to stay with him.

She had no idea how long they stood there. It didn't matter. He was inside her. Every breath, every tiny movement sending flutters through her body. And into her heart.

The dull, logical part of her mind pointed out that it was just sex, but her heart relived it, reveling in the memory.

After hours that took the shape of minutes, he lifted his head and kissed her lips. All hint of vulnerability gone. She unlocked her legs from around his waist and he bent with her to lower her to the floor. She clung to him, her knees too weak to support her weight.

He placed hot kisses along her neck and gave one more thrust, his softening cock gliding through her passage. Then he pulled free, slowly, reluctant to leave her.

Jocelyn closed her eyes and rested against the wall as he straightened his clothing. She'd never had a man love her like that—like he wanted to live inside her body.

It was too late for regrets. And impossible to have them. It had been too good. But damn, reality returned quickly. She had to face it. She needed to get rid of him—and hope this one good fuck had gotten him out of her system. She watched him as he knelt

before her. *Not a chance.* Her body was already preparing for his renewed possession.

He lifted her left foot, then the right. Her body was easy with his command and followed each silent instruction. Seconds later, her soft cotton panties slid up her trembling legs. He eased them over her bottom and finally settled them around her waist with a light snap of the elastic.

"Definitely a good beginning." He leaned forward for her kiss. She met him, opening to him, her body now trained to accept his pleasure. She welcomed his tongue and let the leisurely kiss move at its own pace. With a smile, he lifted his head. "But I did promise you a place where you could scream when you come, didn't I? Well, next time." He placed a quick kiss on her lips. "I understand you're coming to the hospital charity ball. I can't wait to see you dressed up, Detective Bliss. Until then."

The front door shut moments later.

Realizing she was standing alone *in a closet*, Jocelyn dragged herself upstairs and collapsed onto the couch. Her mind hung in a fog that blurred her whole body. It was like she'd never had sex before, never had an orgasm, until Zach.

Karen walked out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a dishtowel.

"You seemed to be getting a lot done," she smiled.

Jocelyn blinked in confusion. "What?"

"Well, there was a lot of thumping going on. You must have made good progress."

"Oh yes, good progress." And there was more to come. Zach had promised her more. She sighed, too overwhelmed to fight the fantasy that slipped in.

"I can't wait to see it."

"What?!" Jocelyn sat up. Damn, the closet. "Oh, yeah, well, let me do a little more before you come down. I want to surprise you."

Karen nodded. Jocelyn grimaced

*Great, now I have to clean the closet when she goes to bed.* Not even that unpleasant thought could kill the afterglow. She dropped her head against the back of the couch

and stared unseeing at the television. The memories returned soft and easy – the glide of Zach's hands, the feel of him deep inside her. She sighed and smiled. She'd been right. Zach's legs were strong enough for a stand-up fuck.

"Are you okay?" Karen asked.

"Sure, why?" The dreamy edge to her own voice made her smile.

"Well, you look so...so relaxed."

"There's nothing more satisfying than a job well done."

## Chapter 4

Jocelyn glanced around the room and sighed. She was dreading this interview. But another two days of spinning her wheels and Jocelyn was desperate for activity. She needed to do something—even if it was coming here. The noose was tightening around Zachary's neck. Neighbors placed his car at the scene at 7:30. They also reported screaming fights between Zachary and Catarina—well, screaming on her part. Catarina seemed to have inherited her sister's talent for over the top drama. There seemed to be silence on his side. That fit with everything Jocelyn knew about Zachary—cold, tough, solid.

The image sent a delicious shiver down her spine.

Jocelyn took a deep breath and crushed any emotion. It wouldn't do to be flushed and fantasizing when the victim's sister appeared. Jocelyn kept her gaze moving around the room. Even the wallpaper looked expensive.

She'd never been easily intimidated by wealth but there was something about this room—the atmosphere of the whole house—that made her feel like a servant. She sat on the edge of the couch, making sure she didn't crush any of the pillows behind her.

When Leona Van Wyse walked in, Jocelyn stood and smoothed her hands down her skirt.

"Detective, I understand you wish to see me. Is it to tell me you've arrested my sister's killer?"

"No ma'am, unfortunately not."

"Then why are you here?"

*The woman doesn't believe in small talk, does she?* At least not with someone of Jocelyn's status. But it was a valid question.

"I'd like you to tell me about your sister. What was she like?" Jocelyn had to strain to keep her voice friendly.

After a long considering moment, Leona sighed and nodded to the couch behind Jocelyn. Jocelyn sat obediently and waited.

"She was my baby sister. Delicate. Fragile. She had exquisite taste, always elegant."

Jocelyn lowered her head to jot down notes. It was a habit long formed, she wrote whatever the person said, even if it had no relevance.

*Elegant, exquisite taste.*

The line of Leona's jaw tightened. "Her only flaw was her unfortunate choice of husbands. I never understood why she married that man. Perhaps it was defiance. He didn't fit into our world. Catarina wanted to be seen as wild. I think choosing him was her way of proving it."

"What was your sister's relationship with her husband like?"

Leona's lip curled up like she smelled something bad.

"As I said, I never understood it. I know she was unhappy. And it seems, so was he. She told me once that he wanted her to do things, sexual things, that she wasn't comfortable with."

Jocelyn squelched the memories as fast as they hit her.

"We never went into details, of course. I believe she finally told him to hire a woman, that she wouldn't submit to his barbaric desires any longer."

*Barbaric desires.* Jocelyn stared down at the words and remembered Zach's voice whispering in her ear—all the things he promised to do to her.

"My sister wasn't raised on the streets, like he was. He's crude and big and—" She gave a delicate shudder. "Catarina didn't know what to do with him. She was frightened of him by the end, frightened of the demands he might make. She didn't

know how to say no. He was her husband after all."

"Did he abuse her?" It didn't fit what she'd seen. Zachary hadn't forced her—he'd tempted her until she wanted what he did.

"Not so that it left physical scars. But I don't doubt the psychological ones were there. I don't know what else to tell you, Detective. I don't like the man. I think he killed my sister and I expect the police to do something about it."

"We're doing everything we can."

Jocelyn left moments later, not much more enlightened than when she went in.

Jonathan Street pulled up as she was leaving.

"Detective Bliss, what are you doing here?"

He looked pleased to see her. He walked across the curved driveway with long strides, the heavy weight of a brief case in his left hand.

"I was just meeting with Mrs. Van Wyse. I'm trying to learn more about Catarina." Jonathan raised his eyebrows in question. "Sometimes it helps me to understand the victim a little better."

"Yes. Catarina was devoted to her sister."

"But she married against her wishes."

"Yes."

"Why did Catarina marry Zachary Simons?"

It was blunt question but one that was haunting her.

"I don't suppose I can convince you it was true love," Jonathan said. "I'm afraid, it was for much more practical purposes. Money. The family was in dire straits and needed an influx of cash. Zachary had plenty of it. Don't get me wrong. I believe there was affection on both sides. At least for a time. But I'll admit, it's been six very difficult years for this family."

"Thank you." Jocelyn turned and walked to her car, her mind filled with the new information.

"I'll see you tonight, then," he called. She raised her eyebrows. "At the hospital charity auction?" Jonathan rushed to explain. "Zachary asked in particular that you

attend."

Jocelyn gripped her notebook and nodded. She was so lost in her own thoughts she nearly missed the concerned, almost disapproving look on Jonathan's face. She tilted her head and waited. Finally, he seemed to gather his courage.

"I couldn't help notice the interaction between the two of you. Zachary has a tendency to flirt with all women. Most understand he doesn't mean anything by it. It's just the way he is. I just didn't want you to take it personally."

Not take it personally? Somehow, she thought his cock between her legs was fairly personal. Unless it was a regular occurrence and he fucked any woman he met. She could easily see women falling into his bed, legs spread.

Her smile tightened a fraction. "I wasn't taking it personally at all. I didn't really notice."

She wasn't sure if Jonathan believed her or not but she kept her eyes steady. He nodded. "Well good. With his current situation..." He let his voice fade away. "Well, let's just say I know Zachary will do almost anything to get what he wants."

*And just what does he want? Is it straightforward sex or is he looking for something more – like seducing the investigating officer?*

"I hope you enjoy yourself tonight," Jonathan said. "If you feel uncomfortable at all, just find me. I'll be happy to escort you around."

"Thanks. I'd better go."

She had things to do. Besides investigating a murder, she had to dress for the party tonight.

\* \* \* \* \*

"How do I look?"

Jocelyn gave Frank the once over—his rented tux fit fairly well. The shoulders looked a little tight and he looked uncomfortable. Not because of the cut of the jacket but because of what it represented—wealth and consequence. He wasn't any more



thrilled about being at this party than she was. He was a good-looking man. Tall, broad shouldered. Definitely worth a double take – as long as Zachary wasn't nearby.

"You look good," she said.

"I look like an idiot."

"You look tough and macho." She smiled. "Isn't that what men always want to hear?"

"That and 'ooh, you're so big,'" he deadpanned.

Jocelyn laughed and took his arm as they entered the ballroom. The dark room was almost filled. They'd delayed as long as Jocelyn considered polite before arriving. Late to arrive, early to leave – the less chance of getting herself into trouble with Zachary Simons.

"Now, promise me, you won't leave my side tonight," she whispered. It was a cheap plan but her willpower hadn't worked. "Whatever you do, don't leave me alone with Zachary."

"Hmmm?" Frank asked with a vague sound that indicated he wasn't listening.

"Whatever you do, don't –"

"Detective Bliss, Detective Carroll, welcome."

Jocelyn heard his voice and snapped her head around.

A tiny gasp escaped before she could contain it. She'd seen Zachary Simons casual and in business clothes. He'd been stunning in both. In a tux, he was deadly. The clothing fit him to perfection – clinging in the right places, hanging loose where it needed. It was an outfit meant to be stripped from his body by hot feminine hands. Hers.

"You've gone pale, Detective. Are you all right?" The laughter behind Zach's question was enough to knock her out of her visual shock. She straightened her spine and turned fully to face him. She had her own moment of triumph as Zach's eyes widened.

She looked good. And she knew it. She'd taken extra care in getting ready – making sure the gown, borrowed from a friend, was elegant and sexy. Copper and gold thread

glittered together in a tight bodice that highlighted and displayed her breasts. She'd always considered them one of her better features. Men certainly seemed intrigued by them. The tight square neckline pushed her breasts together.

Jonathan's comment that Zach's behavior wasn't personal had stayed with her, and she'd dressed with the idea of impressing Zachary. No, his actions might not have been "personal" but the heat in his eyes certainly was.

"I'm fine, thank you." Her voice came out a husky whisper.

"I'm glad you could attend." He included Frank in his greeting but kept his gaze on Jocelyn. It was like he was greeting his date. Jocelyn shook her head to clear the thought. It wasn't a date. Zachary was a murder suspect until they'd proved otherwise.

But as the Chief had pointed out, they were representing the department. And it wouldn't do to be rude to prominent businessman until substantial proof had been discovered.

"I hope you both enjoy yourself tonight. I've been a supporter of the hospital for a number of years and they always throw a good party."

Frank looked around the room, his eyes landing on one or two women as they walked by. "I think I'll get something to drink. J.B., you want anything?"

Jocelyn shook her head but before she could say she would go with him, he turned and walked away, leaving her alone with Zachary.

Well, not exactly alone, she admitted silently. She was, after all, in a crowd of over a thousand people. It didn't matter. She didn't notice them. There was only Zachary.

Her throat tightened.

"Your back-up just abandoned you."

Her instinct was to smile but she couldn't let that happen. Instead, she straightened her spine and pushed her shoulders back. "I don't need back-up." She put as much scorn in her voice as possible. She needed to put some distance between them. She'd completely lost her mind on two different occasions with him. That could not happen

again. The Chief was around tonight, no doubt watching her. The press was probably watching and she knew Jonathan and Frank had noticed the strange connection between her and Zach.

Zachary took a step closer, the crowd shifting around them. Her hand tightened on her tiny evening bag but she willed herself not to be intimidated.

"Hmm. And I thought you brought him along so you wouldn't be tempted to drag me into the nearest closet." His voice was low, so low she could barely hear him though his mouth was right next to her ear. She looked away, trying to block out the husky whisper that led her to destruction. "I've replayed it in my mind, night after night. You were so hot, and tight and you held me like you needed my cock as badly as I needed that sweet little pussy of yours."

Jocelyn forced shallow breaths into her constricted lungs.

"Yes, you remember as well." His seductive whisper reminded her of his mouth on her skin. He stepped back. "Let me show you around," he said, all trace of seduction gone from his voice. "It's actually quite interesting. The art along the walls is for sale." The sudden personality change gave Jocelyn whiplash. Zach took her arm and led her toward the edge of the room. For a moment, Jocelyn wondered if this was some ploy to get her out of the ballroom and into some secluded location but instead he did exactly as he'd said. He took her around the room, showing her the various items available during the silent auction.

As they wandered, she learned the true power of Zachary Simons. In the past week, her thoughts of him had been sexual but she saw a different side of him as he moved through the crowd. He greeted people, pausing to talk with some, always introducing her. She noticed he called her Jocelyn Bliss but made no mention of her being a cop. Through it all, he included her — making it clear to all she was the focus of his attention.

Jocelyn listened to the conversations as people stopped Zach. Most wanted to talk business. Zach appeared open and interested but didn't stop for long. It was obvious Zach was one of the biggest contributors of the night. They strolled the length of the

ballroom. Hundreds of items sat on tables lining the room.

Zach explained the silent auction was an additional fundraiser for the new hospital wing.

Jocelyn was quickly caught up in the array of items—everything from massages to baskets of bread, jewelry to art. They wandered from table to table, falling quickly into a comfortable rhythm of conversation. They talked about the items and Jocelyn was amazed to find herself laughing at Zach's quick wit. She hadn't planned to like the man.

She was also amazed at how often Zach stopped to bid. He didn't appear to be looking for anything in particular. Instead, he seemed to randomly pick items and bid on them. When he bid on a pair of hand-crocheted lace gloves, Jocelyn started to get suspicious. What would a man like him, a bachelor, want with lace gloves?

It didn't take long to figure out his pattern. Zachary scanned each table as they walked by. If an item had no bid, he'd put his name down, sometimes bidding well above the minimum asking price. Once she started watching, she was astounded at the number of items he'd bid on.

"You know, you could end up *buying* all this stuff," she cautioned.

"I know." Zachary nodded. "I like stuff."

She remembered the stark elegance of his home. It wasn't cluttered with stuff. He didn't keep the items he bought. *What does he do with it all?*

She started to ask him that same question but a low rumble moved through the room, cutting off her words.

"I can't believe you have the nerve show your face here."

As a unit, they turned to face the victim's sister. Jocelyn instinctively stepped closer to Zach.

"Now, Leona..." Jonathan Street stepped up to the furious woman's side. "We don't need a scene here tonight."

She ignored him. "This was Catarina's favorite charity. How dare you come here

and act like the grieving widower?" She glared at Zach. A portly man with a receding hairline, and an infinitely patient face, placed his hand on her arm. Jocelyn assumed he was Leona's husband. She brushed him away and took a step toward Zach. "You killed my sister. Everyone knows it. The people here are just too scared to turn their backs on you because you've got money. You won't buy your way out of this one. I'm going to see that you're punished for what you've done."

People around them had turned to watch at Leona's first words. Now they stared openly. Murmurs ran through the crowd. Whether sympathetic to Zach or Leona, it was hard to say. And Jocelyn didn't want to find out. The Chief would not be pleased to see her in the middle of a society brawl.

Jocelyn stepped in front of Zach.

"I think maybe we should move this—"

Leona's eyes flashed with hatred as she turned to Jocelyn. "I see how it is." She looked up and down Jocelyn's body. "He can get away with murder if he sleeps with the investigating officer. Or maybe this is a straight pay off. How much does it cost to get you to look the other way? I can't imagine you're too expensive."

Jocelyn's eyes snapped open and she instinctively moved forward to bitch-slap the woman. Two hands landed on her shoulders, pulling her to a stop. She glanced down. Frank, who had appeared out of nowhere, held her left side; Zachary, her right.

"Now, Leona, you know very well the police are investigating everyone, including Zach," Jonathan announced as a way to soothe her grief.

"What about my sister?" Leona's overly dramatic cry echoed through the air. "That bastard is walking around free and she's in the cemetery." She wailed and threw herself into her husband's arms. He caught her and patted her on the back in an uneasy show of comfort.

Zachary stared at the scene without emotion. He remained silent while Leona continued to rant. The crowd around them backed off, forming a circle to watch the action. When Leona was—*finally*, to Jocelyn's way of thinking—led away by her

husband, Zach nodded to the rest of the group, and quietly dismissed himself.

Jocelyn watched him move through the crowd.

"I'll be back," she whispered to Frank and slipped away. It wasn't hard to follow Zach's path. He zigzagged across the room, greeting people as he went, but never stopping.

He looked normal, even calm, for a man who'd just been publicly accused of murder. But Jocelyn knew he wasn't as cool as he appeared. She would have been hard pressed to explain it but she sensed a strange tension that hovered over his body.

The urge to be there for him, to be a comfort to him, propelled her across the floor. It was inappropriate for her to care, but she did. Their previous encounters could hardly have been called emotionally binding, but still, there was an intimacy between them.

He picked up speed as he stepped out of the ballroom. She followed. He turned the corner. She raced behind, the long skirt and high heels limiting her ability to run after him. She made the corner just as a door closed.

She tapped lightly and slipped inside.

"Zach?" The room was dark. Two small wall sconces left long, heavy shadows across the floor. Deep brown leather furniture lined the small room. It was obviously a lounge reserved for important guests.

Zach stood alone at the bar. He poured a snifter of brandy before looking up.

"How can I help you, Detective?" He was every bit as controlled and calm as he'd appeared to the people in the ballroom. No hint of tension lingered in his voice; no trace of irritation marked his face—as if the whole scene was a faintly remembered incident, not worthy of notice. But gone was the charming man who'd escorted her around the ballroom.

"I just came to see if you're all right." Jocelyn took a step closer. She approached slowly, as she would a cornered wild animal.

"I'm fine. Why wouldn't I be?" He took a swallow from the glass. "But I'd prefer to be alone right now." An edge crept into his voice. "My temper is a bit uncertain."

"It's understandable." She wanted to touch him, to put her hands on him and ease that wicked tension that bound his shoulders. But she couldn't. She clenched her fists and forced them to remain at her side. "I—uh..."

He tossed back the rest of the brandy and stamped the empty glass onto the bar.

"How eloquently spoken, Detective. Was there something else you wanted to say?"

His snide demand snapped her patience and vaporized her compassion.

"I just wanted to make sure you're were okay—but *obviously*, I didn't need to bother. I should have known *you* didn't need any help." She spun around, ready to storm away.

Zach's hand shot out and grabbed her arm. In one fluid move, he pulled her back, taking her hips in his hands and lifting her onto the edge of the bar. The long skirt of her gown frothed around her legs and over her arms.

He placed his hands outside her legs. His fingers dug into the edge of the bar, leaving dents in the smooth leather, like he was fighting for control. She held her breath and waited. He raised his eyes and stared up at her.

Fire, desire, and heat flashed at her—and something else. Something that looked like hurt, need.

"Zach—" She ran her hand down the side of his face.

"If you want to help, you can help me work off some of this stress." His words were gruff but she could see a slow unwinding in his gaze.

Before she could think to respond, he gently gathered her skirts, folding them back and away, baring her legs. He placed his hands on her thighs and slowly spread her legs open.

He was silent, almost grim as, he slipped his hands up the sides of her legs and around, cupping her buttocks in his huge palms and slowly pulling her hips forward. She inhaled sharply and leaned back, catching her weight on her hands.

He smoothed his hands over her skin—long, soft circles of contact along the muscles of her thighs. Her breath slowed to match his, long deep-chested pants. He pressed his

hands on the insides of her thighs and opened her more. Her white satin panties shone against the dark wood of the bar.

The steady pressure of his stare sent her moisture flowing. She shifted under his hands, hoping to ease the growing ache.

He didn't seem to notice. His fingers trailed down the inside of her thighs then followed the same path back up her mound, close but not quite touching. Her sensitized skin tingled with each new touch, burned with each repeated caress.

She knew what was coming—knew in moments he would put that seductive mouth on her sex. He'd promised this and she'd dreamed of it. Her body tightened, preparing for his intimate kiss. She wanted it. Wanted the feel of his mouth on her pussy. The leisurely caresses weren't enough.

"Zach." Her voice was deep and husky. And begging.

"Tell me," he commanded, never lifting his eyes to hers, focused only on the vision before him. His thumbs slipped under the edge of her panties and then retreated.

"Please," she whispered.

"Tell me," he ordered again. "What do you want?"

She bit her lip. She'd never asked a man to do this before, but the dreams of Zach, the fantasies of his mouth on her skin were too much.

"Your mouth."

He didn't respond. For a moment, she thought he might not have heard her. Slowly, giving her too much time to anticipate his touch, he leaned forward and, with the lightest touch, licked his tongue slowly up the center of her panties.

Jocelyn pressed her lips together but still a tiny whimper escaped. The elusive touch left her flesh quivering as it passed. Moisture soaked her panties. He slid his finger under the edge of her underwear and traced tiny patterns along the outer side her nether lips, tickling the hairs and sending a rush of shivers through her body.

He kept his mouth against the satin shield that covered her sex. The slow steady



brush of his tongue resonated through her underwear, shaking her to the center of her melted core. She curled her hips forward, wanting a deeper, more intimate touch.

"Do you want my mouth against your skin?" His words vibrated against her clit.

"Yes!"

"Do you want me to suck your cunt?"

"Oh God, yes." His words swelled the ache between her legs.

She lifted her hips to help him remove her underwear. He pulled her panties down her legs and slipped them off over her high-heeled shoes. She waited—sure that he would finally put his mouth on her.

He took her calves in his hands and raised them. Jocelyn had no choice but to rock back when he placed her legs over his shoulders. As he bent his head, moving toward the moist heat that had been designed for him, he looked up and met her eyes. She discovered a new seduction. His eyes glowed with undisguised desire and pleasure.

He loved what he was doing to her.

One corner of his lips curled up in an arrogant smile and he lowered his gaze to her sex. The rough texture of his palms slid up the backs of her legs, supporting her open, vulnerable position. Jocelyn waited, tensing, anticipating that first touch.

When it came it was a whisper. Warm, hot breath flooded the tiny hairs of her bush. Then the touch of his tongue, light and fleeting against the inside edge of her lips. It was wet and hot. His fingers spread her lips wide. Jocelyn held her breath. He licked again slowly up the inside of her sex, stopping when he reached her clit. She groaned and grabbed his head at the first light flick. God, he'd teased her for too long. He moved like he was backing away.

"No-o!" Her protest was involuntary but she couldn't let him stop. She dug her fingers into his scalp and squeezed her thighs closed, capturing his head between her legs. She felt his smile against her skin but he didn't pull back. He circled his tongue around her clit, as if telling her the time for teasing had past. She relaxed her grip on his

head and sighed, letting the tension flow between her legs and spiral through her eager body.

She rolled her hips, matching the lashes of his tongue. He opened his lips over her clit and started sucking as he pushed two fingers deep inside her pussy. Her groan echoed through the empty room. She no longer cared if someone heard her. His fingers fucked her, steady strokes while he sucked a similar rhythm on her clit. He kept on, steady, strong. Warm shudders ran through her body as the ache built between her thighs. He curled his fingers within her cunt brushing against her inner walls.

She gasped and tried to sit up. Without stopping his movements, he reached up with his free hand and gently pushed her back. Breath struggled to fill her lungs.

“Oh my God, Zach.”

He kept on, licking and sucking and stroking with his long fingers.

And the center of her world exploded. She arched her back and cried out as heat pulsed from the point between her legs and flooded her body.

His tongue continued to trace light licks against her clit, tasting her. Slowly, she relaxed the grip of her thighs and stared into empty space, listening to her body hum and trying to regain her breath, her equilibrium, her sense of decorum. They were gone, and obviously, were not coming back for a while.

She was vaguely aware of Zach lowering her legs and pulling her underwear back in place. He set one final kiss on the top of her sex as if kissing it goodbye. For now. He draped the gown back over her legs and straightened.

“I feel better already.”

She blinked at him. Something was different. Her fogged mind took a moment to understand—the fierce strain that had invaded Zach’s shoulders was gone.

“That’s how you release your tension?” It was difficult to make her mind and her mouth work together. “Did your wife do things specifically to stress you out?”

Zach smiled. “Is that what you would do, Detective? Tie me up in knots so I’d be in

need of tension relief?"

"Damn straight."

Zach laughed. "Glad to hear it." After a moment, his laughter fell away and he shook his head. "No, Catarina didn't care for this sort of thing. She was a bit more traditional."

"I didn't think it was that unconventional." He raised his eyebrows. "Toe-curling," she clarified. "But not unconventional."

Heat flared behind Zachary's eyes as he helped her off the bar. He kept her close, moving between her legs, pressing lightly against her sex. "Glad you enjoyed it. I'm fond of this kind of loving myself." He arched his hips forward. His erection brushed her mound. She moaned as a sudden spike of pleasure ran through her body. It was too easy to recall the feel of his cock inside her—and too long since she'd felt it. She'd just come but there was clearly room for more. "I'm pleased you didn't find it too wild. Does this mean you'll enjoy it when I tie you to my bed and fuck you until you can't walk?"

Jocelyn nodded. Then realized what she was agreeing to. She shook her head.

She couldn't. Reality intruded. Damn, she'd done it again.

She was a cop—a cop who'd let a murder suspect make love to her in a closet and go down on her at a charity ball. And she couldn't forget that first time in his office. What was she thinking? This couldn't keep happening. She was going to get fired. The Chief was somewhere in the ballroom. God forbid someone informed him she'd raced out after Zachary Simons. She mentally kicked herself but couldn't really regret what had happened. It had been too mind-blowing.

She stepped away and smoothed her hands down her dress. She looked remarkably tidy, no signs of the fact that she'd just been spread out on the bar and eaten like Sunday Brunch. Zach ran his fingers through his hair and it was back in shape, no reminder of her fingers tangling in the thick brown strands.

"Are you all set?" Zach offered his arm. "Shall we go?"

She shook her head. She couldn't do it. She couldn't return to the ballroom on his arm. It would jeopardize everything.

You already did that, she added, knowing it was true. Something about Zachary Simons made her forget what she was supposed to do.

"I want to fix my makeup before I go back," she said lamely.

"You look great," Zach insisted with a smile. Heat flashed at her through his gaze. Heat and a dare – daring her to walk out of the room by his side.

"No, really. You go ahead. I'll see you inside."

Zach shook his head, disbelief crossing his face. "You're ashamed to walk in with me," he accused. Jocelyn looked away. "Fuck, I don't believe this. My wife was willing to be seen with me in public but she wouldn't let me go down on her in the privacy of our bedroom." He shoved his hands into his pockets. "You, follow me into a back room and spread your legs, but I'm not worthy of taking your arm to walk into the ballroom." He turned and strolled to the door, the cool detached businessman returning. "You know your way back. I hope you enjoy the evening, Detective. And if you need stud services again, put me on the short list. Discreet, confidential fucks guaranteed."

"Zach—" She called out but he didn't stop. It was probably for the best. What would she have said?

She waited, longer than necessary, before opening the door. The hall was empty. Sounds of the party echoed from the crowded ballroom. With heavy feet, Jocelyn walked toward the noise.

She stared at the entrance.

She couldn't do it. She couldn't make herself go in. It didn't matter that the room was filled with over a thousand people—she'd know Zachary was there. And she'd remember the look his eyes—it was like she'd hurt him. Was it possible? Or had it been pride and ego?

It didn't matter. She couldn't risk seeing him again. Not tonight.

## Chapter 5

Daylight didn't bring any revelations—except into her own character. The scene had played over and over again in her mind. And she didn't look better in the picture, no matter how often she played it.

Had his words been true? Was she as shallow as his wife?

She threw herself out of bed and pulled on her workout clothes. She'd go for a run. Maybe pounding the pavement would loosen up the cobwebs in her head. She jerked open the front door and saw Frank sitting in his car in her driveway. He got out as she approached.

"How long have you been here?"

He shrugged. "A couple of hours."

"Hours?"

"I'm a cop. I'm used to sitting around for long hours." He drank from the Styrofoam cup in his hand. He was a cop. He knew to come prepared with a thermos of coffee.

"This is my house. It isn't some kind of stakeout." She stopped and squinted at him. "Is it?"

Frank shook his head. "No. At least not yet, but you've got to watch it. You disappeared last night with Simons and then no one sees you for the rest of the night."

Jocelyn folded her arms over her chest and looked away.

"I came home," she said. Frank raised one eyebrow. "Alone. I made my appearance, chatted with a few people, and stopped the sister of the victim from decking our prime

suspect. I figured my work was done.”

“So, you followed Simons out and that was it? Nothing happened?” Jocelyn considered lying but she couldn’t do that—not to Frank. Instead she stayed silent. “Jocelyn, do you understand what’s going to happen? You’re going to lose your badge and probably go up on criminal charges. You can’t get involved with him.”

She straightened her spine and stared him down. “I’m *not* involved with him. Have I given you any reason to suspect I’m not trying to find evidence against him? I’d be thrilled to have him arrested.” As she said the words, she realized they were partially true. If he was arrested, her history of poor taste in men would be confirmed.

“They watch, J.B.”

“I know.” She’d been young and stupid when she’d met Donnie. He’d conned her for months. Or more realistically, she’d conned herself for months, ignoring evidence that he was small time crook trying to make the big time by having a cop at his beck and call.

But then she’d overheard a conversation between Donnie and one of his friends. He’d talked about how he had her under control—kept her happy with flowers and hot sex.

Jocelyn hadn’t turned him in. She couldn’t. The world would know what an idiot she’d been. The cops finally arrested him and he’d cursed her name the entire way through booking.

That was probably the only thing that saved her badge then. Nothing would save it this time. This time it wouldn’t matter. She was determined—if Zach was using her, if he was guilty, she’d be the first in line to arrest him and then she’d quit. Her instincts were off.

“You should have stayed last night,” Frank said.

Something in his tone made her wary. “Why?”

He shook his head like he couldn’t quite grasp it himself. “I don’t know. Things got a little weird. It was like the room divided into factions—his and hers.”

"Which side did you hang out on?"

"Hers. A lot of people think he had good reason to kill her."

"Fine. Do any of them have proof?"

"No. Just rumors. Leona's been telling the world about Simons' kinky sex tendencies. Maybe we could get a warrant to search his house."

Jocelyn closed her eyes for a moment—anything to do with Zachary and sex sent a bolt of lust into her gut.

She could see him into a few kinks—a little domination, a few paddles. The flesh between her legs began to dampen. She'd never been into that scene but with Zachary...

It was too easy to hear his voice commanding her attention—demanding her submission. Her mind blurred with the fantasy.

*"On your knees."*

*She resisted for a moment but then looked in his eyes. They were hard and serious and she knew if she didn't follow his orders, he'd leave. Leave before fucking her.*

*She sank down, spreading her thighs wide, as she knew he'd want.*

*"Very good. Now, suck me. Take my cock in your mouth and love it." She pressed up on her knees and opened her mouth.*

She shook her head and the image evaporated. Frank sipped his coffee and didn't seem to have noticed her fall into sex fantasy world.

"Well, kinky isn't illegal," she pointed out.

"Good thing, too." The corner of Frank's mouth kicked up and Jocelyn wondered if he might be into a kink she didn't know about. "I mean because the jails would be full," he added, though the tops of his ears turned red. "What do we do now? The Chief's still looking for answers and everything's pointing to Simons."

Everything except my mind, Jocelyn thought.

"Yeah, let's do something." Running had lost its appeal. She wanted to work. The

only thing that was going to get Zachary Simons out of her life was to solve this case—one way or the other. “Let’s see if we can find any of these women he’s supposedly been with in the past year. Then we go over the financials again and see where he’s spending his millions.”

Hours later, Jocelyn glared at the phone. She’d called so many hotels and bars she thought she’d scream. No one remembered Zachary with a woman besides his wife or his assistant. Jocelyn remembered the overblown sighs of the woman in Zach’s office. She couldn’t picture him with a woman like that. He’d want a woman who was real, honest, and open.

*Me.*

*Ha!* Zachary wanted something from her, but it wasn’t a long-term relationship. Men like him didn’t have long term relationships with women like her. They might be interested for a while but eventually, Zachary was going to want one of his own kind. Another Catarina.

“Let’s try it a different way.”

Frank looked up. “I’m open to any suggestions because I’m getting nowhere.”

“Let’s look at the victim.”

“That’s dangerous. Her family has money.”

“I’m not trying to crucify her. I just want to know what she was like. Why so many people think Zachary was capable of killing her.”

“I’m not sure he wouldn’t be capable of killing his own mother. That’s one cold dude.”

Jocelyn crushed the instinctive protest. She could swear to Frank that Zachary was anything but cold.

But she decided now was not the time to do that.

“I think I’ll start checking around.”

“With who?”



She smiled. "Someone had to keep that house clean."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jocelyn walked silently through the Simons' home. She had permission to be there and wanted to see the house alone. She wandered through the living room. All traces of the murder were gone but it was scratched into her memory – the broken, glazed stare of Catarina Simons. The elegant negligee, the perfect make-up. Only death's stain stopped it from being picture perfect.

A long, deep shudder ran up her spine. It seemed simple. She stood next to the small table – the one that Catarina had hit when she fell – and pictured the scene in her head. Jocelyn brushed her hair back and put her hand on her hip, trying to put herself in Catarina's mind.

*She waits for him – hoping for a reconciliation. She dressed especially for him. He likes her in lace because she looks delicate and helpless. Zachary walks in and sees her. She smiles seductively knowing Zachary will take up any invitation for sex. He doesn't speak. He lifts the gun and –*

It didn't fit. This wasn't a crime of passion. It was cold and plotted out. It wasn't Zach's style.

Jocelyn cringed at her thoughts. *His style?* Yeah, she could bring that before the judge. *This kind of murder isn't his style.* It sounded stupid even in her own brain.

"Detective Bliss?" a soft-spoken voice called. Jocelyn looked up. A dark headed woman stood in the entryway.

"Are you Amie?" The woman nodded. Jocelyn flashed her badge. "Thank you for talking to me."

"I told the other police – I wasn't here. I only come in three times a week and I wasn't here that night. I don't know anything."

"Am I keeping you from your work?"

Amie shrugged. "I'm supposed to dust twice week now. Just to keep everything tidy until an inventory is made."

"We can talk while you dust," Jocelyn offered. She followed the housekeeper up the stairs and down the hall to an east facing room. As Jocelyn walked in, she knew it was Catarina's room.

Like the room where Jocelyn had first met Zach, this room was designed around flowers. The curtains and bedcovers were a choreographed blend of different floral prints lined with more lace. It was well done, elegant but still Jocelyn's practical mind screamed for something solid. She forced herself to look beyond the pattern. She didn't have to like the woman or like her taste in interior design to investigate her death.

"I know you weren't here that night, Amie. I'm just trying to get a handle on Mrs. Simons' character. What was she like?"

The housekeeper smiled. "Rich. She was rich and spoiled and she had excellent taste."

*That's what her sister said.* Jocelyn let the edge of her mouth curl up. "What was she like to work for?"

"Mrs. Simons, she was okay. She didn't harp or follow me around. She told me what she wanted and expected it to be done. It was, so I got to keep my job."

"What about Mr. Simons?"

Amie paused before replacing the candlestick she'd lifted to dust. "He's an interesting man." Jocelyn waited, hoping the housekeeper would continue. "I don't think they were a good match," Amie added.

"Why not?"

She turned and looked at Jocelyn. "She was so dainty and feminine and he's so rough and rugged. I think she found him overwhelming."

Jocelyn wandered across the room. An elegant jewelry box stood open on the dresser and a tall jewelry case next to it. She lifted the lid on the first case and flinched

at the glitter.

"Wow, she liked her jewelry."

Amie laughed. "That she did. Had jewelry for every occasion."

"And for occasions I've never even thought of, I'm sure." Using her pen, Jocelyn flipped a couple of the pieces around. More stones glittered back.

"Mr. Simons was a great one for gifts. He bought her little gifts all the time."

Two smooth bands grabbed Jocelyn's attention.

"Did she have two wedding bands?"

"Yes. One in gold and one in platinum, so it would match the rest of her jewelry. She wouldn't wear gold and silver together. Mr. Simons bought her a second wedding ring, exactly like the first one but in platinum so she could always wear her ring."

Jocelyn remembered her own mother telling her that silver and gold couldn't be worn together but sometime in the past ten years it had become acceptable.

"Hadn't she heard you can mix gold and silver now?"

"I'm sure she heard, she just didn't care. She was a purist."

*And she had the money to do it. Or he did.* Jocelyn opened the tall case and glanced through a couple of the drawers. She didn't have a definite purpose—but it was interesting to learn about Catarina, about the woman Zachary had married.

The third drawer she opened pulled Jocelyn to a stop.

Almost a dozen watches were lined in perfect symmetry, ticking in precision.

"She liked watches."

Amie came over and peeked over Jocelyn's shoulder.

"Yes. Mr. Simons gave her most of these. She had one for every outfit."

The watch found on Catarina's wrist that night fit in with the watches laying in the drawer.

"Is that all?" Amie asked from the door. "I'd like to close up this room."

"You said you're cleaning until they do an inventory. Doesn't it all go to her

husband?" *Not if he's found guilty of murder.*

"I wouldn't know, ma'am."

Amie followed Jocelyn out of the room, locking the door behind her.

Jocelyn left, feeling no wiser than when she'd arrived.

One thing had become crystal clear. Jocelyn might not like Catarina Simons' taste in furniture and the woman sounded like a snob, but she had had excellent taste in men, even if she hadn't recognized it herself.

Jocelyn returned home to a quiet house and a blank answering machine. Zach hadn't called. Not that she'd expected him to after last night.

Karen was working so the house was empty.

Jocelyn wandered upstairs but couldn't settle anywhere. She moved from living room to kitchen and back. But walking didn't help. Now that work wasn't there to distract her, her thoughts kept returning to Zachary and the cold look in his eyes as he'd left her last night.

His words haunted her. She couldn't blame him for his anger. If *he'd* refused to walk out with her after fucking in the back room, she would have felt cheap. Used. And that's exactly what she'd done to him.

He'd shown much more control than she would have. She almost smiled imagining the scene she would have caused if he'd walked out after fucking her. Leona's dramatics would have paled in comparison. Yet, Zachary hadn't sounded hurt or angry. Disgusted maybe. Irritated definitely.

Then his distance had returned. She knew from her limited experience that he used distance whenever he wanted to conceal emotion.

A sick punch landed in her stomach. She headed for the door, grabbing her coat at the bottom of the stairs. Even as she moved, she knew it wasn't a smart decision. She was putting herself within his reach and that had proved disastrous before but she had to do something. She couldn't leave things like this.

She didn't remember most of the drive to his house. She spent the time rehearsing what to say. It all sounded stupid inside her head. She couldn't imagine saying any of it out loud. He'd laugh at her.

The one truth that came to her was she couldn't keep working the case. It would never work—at least in her mind. She'd never know if she'd let a murderer go free because she was attracted to him or if she arrested an innocent man to prove she wasn't under his power. Both answers were wrong. She had to get herself off the investigation. It wouldn't be hard. The Chief would love a reason to embarrass her.

That decision made, Jocelyn took a deep breath and tapped lightly on his door. It was a half-hearted rap. Maybe he wouldn't hear it, then she could tell herself she made the effort and go home and write him a note.

Silence answered her knocked and after a few moments, she sighed in relief. She turned away and the door opened.

"Detective Bliss, how can I help you?"

The butler who'd cleaned her dress stopped her escape. She silently swore but faced him.

"Hi. I was looking for Zachary, uh, Mr. Simons, is he home?"

The man backed away, opening a space for Jocelyn. It was now or never. She forced her legs to move and stepped inside.

"I'll see if Mr. Simons is home."

"The house isn't that big," she pointed out. If Zachary didn't want to see her, fine, but he wouldn't be able to hide behind his butler.

"Still, I'll see if he's available to see you now." He turned and walked away, leaving her waiting in the hallway.

The superior tone made Jocelyn's jaw ache but she kept her mouth shut. She was here with a mission. She was going to get it done and get the hell home so she could begin her program to forget Zachary Simons.

"Mr. Simons will see you, Detective. He's upstairs, first door to the right. Goodnight." He turned and walked past her, exiting out the front door. The snap of the door closing behind him jolted Jocelyn more than she'd expected. She was alone with Zachary. Truly alone.

Every other time they'd been together there had been others nearby, near enough to fear exposure. But not tonight. They were alone in his house. She took a deep breath and walked up the stairs, her feet heavy, as if resisting each step.

She turned at the top of the stairs and walked through the open door.

Into his bedroom.

She'd missed this room during her visit last week.

A huge bed dominated the right half of the room. The bed was sturdy, strong. Staring at it, she could easily imagine herself, spread eagle, waiting for Zachary to enter her. The ever-present ache rolled deep in her stomach at the fantasy.

"How can I help you, Detective?"

She spun around and faced him. Zachary waited, sitting casually on a loveseat opposite the bed, one leg crossed over the other, ankle to knee. His fingertips tapped a slow rhythm atop his thigh. She wasn't sure if it was a sign of nervousness or impatience.

"Is this a formal interview? Do I need to call my lawyer? Or are you simply looking for stud service?"

She decided to jump to her reason for being there.

"I came by to tell you that I'm taking myself off the investigation." She watched him, waiting for his reaction.

There was none. He didn't smile or frown. Hell, he didn't even blink. He just stared at her.

"Okay," he finally said.

Not exactly what she'd expected. "Uh, okay, well, that's it then. I just wanted you to

know. Someone else will be taking over the case."

"Is that why you came here tonight? To tell me this?"

"Yes." No, her obsessively truthful conscience countered silently.

"Why didn't you just call? I was able to find *your* address and phone number. Surely a cop could find my unlisted number."

"Why else would I come over here?"

As soon as she said the words, she knew it was a mistake. He'd have a dozen answers for that and, dammit, they were probably close to the truth.

"I'm guessing it's to take me up on my offer to fuck you until you scream." The arrogant smile on his lips was almost more than Jocelyn could handle but then she remembered the blandness of his eyes last night. This was not a man who showed himself easily. "You *are* here for stud services, aren't you, Detective?"

"No. I—"

"Well, it happens that I'm in the mood to fuck and you're available."

"Listen, I don't want to do this."

"Really?" He draped his arms casually across the back of the love seat and lowered his foot. The movement opened him up, and she could see his waist, and his crotch. Her eyes lingered. He was getting hard, just talking to her. Memories of him kneeling before her assailed her senses and she knew now she wanted to return the favor. Her hands gripped the soft material of her jacket. His erection swelled under her heated gaze. "You're a terrible liar, Detective. Why did you really come here tonight?"

She hated to think of herself as a total coward. She pushed her shoulders back and looked into his eyes. "I wanted to apologize for last night."

"I see."

His clipped answer was completely unenlightening and didn't help Jocelyn decide what to do next. She had no clue where to go from here.

"I'm sorry," she continued. "I was rude and I panicked. I don't know how to

handle—" She waved her hand vaguely in the air. "This."

Zachary shrugged. "What's to handle? We're attracted to each other. Or am I missing my guess? Were those adventures in the closets and last night all on my part?"

"No, of course not but, Zach, I'm a cop."

"Yes."

"You're a suspect in a murder I'm investigating."

"Yes."

"Well?" she demanded, exasperation finally getting the better of her. "Don't you see how that could be a little bit of a conflict of interest? Don't you think I might need to protect my reputation just a little bit? I have to be able to do my job and I can't do that if people think I'm fucking the primary suspect."

"Which you aren't."

"No."

"Not yet."

Jocelyn took a deep breath. This was the moment. This moment explained why she'd come here tonight. She raised her eyes to his, knowing he would see the truth.

"No. Not yet," she whispered.

"By the morning, you won't be able to say that."



## Chapter 6

Jocelyn waited, resisting the opposing urges to run from the room, protecting her career and maybe her heart—or running to him, plunging herself into dangerous pleasure.

“Come here,” he commanded.

A small corner of her mind might have protested the order but it was silenced before it could scream. Her body moved forward, taking the three steps necessary to reach him. She stopped and waited. The stoic set of his face hadn't changed. He was still angry, maybe hurt. Was she to be punished in some way? The thought should have scared her—more because of her own willingness to accept his punishment than anything else—but she knew his punishment would lead to her pleasure.

Zach reached up and placed his hand around the back of her neck. With gentle and steady pressure, he pulled her to him. His mouth met hers, his tongue demanding entrance. The kiss was harsh and ravishing. She accepted it as what was due her and gave him the response she knew he wanted. She welcomed his tongue, drawing it deep into her mouth and pulling a groan from deep in his chest, changing the kiss to a quest for pleasure.

After long moments, he released her and sat back. She'd accused him of being cold, but here, close up, there was fire. It raged in his eyes.

“No coercion. No seduction. Your decision,” he said, his voice soft even in the quiet room. “But know what you're getting into. If you stay here we're going to fuck, but it will be how *I* want it and for as long as *I* want it. So decide now.”

Her throat tightened. He'd said there would be no seduction but he didn't realize

how seductive his words were or how powerful it was to be given the responsibility of the decision. She could walk away. He wouldn't try to stop her. But she knew she wouldn't leave. She couldn't.

She stared at his lips. And licked her own, then she nodded.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Fine."

She could almost believe he didn't care if she stayed or left, but she recognized the tension lining his shoulders and remembered the glow of his eyes. He folded his arms over his chest.

"Strip," he ordered.

The air left Jocelyn's lungs in a rush. "What?"

"Strip. I've only seen you naked once and I had to rush it. Strip."

She opened her mouth to reject the idea—or at least re-negotiate—but Zachary watched her. He was daring her. He didn't think she'd do it.

She stepped back and reached up, beginning at the top of her blouse. She'd never stripped for someone before. Most times she was ripping off her clothes in a rushed attempt to get to the bed before the feelings faded.

Her top three buttons slipped open easily. She stared down at her hands and realized they were trembling. It wasn't fear or embarrassment that worried her muscles—it was excitement. She took a deep breath, hoping to calm her nerves. The movement opened the top of her blouse, revealing the laced edges of her bra. She swallowed deeply and continued. She reached the next button.

Then she looked up. Zachary's eyes hadn't left her face. He wasn't watching her strip—he was watching to see what this was doing to her. And smirking while he did.

Defiance flared in her chest. Jocelyn lifted her chin and gripped the edges of her shirt. With a quick snap of her hands, the bottom three buttons popped off and the blouse was open.

The left edge of Zach's lips curled up. She slipped the shirt back, off her shoulders, catching it for a moment on her elbows and holding it—teasing him. She trailed her fingertip across her collarbone and down the valley between her breasts. She looked at Zach and tilted her head, silently asking if he wanted her to continue. Like an arrogant pasha to his slave, he nodded, giving her permission to move on.

She let her chest rise and fall in deep breaths, knowing the movement revealed more each time. Her pussy ached with a need that she knew only Zach could ease.

Others might come close but she needed Zachary Simons.

*Tonight.*

She added the word to remind herself this wasn't a forever thing. She couldn't afford to lose her heart to him. Her body was one thing, but she needed to keep her emotions separate.

And just enjoy what Zachary could do for her.

And what she could do to him.

Loving that he watched, she lowered her gaze, focusing on his erection, pressing up against his trousers. She stared for a moment then licked her lips—it was an extravagant, porn star kind of movement but it worked. She heard a sharp intake of breath and couldn't resist a slight smile.

She straightened her elbows and let the blouse fall to the ground. Then with a quick flick of her unsteady fingers, she opened the button on her slacks and let them fall. They piled at her ankles and she stepped out of them. She wore casual walking shoes so she left those behind as well. She stood before him, bare except for her underwear.

Unable to resist, she looked at him again. He wasn't watching her face any more.

Fire flashed in his eyes and warmed her bare skin.

"No cotton panties today, Detective?"

"I thought you'd like these." It was true. She'd dressed with him on her mind, selecting white lace panties and matching bra.

"Very nice." Zach pushed himself out of the chair and strolled across the room. Desire throbbed in her sex. "I do seem to have a fascination with white panties these days." He stopped inches away from her, their bodies touching in fleeting caresses. He slipped his hand between her legs and cupped her crotch. His touch was light, just a tease against the silk of her underwear. A shaft of need spiked in her stomach. She couldn't stop her gasp.

"You're already wet. Almost like you were thinking about fucking me before you got here." He placed a soft kiss on her lips. "Were you? Were you thinking of how I would slide into your cunt and fuck you all night long."

"Yes." She turned, trying to catch his mouth for another kiss but he shook his head.

"Soon," he promised. "Take off your bra."

The front clasp of her bra opened easily. The cups clung lovingly to her breasts. Her breasts hung heavy and wanting. Her nipples were peaked and aching for the feel of his mouth. She pulled the cups of her bra away.

Almost as if he couldn't resist, he reluctantly slid his hand from between her legs and moved upward, cupping one breast, holding its heavy weight.

"Lovely," he said, his voice a sensual invitation across her skin. He bent down and placed an honoring kiss on each nipple before straightening and stepping away. "Now turn around and take off your panties. You've got an incredible ass, and I want to see it." Excitement brushed over her skin, making her nipples even tighter. She turned for him.

It was a show and she was the star.

Cocking her hip to the side, she slipped her thumbs into the elastic band of her underwear. Pushing down, she slowly revealed her the top half of her bottom. She paused and rocked over so the other hip jutted out and then continued the slow, sensuous slide of lace against her skin. She glanced over her shoulder to make sure he was still watching. Fire glittered in his eyes, fire that she felt deep in her pussy.

She bent forward, inspired by his intense stare. Keeping her legs straight, she slid

her panties down her legs, baring herself until she was bent fully over — her ass high in the air.

“Very nice.” The casual words were a blow to her ego until she heard his breath, tight and deep. “Now stay there, for just a moment. Spread your legs. That’s it. Let me see you.” Her own moisture flowed, almost dripping down her leg.

A strange vulnerability flooded into her. She took a deep breath, trusting in Zach, and moved one leg out, opening her naked sex to him. She stood there, bent over, the backs of her legs screaming, her mind fucked by the idea of him staring at her. After long moments, he said, “That’s lovely. Now, climb onto the bed.”

She straightened and the blood rushed to her head. She looked over her shoulder. Zach was watching her closely. The distance she’d seen so often was gone. He was there, aroused by the sight of her body.

Power rushed through her veins as she stepped out of the discarded panties. She lifted her chest, proudly presenting her breasts and strolled to the huge bed in the middle of the room. Her loose-hipped walk massaged the sensitive flesh between her legs and she loved it. There was more to come. She crawled up onto the bed, stretching her body like a cat, showing off for the man who watched.

“Lay on your back and spread your legs. Show yourself to me.”

She tensed for a moment then rolled over, following his command.

“Spread your legs,” he repeated. “Let me see that sweet pussy that I’ve licked and touched.”

She looked up at him, hesitating, caught between embarrassment and arousal. Zachary stood at the end of the bed and watched her. Taking a deep breath, she reached between her legs and used her palms to slowly open them. His steady gaze waited until she was exposed to him before releasing her eyes. Then he looked down.

“Very nice. Are you wet, little one?”

“Yes,” she admitted what he already knew.

"And pretty. That's it. Let me see you. I want to see how you like to be touched." She let her fingers trail lightly across her sensitive skin. "Yes, touch yourself."

She followed his orders, her mind locked in sensation, his voice echoing through her skull. It was easy to imagine his hand between her legs, teasing her clit, stroking her. She groaned. That was what she wanted. His fingers on her skin.

"Please, Zach."

"Soon. Yes, let me see." She felt his hand on her thigh as he spread her legs farther apart, opening her to him. She took a deep breath, her chest tight, her pussy hungry for satisfaction. She let his voice surround her and touched herself, rubbing circles over her clit, desperate for release.

The pressure began to build. She rocked her hips upward, pushing against her own hand.

"Stop." Zach's voice barely penetrated her sensually fogged world. She ignored him. "Stop," he commanded again. This time the words were accompanied by a light touch of his fingers on the back of her hand. He wrapped his fingers around her wrist and pulled her hand away from her sex.

"No, Zach please." She knew the pleading voice had to be hers but she didn't recognize it, and somewhere deep inside she was sure she'd be ashamed later, but her body needed this.

"Shh. Let me." He replaced her hand with his and slipped one long finger inside her pussy. Her sex tightened around him. "That's it. Move against me. Let me give it to you."

It didn't take much. He held steady while she pumped her hips upward, fucking herself against his finger. He talked to her while she moved, telling her how sexy she looked spread before him. She dropped her head back and groaned as the tension intensified. Speech was impossible. She moaned and let the feeling flow through her. She arched up against him, crying out as her orgasm flooded her body.

She relaxed back on the bed, her chest pumping with the need for breath. Zach

looked at her and smiled. As she watched him, he lifted his hand to his mouth and licked his finger. She didn't know why but that slow movement, the clear enjoyment of her taste, drove a wedge of desire back into her satisfied body.

As if he could read her mind, read her desire, he leaned over her and placed his mouth against her sex. With slow, oh so gentle licks, he began to fuck her with his tongue. Her sensitized skin fluttered at the soft touches. She sighed his name.

He smiled against her skin, loving the sound of her sighs almost as much as the warm wet of her sex.

She was the perfect fuck. For him. For now.

He didn't let the illusion of desire cloud his judgment. This wasn't permanent. The detective didn't actually like him very much, but she liked to fuck. And she wanted to fuck him. Once the need had burned out, for both of them, they would go their own ways. It just wouldn't be soon.

He used his mouth against her, enjoying the warm, musky flavor of her pussy. She was so open. Her cries, like caresses along his cock, made him even harder. He wanted her to scream for him. Wanted her to lose her mind until only he existed.

He drove his tongue into her cunt and began short, quick flicks with the very tip, tickling her inner walls. Jocelyn sat up, her knees clamping around his head.

"Zachary!"

She felt his shoulders shake as he laughed but he didn't stop the fluttering caresses. He moved deeper, placing his mouth over her cunt, alternating between the long tongue fucks and sucking on her clit.

She pushed up to half-sitting and began panting as the now familiar rise of orgasm overwhelmed her, centered at the point of Zachary's mouth. He rubbed the swollen mound of her clit with his finger and slid his tongue deep inside.

"Ahh!" Like an electric shock, her body tightened. She dug her fingers into the bedspread to keep herself earthbound. Her mind lost focus while her body shook with

the power of her release. "What the hell was that?" she gasped when she could speak.

With a final kiss and a long lick that made Jocelyn whimper, Zachary lifted his head.

"Well, it sounded like an outrageous orgasm." He licked his lips. "Felt like one, too."

"How did you do it?"

He just smiled, mysteriously.

Sated and weak from two climaxes, she closed her eyes and willed her breath to return to normal. She wanted him, had dreamed of fucking him—the quickie in the closet nothing more than a teaser of what she knew him capable of. But now, she wasn't sure she could move or respond. She felt Zach's weight leave the bed and forced her eyes open. He stood up and began to unbutton his shirt. Amazingly, the stirrings of arousal returned.

She'd felt him, but never seen the body she'd dreamed about. She couldn't resist the opportunity.

He opened the sides of his shirt and Jocelyn gasped, her body echoing the cry with a hollow ache in her stomach.

He had the most stunning chest she'd ever seen. Cleanly defined muscles cut lines and curves that seemed designed for her hands. Each muscle built on the next, delineating the etched ripples of his stomach. The tiny pads of his nipples, hard and pointed, softened the sharp lines of his pecs. She wanted to run her tongue over the peaked centers of his nipples.

"Oh my."

He bowed his head in acknowledgement. "Thank you."

Jocelyn swallowed and nodded, waiting for the rest of it. He peeled off the shirt and dropped it on the floor. And his hands went to his fly. She knew what he felt like, knew how he fit so full inside her, but she wanted to see him.



He opened his pants and scooped both trousers and underwear down in one move. He straightened and stepped out of his clothes. Then he moved toward her.

“Wait! Don’t I get to look?”

He stood there, at the end of the bed and waited. It was strange to have a woman stare at him so closely. Jocelyn rolled to her side and propped her head up on her hand and watched him. He could feel her gaze as she stared at his cock, hard and thrusting out. He was ready for her — more than ready for her.

She didn’t say anything, didn’t react. She just looked at him.

After a few more minutes, he couldn’t stand it any more. He was losing control of the situation.

“Well?” he finally asked.

Jocelyn opened her mouth and ran her tongue along the inside edge of her teeth. “Luscious.”

The skin around his crotch grew impossibly tighter and he stalked to the bed. He had to be inside her. Now.

He reached out and took her leg in his hand and with one flip, he rolled her onto her back. He climbed between her thighs. She was wet, glistening with her own juices. She was ready for him. He growled and lifted her hips.

His cock led the way and in one smooth thrust he was buried to the hilt inside her cunt. He held himself still, savoring the wet heat that surrounded his cock. She moaned and the sensation moved from his shaft and through his body, like she was fucking all of him. She was tight and hot. He looked down into her eyes. She stared back. Unafraid. Not only ready, but hungry, for whatever he would give her. Tonight he was going to give her everything he had. Several times. He smiled.

Holding her eyes, keeping her captive, he slowly withdrew.

“I want to watch you, feel you come around my cock.”

Her shoulders tensed, like she was bracing herself for a hard fuck. He’d give that to

her. Later. When she was screaming for it, begging for him to pound into her.

He began slowly, knowing she wanted it hard and fast. He had plans for a long night. He wanted her begging. Wanted to feel her surrender to him completely. He'd chased her, and now, he had her to enjoy.

He reached out and captured her hands in his, holding them to the bed, trapping her beneath his thrusting body. She was tired, well used already, but he wasn't stopping. Their eyes clashed and clung to each other, neither willing to look away. He moved in her, her cunt walls gripping him, pulling him back inside her pussy.

The temptation to let go was strong but he resisted knowing there was more.

He pressed his hips upward rubbing against her clit with each stroke. He saw her eyes start to glaze over. Her head fell back and she arched her neck, her voice gone, lost in the frantic gasps.

He worked hard inside her, moving from long deep strokes to short pulses, just enjoying the feel of being inside her. She started to pant and plead, his name a hissed cry through gritted teeth. He increased the depth of his thrusts, giving her more—just not quite enough. He knew where to push her—how deep to drive. She was his to pleasure tonight.

He pulled out, almost leaving her, and shoved into her one more time, harder and deeper—closer to what she wanted. Her eyes widened. The hazy fog of satisfaction was gone and the fire of lust had returned.

"Zach!" she squeaked, sounding desperate, but he knew there was more in her. He gave her what she wanted, thrusting long and hard, savoring each cry and plea. And finally, his name again. It was closer to the scream he wanted. He felt her pussy contract around his shaft and held himself still, fighting the urge to come. Soon. Soon. But he wanted to bind her more closely to him.

She collapsed boneless on the bed, her legs falling open. Zach pulled out and Jocelyn's eyes fluttered open.

"What—" She looked disappointed.

"Don't worry. There's more," he promised. He rolled her over, her tired body pliant beneath his hands. Her ass was too much temptation to resist. He rubbed his hands over the firm mounds thinking of a day when she might let him fuck her there. But tonight, he wanted her cunt. He pulled her hips upward and placed his cock at her drenched opening. A muffled groan rumbled through her as he teased her. Oh yes, she could take more of him—all of him.

Holding her hips, he inched his cock in, savoring the tight feel of this penetration. She held him perfectly. Tight and willing. And she loved a good, hard fuck.

He couldn't wait any longer—his own need too great. She squirmed in his hands but not to get away, to push him deeper. He pulled back and plunged deep into her cunt.

He couldn't remember the last time a woman had been this hungry for his cock. God, he loved fucking her.

Then his thoughts grew focused—there was only the need to come. The need to release inside her. Her cries urged him on. He rode her hard and deep and she begged for more.

Jocelyn clawed at the sheets, reaching for the end of the mattress.

"Ahh." The cry left her mouth as Zachary slammed into her cunt again. She was going to be sore tomorrow. He felt a moments regret but he'd make sure each ache reminded her of pleasure. She pulled on the corner of the mattress and forced her hips backwards, pushing hard against his thrust. His cock filled her and he groaned, loving the slick feel.

"That's it, baby. Fuck me. You want it, don't you? Want my cock in this tight pussy."

"Yes," she groaned through clenched teeth. He was pounding into her, but kept control—keeping her orgasm just out of reach. She would come again, when he did. "Please, Zach."

"You want to come?"

"Yes!" she cried

"Haven't you come enough tonight? Three or was it four times already?" He pushed into her and stopped, holding her hips still with strong fingers.

"How many times have you come tonight?" he asked again, knowing her torment. He would give her what she needed soon but he wanted her desperate.

"Three. I've come three times."

"And you don't think that's enough?" He pumped his hips, shallow thrusts connecting deep inside her pussy. "Greedy little thing aren't you?" She moaned. "Aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm greedy!" She whipped her head around and glared over his shoulder. "Now, fuck me," she commanded.

He leaned back and Jocelyn knew she'd made a mistake.

"Now, really, my dear, is that any way to get what you want? Have your other men all crumbled when you ordered them about?"

He started to pull out and Jocelyn dropped her face onto the bed. He couldn't do it. He couldn't leave her. She needed him.

"No, please."

"Please what? Please don't leave your pussy? Please don't stop fucking you?"

"Yes. Please, Zach."

He held steady, the tip of his cock fitted to the entrance to her cunt.

"Shall I continue?"

"Yes," she whimpered.

"My way. I'm going to fuck you the way I want to fuck you." Jocelyn felt her sex flutter and contract at his words, desperate for him to be back inside her.

He thrust into her.

"Yes."

"Tell me what you want."

"More. Give me more." And he began to move. She lost track of what she said, how she begged him. She answered him, telling him whatever he wanted to hear, anything so he'd keep fucking her.

*Yes, she was greedy and she hungered for his cock. Yes, she wanted more and more.* He pounded into her, her words seeming to drive him on.

He reached around and cupped her mound. He was solid and used his hips to push her forward, rocking her clit against his palm.

"Please, Zach, give it to me. Fuck me. Oh yes, it's so good."

He swung his hips low and drove into her one more time, counteracting his thrust with a push from the heel of his hand. Jocelyn screamed as the orgasm slammed through her. She collapsed on the bed, melting into a boneless mush.

He held her hips and pumped hard into her. His groan vibrated through his body as he flooded her sex with his hot seed.

## Chapter 7

Jocelyn lay still. Her body battered, bruised she was sure, and weak. But if he rolled her over, asked her to spread her legs, she would. She would do it. She looked out from under half-drooping eyes. He was stretched out next to her, his breath finally returning to normal.

God, he was beautiful. Not just the physical beauty but the power and confidence.

His eyes flicked open and Jocelyn felt her heart melt as he smiled. It was a slow, sensual smile. Like he was thrilled to find her next to him.

"All right?" He leaned over and placed a kiss on her mouth before allowing her to answer. She nodded. He ran his hand along her hip and thigh, then slipped it between her legs. She gasped, her body sensitized to his touch.

"Did I hurt you?" She smiled and shook her head. "Good. I know I was a bit...enthusiastic." He played with the hair protecting her sex, slipping his fingers through the curled strands. "Your pussy quite tempted me beyond control."

A strange emotion burned in her chest. He'd always been so controlled, keeping a tight leash on the fire that burned inside him. But she was the one who'd released it. Before she could analyze the new feeling, Zach rolled off the bed and reached out for her hand.

"Come on."

She stared at him for a moment then declined.

"I can't walk," she insisted. Zach had fucked the strength out of her legs. She brushed the hair out of her face. "How can you?"

"Great stamina." He bent, slipped his arms beneath her neck and legs, and picked her up. "And I've been storing up a long time." She didn't ask how long. That would bring the topic back to his wife and she didn't want anything to intrude tonight. Tomorrow would be soon enough. She'd go to the office and remove herself from the case. She could cite personal conflicts and Frank would back her up on that.

"Let's take a shower." Since she was being carried to the bathroom, a shower sounded like a good idea. He stood her inside the shower and followed her in. With a quick twist of his wrist, the stream came on warm. She sighed and let the water trail over her back. Zach kept his arm around her. She was glad. She loved the feel of his body, hard, strong against hers. And she wasn't sure she could stand up without his help.

He took one hand away, giving her his chest to rest against.

"That's it, honey. Lean on me." She relaxed.

He picked up the soap while he hummed softly in her ear. Lather bubbled between his large hands before coming to her. He washed her—all of her. She stood, letting him control the movement, her arousal, her body. He'd done so much to her—she wanted her turn.

He turned her sudsy body around and pressed it against his own. He kissed her and Jocelyn stepped free of his hold.

"Let me wash you." She opened her eyes wide and tilted her head. "But I don't seem to have any soap." She looked down at her bubble-covered breasts. "I'll just have to improvise." She leaned forward and rubbed against him, her tits rolling like tiny pebbles against his chest. She used her whole body on him like a giant sponge. He spread his legs and leaned against the wall, letting her slide up and down him as she would. She bent her knees, massaging his body with hers, until his erection lay between her breasts. She took its length in her hands feeling it grow and push against her. She knew what she wanted.

She stood up and turned around letting the water pour over her skin, rinsing away

the soap. She looked back to Zach. He leaned against the wall with a casual air.

She pulled him forward, letting the water wash over his flesh. She sluiced the water across his skin, scattering the soapsuds that clung to him. Her hands skittered across his chest, touching, teasing. When the bubbles were gone, she met his eyes and slowly sank to her knees.

Her hands slid up his legs, the rough hair slipping between her fingers. Memories of last night and his steady eyes—his hot gaze as he prepared to taste her. She did the same. Letting her hands wander across his strong thighs, testing the muscles with her palms, moving ever closer to his hard shaft and still she watched him.

After long moments, he closed his eyes and took a deep breath. She had him.

"Tell me," she whispered, demanding the same concession she'd given him last night. He looked down at her. She flicker her tongue across the tip of his cock, catching a tiny drop of pre-cum. "What do you want?"

He waited, his chest moving in deep, long breaths. He licked his lips and swallowed.

"Your mouth." His voice was harsh and deep, like the words were ripped from deep inside him.

Knowing he watched, she pushed her hair away from her face and opened her mouth slowly, letting her tongue peek out. And she tasted him. She trailed her tongue up the long line of his cock, learning his length. She kissed her way to the tip and took the round head into her mouth, sucking lightly.

His thighs tensed underneath her palms; his hands curled into fists.

She pulled back. "How long has it been since you've come in a woman's mouth?" Zach's eyes blazed for a moment before he slammed them shut and dropped his head against the shower wall behind him.

"Years."

She swirled her tongue around the head of his penis and sucked again. "How



long?"

"Oh God. Eight years. Eight fucking years."

"Hmmm." She opened her mouth wide and let his shaft slide deep into her mouth. He was so thick, she couldn't take much in but she loved what she could reach, and used her hands to tease the rest. She brushed her tongue along the underside of his shaft, tickling the area below the thick head.

"Dammit, Jocelyn." Zach's fingers slipped into her hair, holding her head. Water poured down on her. She pulled back, and began to move on him, letting his length slide in and out of her mouth. An impatient roll of his hips shoved his cock hard into her mouth. He was losing control.

Jocelyn groaned, not in distress, but pleasure. He was a man who wanted to hear how she liked it. She played with him, sucking him deep, using her mouth, lips and tongue to tease him beyond his control. The restrained pump of his hips grew rougher. Jocelyn dug her nails into his thighs, urging him to release into her mouth.

Zach felt like his eyes were going to explode, God knew his balls were about to. He reached down, intent on pulling her away. Jocelyn shook her head and growled around his cock, the tiny vibrations fluttering along his shaft. She wanted this. He couldn't stop the steady roll of his hips. Her mouth was so hot and wet and her eyes watched him, daring him to come inside her. Long denied pleasure poured across his body.

She sucked him deep and then as he pulled back, she flicked her tongue along the underside of his cock. He growled as he shoved forward, filling her mouth with his cock and his cum.

Still she continued to move on him, draining him of every drop. He sagged against the wall, the strength in his knees giving out. One hand jammed against the shower kept him from completely embarrassing himself and sinking to the ground.

When his eyes stopped vibrating, he stared down. She still knelt at his feet, like the perfect submissive. She slid her hands up his thighs, tracing undefined patterns across his skin. She was the epitome of sexy.

And what made it all true was the look in her eyes—the confidence and power. While he watched her, she opened her mouth and traced the inside edge of her lip with her tongue, just like she'd done that first night—teasing him. Tasting him.

"You keep looking like that, and it won't be another eight minutes let alone another eight years before I come in a woman's mouth again."

Laughter and light flashed in her eyes and she pushed up on her knees.

"Okay." She smiled and then licked the length of his soft cock, inspiring more blood to that area.

"Oh no, not again." He pulled Jocelyn to her feet.

"But, I—"

He smiled at her protest. She liked the power—liked to feel him weaken and give himself to her control.

"Later," he said, turning her around. Jocelyn leaned against him. He bent down and kissed the long line of her bared throat, savoring the feel her skin, her body fitting with his.

"When I'm a little more used to that extremely sexy mouth of yours," he said. "When I might be able to control myself, you can suck me off again."

"Promise?" she asked, her voice dreamy and warm.

Zach felt his dick harden. "Oh yes."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jocelyn draped one arm across her forehead and closed her eyes. Zach stared down at her, his heart rate and blood pressure finally returning to normal. Damn, she'd just about killed him but he'd die with a smile. A smile just like the one she wore. Masculine pride thumped in his chest that he'd been able to put that smile on her face. He closed his eyes and let his hand drift in unplanned trails across the smooth skin of her stomach.

He hadn't let her sleep. They'd stumbled back to bed after their shower but he'd been too long, too hungry for pussy to be without. He'd slipped inside her, needing the feel of her cunt around his shaft. They'd loved slow, the desperate search for orgasm fading, leaving only the need to move with each other.

And they'd talked.

Zach couldn't remember a time he'd ever talked with a woman while he'd fucked her but with Jocelyn they'd somehow started talking about travel and the places they'd been or wanted to go. It was hard to imagine now but as he'd loved her body, he'd learned her mind.

He spread his fingers across her skin, soaking up her warmth.

An electronic beeping from across the room pulled her up into sitting.

"Ugh. My cell phone," she muttered as she crawled over him to the piles of clothes they'd left on the floor. Zach rolled over and watched her shuffle through the stacks. It took her three tries before she found the one with her slacks and cell phone.

"Detective Bliss." The sharp way she answered the phone made her sound so much like a cop. He smiled. "Yeah, hi." Zach felt no compulsion to not listen. She was in his bedroom after all. "Damn. No, it's fine. I'll do it. Yeah, I know where to find him. Okay. I'll see you later." She clicked the phone shut.

Zach sat up in bed and waited for her to turn around and give him some indication she remembered he was in the room. Instead, she bent down, picked up her slacks and dragged them up and over her hips. She stumbled across the room and found her bra and finally her shirt.

"Jocelyn, what's wrong?"

"Nothing. I just have to get dressed. I have to..." Her words drifted off as she shook her head. Like she couldn't bear to say them.

"Jocelyn?"

She finally looked up. Her face was hard and her jaw was tense, clenching her teeth,

as if she was holding the world together by sheer willpower. Then he saw it in her eyes.

"Oh fuck. You're going to arrest me."

She nodded. "The judge just signed the arrest warrant."

Jocelyn stared at the man on the bed. Her lover. And now her prisoner. Memories of a time before, when she'd discovered her lover was using her to avoid prosecution. It was too similar not to strike a cord.

Zachary shook his head and rolled out of bed.

"I'm assuming I have time to get dressed?" he asked with a slight sneer.

Jocelyn bit her teeth together. He was pissed. Well, he had a right to be. And so did she. "Of course."

"I mean it wouldn't do for your little cop friends to know you've been fucking the primary suspect would it." He stood up and walked across the room. She turned away, keeping her eyes trained on the door. She wasn't worried about him pulling a weapon or trying to escape. And she couldn't watch him. It made it too personal to see him getting dressed. Pulling on clothes that she'd so recently watched him remove. He stopped by the mirror and brushed his hair before glancing back at her.

"Don't worry. They won't find out from me." He walked by her and back to the bed where he picked up the phone and dialed. "It's me," he said after a moment. "Can you meet me down at the police station? Why do you think? I'm being arrested for murdering my wife."

## Chapter 8

Jocelyn tapped her pen against the tabletop and watched the television monitor. Racks of video equipment lined the front and back walls of the tiny room. A camera was pointed through the window into the interview room.

Frank had instantly agreed when Jocelyn said she didn't want to be involved in Zachary's questioning. Frank had looked at Jocelyn's wrinkled slacks and the blouse missing three buttons but hadn't said anything.

Instead, he'd led Zachary away, taking him through the process of formalizing the arrest. Now, Zach was alone in the room, waiting.

The door opened and Frank and another man walked in. Zach stood and shook the stranger's hand and nodded brusquely to Frank.

The door behind Jocelyn opened seconds later. Jonathan Street came in. The light scent of his cologne followed him. It wasn't overpowering but she'd quickly grown used to the clean scent of Zachary – all male with no perfumes.

"They said I could observe from here," Jonathan said with a convincing smile.

Jocelyn nodded, not sure if she liked him or not. Not that it mattered. They were both there to do a job. "Shouldn't you be in there with him?" She cocked her head toward the TV camera.

"I'm second chair. I'm really not a criminal lawyer. I wouldn't give Zachary the best advice. I think a case like this, when there is so much, well—" He stopped. "I just think it's best that Zachary have the best criminal lawyer he can get."

Jocelyn nodded. Street seemed to think that Zachary was guilty. And dammit, so

did the judge and Frank and it looked like the Chief as well.

So why was she balking?

*Because he's a great fuck.*

Jocelyn rejected the idea as soon as it popped into her head. That couldn't be it. She wouldn't let it be true. Something about the situation just didn't fit. Zachary wasn't desperate enough to kill his wife.

"Let's get started, shall we?" Frank said. That was Jocelyn's signal to start taping. She set the machines into motion and sat down to watch. Though they would watch the video later, it helped to have someone observing while the questioning was occurring—she might see something Frank missed.

Frank started off with the night in question. Jocelyn had been over the file so many times she could recite the timeline in her sleep.

"I understand your intimate relationship with your wife was strained," Frank commented. Jocelyn tensed.

"Strained." Zach released a humorless laugh. "That's a good word for it. Until recently—" Zach stared through the window like he knew she was watching on the other side. "Until recently," he repeated, "I've been living a celibate's life. My wife and I hadn't shared a bed in the last six months of our relationship."

"And during that six months?"

"Until my wife's death two weeks ago, I remained faithful to her."

"So you felt you couldn't have sex with another woman until your wife was—"

"Was no longer my wife."

"I recommended that he not engage in any intimate relations until the divorce was final," Street whispered to Jocelyn. "It would look bad for the court. It might make it easier for Catarina to claim adultery. I'm not one to judge, of course, but we didn't need any direct evidence against him."

Jocelyn waved the lawyer quiet and sat forward. In the other room, Zach

unconsciously mirrored her movement.

"What?" Zach leaned against the table. "You think I killed my wife because I was *horny*? Give me a break."

"Sex is a powerful motivator."

"Yes, and relief was only five fingers away."

"Listen, we all know how it is," Frank said sitting down across from Zach and his lawyer. Frank put on his friendly "I'm just one of the guys" voice. "You want to be free and she won't let you go. She was sucking you dry."

Zach's lips curled into a mocking smile.

"Detective, Catarina could never 'suck me dry'."

Jocelyn gulped at the double meaning to his words. Panic was quickly followed by memory of his cock in her mouth. He'd been so wrapped up in her, so totally—she looked for the word—enthralled. She licked her lips, the tactile sensation of his hard shaft moving between her lips was easy to recall. She stared at the monitor and watched his eyes unfocus for just a second. Was he thinking about last night and her mouth?

After a moment, he sat back in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest.

"It's not secret that I wanted out of the marriage but I didn't have to kill her to get her out of my life."

Jocelyn listened to the rest of the interview but it didn't sink in. The words passed by her as she watched Zachary. She believed him. Dammit, why did she believe him? Was it because he liked to fuck her? Because no man had ever looked at her the way he had—with true, hungry desire? Or had it all just been a plot to keep her believing in him? Had he manufactured that lust to keep her attention? She didn't want to believe it. Didn't want to believe she'd been suckered again by a beautiful face.

"I wish Zach would answer more fully," Jonathan muttered. "I worry that he's so used to hiding things that he doesn't realize he needs to be fully open now."

Jocelyn nodded, wondering again at the lack of faith Jonathan had in Zachary's

ability to control the situation.

Moments later Zachary's other lawyer called the interview to an end and they stood. Jocelyn clicked off the tape and started the machines rewinding. When she turned to open the door, Jonathan hesitated.

"Detective Bliss, I hope I'm not being too forward but I was wondering if you'd consider having dinner with me one night."

"Dinner?" Jocelyn knew she sounded stunned by the idea but, hell, she was stunned by the idea.

Jonathan smiled. "Yes, it's the evening meal. Dinner."

It was a friendly, teasing smile that might have actually tempted her a week ago—even yesterday she might have been interested. But after last night, she couldn't think beyond Zachary.

The thought petrified her for a moment. She had to think beyond him. He was most likely going to be convicted for his wife's murder.

"Uh, I don't think that would be terribly appropriate at this point. Thank you." She crushed the thoughts of all the other inappropriate things she'd done on this case.

He shrugged. "I was afraid of that. If you change your mind, or when this all over, call me. I can see why Zachary was attracted to you. There is something intriguing about you, Detective Bliss."

She nodded her thanks before turning and organizing the tapes from the interview, letting Jonathan leave.

The door shut behind him and Jocelyn released a sigh. Something about that man made her uncomfortable. Seconds later she opened the door and looked out, watching as Zachary and his lawyers walked down the hall. She dug her fingers into the wall to keep from following him. She'd managed so far. She wasn't going to blow it now by racing after him and begging his forgiveness, no matter how much her heart screamed for her to do just that.



Damn it, when had it happened? From the beginning she'd been attracted to him, but now, was it more than just sex? God, could she be falling in love with a suspected murderer?

Frank filled the space before her blank eyes.

"Well?"

She looked up. Frank's face was grim and the lines across his forehead seemed deeper than usual. She shrugged.

"Yeah, me, too." He looked over his shoulder, watching the small crowd walk away. Zachary would be released on bail probably before he'd even finished processing. "It's all there, but something doesn't fit."

"I don't think he did it." It was the first time she'd said it out loud. "I think he's being set up."

Frank nodded. "All the evidence makes him the killer and normally, I'd say lock him up, but I think I agree with you."

"Bet that's irritating."

Frank smiled. "So now, what do we do?"

"I want to talk to him."

She watched Frank's face crumble and for a moment felt a twinge of sympathy but she let it go.

"What? We just interviewed him."

"No, I want to talk to him. Alone. I need to look into his eyes."

"J.B." Frank's voice was filled with warning. Jocelyn acknowledged it and then pushed it aside. She needed to see Zachary. At least for a few minutes.

"Please. Come with me. You can wait in the car."

"Oh, great, I get to chaperone."

It took some fast-talking and the promise to fill out reports for the next month but finally Frank agreed to drive her over and wait. It was dark by the time he pulled into

Zach's driveway.

"How much time?" Frank asked.

"Twenty minutes."

"A lot can happen in twenty minutes."

She winced and sighed. "Okay, give me ten," she said, though she was pretty sure she could get in just as much trouble in ten minutes as in twenty. "After ten minutes, come knocking on the door."

She climbed out of the car and walked up the sidewalk with as much confidence and police demeanor as she could. She wasn't here for seduction. She was here to get information out of a suspect.

No. She couldn't think of him as a suspect. He didn't do it. She had to believe that.

She knocked on the door and waited for the grim butler to greet her.

Instead, Zachary opened the door and waited. A drink filled one hand—the door, the other. She checked his eyes quickly to see if he was drunk but crisp, sharp irritation shone back at her. He wasn't drunk. But he was pissed.

"Detective Bliss. What are you doing here? I thought the interview was concluded by my lawyer."

It was the greeting she expected and nothing more than she deserved. His words were polite but hollow.

"I wanted to check on you."

"I'm fine. Thank you for stopping by." The words came out friendly and neutral. His voice had lost the hardness from moments before. She shook her head. He was so controlled, so cold. The only time she'd seen any indication of emotion was during sex. He stepped back like he was planning to close the door. She slapped her hand against the wood and stopped it.

"How do you do it?" she asked before she could talk herself out of it.

"Do what?" His fingers tightened on the doorknob.

"How do you hide your emotions so well?" She stepped forward, using the same strategy he'd used to get into her house—she just kept moving. She walked in and turned to face him. Zachary let the door close behind her and leaned against the back of it. She folded her arms over her chest and stared at him. "You never get angry, or upset. Nothing fazes you. You find your wife dead on the floor and you look no more interested than a casual observer. Your wife's sister publicly accuses you of murder and you calmly walk away. How do you do it?"

"I don't believe the world has a *right* to see my emotions. They're mine and I choose with whom I will share them."

She stopped. What could she say? He was right.

"Well, if your lawyers haven't told you yet, that's probably not a great attitude for getting people to believe you."

"It's worked with you. You know the truth, Jocelyn. You don't really believe I killed my wife or you wouldn't have come here *last night*."

"I arrested you this morning."

"Do you think I killed her?" He took a step forward, moving with a menacing slowness.

"What I believe doesn't matter."

"It does to me. Do you think I killed her?"

Jocelyn looked away, silently debating her answer. Finally, she looked back into his eyes. "No."

He nodded but there was no other reaction. He didn't thank her or show any relief.

"Unfortunately, my believing you doesn't carry much weight. I can't prove it," she said. She had to force the words from her mouth. It was hard to admit she had no fucking idea what was going on, in her head or in his life. "I need you to talk to me. Help me."

"I don't know what more I can tell you, Jocelyn."

The sound of her name flowed through her like an electric shock. He rarely used her name, addressing her instead as "Detective".

"I only know the basics," he continued. "I didn't kill Catarina. I didn't need to. I was willing to give in. She wanted half my money and alimony. At first, I fought her because she didn't *deserve* half of my money. And for some strange reason, I thought we could settle this like reasonable adults." He walked down the hall and swallowed back a gulp of whiskey. "Last week, I realized, she was dragging this out just to torture the hell out of me and I didn't care that much. I was ready to give in and put it all behind me. I wanted out that badly. I'd ordered an audit of my properties and I was ready to sign whatever she wanted just to get her the hell out of my life. I'd bought my way into her bed, I was willing to buy my way out of it."

His words were cold and harsh but Jocelyn heard the pain behind them, even from a man who didn't show his emotions. To anyone. Except to her, on occasion.

She pulled back from that thought as soon as it formed. She couldn't start thinking she would be the one woman to make him care—the woman of his dreams. Zachary Simons was a man for many women and she wasn't going to be one of them.

Not for long, anyway.

Jocelyn squinted at him. Something lingered in her brain from his interview. Something that didn't fit the playboy image. "Why didn't you have an affair after you filed for divorce? Or before. I know it's not for lack of women or lack of sex drive." She smiled when Zach did.

"What do you ask?"

"Jonathan Street said he recommended you not have an affair, because it would make the divorce more difficult."

The light in Zach's eyes dimmed. "As he said, it would have looked bad in court." She was sure his cold words were meant to scare her off.

"Tell me," she pressed.

Zach looked off into space, away from her.

"I'd made the vows," he said with a shrug. "I don't think I saw them as sacred vows by then, but it was a promise I'd made. I don't break my promises. Once the relationship was dissolved, I felt like I'd be released from that promise."

"Bet you had a hell of a night planned."

"Yes, I did." He glanced at Jocelyn with fire in his eyes. She felt a zing through her heart. He looked down her body and stopped at the top of her thighs. With a smile, he raised his head. "I'm a little less desperate now."

Jocelyn cleared her throat. "Right. So, uhm, let's go over it again."

"That night?" He walked forward. "You showed up, hungry and horny, wanting to fu—"

"No, I meant the night of the murder."

"Too bad."

"I don't need any help with the memories of last night."

Damn, she thought as the words left her mouth. What was she thinking? She wasn't supposed to say things like that. Not to a suspect. Not to *him*.

"Let's just focus on the night of your wife's death. Walk me through the night." Jocelyn opened her notebook from that night.

Zach rested his head in his hands with his elbows propped on the table. "I came home from work."

"What time?"

"About 6:30."

"What next?"

"Nothing. I was home until I got the call from Catarina asking me to come over." Jocelyn opened her mouth to ask what time the call came in. "Seven o'clock," Zach answered. "I left and headed to her house."

"What time did you get to her house?"

"Seven-thirty."

Damn, that's what the witness said as well. He didn't even lie about it.

Zachary Simons wasn't stupid. He could come up with a lie or an alibi.

"You could have been a few minutes late."

"No, I was on time," he insisted. "Catarina used to play power games with time, always making people wait. It pissed me off so I make it a point to be on time.

"I walked in that night, fully expecting to wait for fifteen minutes before she came downstairs."

"Why did you wait to call the police?"

"I didn't. I called as soon as I found her. I got there, went into my study, or what used to be my study, to get a few papers and then decided to sit in the living room and wait for her. There she was."

"All dressed up and waiting for you."

Zachary shrugged. "That doesn't make sense. What I told your partner today was true. We hadn't slept together in the last six months of our marriage."

"Maybe she was lonely."

"She didn't want sex with me. She didn't *like* having sex with me. Why would she try to seduce me? We weren't that good in bed together."

Jocelyn felt her mouth sag open.

Zachary looked at her and laughed. "Thank you for that."

"It's just kind of hard to believe you not being, you know, good, with anyone."

"That's sweet, Detective."

The air around them grew alive as the silence settled.

"Uh, I'd better go."

"You could stay."

"Uh, no. Frank's waiting outside."

"Ah yes. The ever watchful Frank."

"It's not just Frank," she said, feeling the need to defend herself.

"Really."

Jocelyn grimaced at his slightly mocking tone.

"You expect me to believe that if you didn't have Frank waiting for you that you would still leave? That you wouldn't stay the night?"

She opened her mouth to answer but stopped.

"Wise choice. It's not nice to lie."

Jocelyn swallowed. "I have to go."

Before Zachary could say anything else, she hurried to the door. She couldn't tell him honestly that she wouldn't have stayed and wouldn't have dragged him back to that huge bed and fucked him until neither could remember why it was wrong.

She climbed into the car without looking back. She knew Zachary watched from the doorway but she couldn't turn around. Turning her head would lead to her body and then she'd end up back in his bed.

"Well?" Frank asked when she'd buckled in.

"I don't know."

Frank started the car and sighed at the same time. "Why did I know you were going to say that? We've spent the entire day with the best suspect we can come up with and we're still back at 'I don't know.' I'm thinking we put aside instinct and go with the facts." Jocelyn didn't answer, her mind trying to find the one point they missed. "J.B, what are we supposed to do now?"

Jocelyn was silent. After a full minute, Frank glanced at her and shook his head.

"No. Please."

"What else can we do?"

"Don't make me look at those files again," he whined as he turned into the parking lot of the station, but he followed her upstairs and started picking the pages apart.

Hours later she was starting to think Frank was right. There was a really good

circumstantial case against Zachary. It might be enough to convict him.

She probably shouldn't worry. Zach would hire the best lawyers. And if his lawyers were good enough, he'd get free.

But it didn't seem right, depending on lawyers to free an innocent man.

"I'm done," Frank said, dropping the open file on the desk. "I can't look at this stuff any more. It's late. Let's go home."

Jocelyn flipped through the pictures. "You go. I'm just going to read through it again."

"What do you think you're going to find? How many times have you read through it?" Frank stood and pulled on his jacket. "I'm leaving and if you're still sitting here tomorrow morning, you're buying me breakfast."

Jocelyn waved him away and spread the pictures out on the desk.

She had to look at them in a different way. Something about the crime scene didn't fit but she couldn't put her finger on it.

She walked around the desk and looked at the pictures upside down. Her eyes narrowed as she focused on the slim gold watch that marked the time of death. The next picture over was the full body shot. It wasn't difficult to mentally add color to the black and white photo. The memory of Catarina Simon's body stretched out on the floor filled Jocelyn's dreams.

Jocelyn's gaze was drawn to the silver and diamond earrings.

She looked at the previous photo and the breath left her body in a rush as she locked onto the Catarina's wrist. And the gold wristwatch that was damning Zachary by its presence. She grabbed the phone and dialed before she considered the hour.

It rang once.

"Carroll."

"Frank—"

"J.B.? What the hell do you want?"



She ignored the gruff tone.

"I don't think she was killed at 7:30."

"What?"

"Her watch. She was wearing a gold watch."

"So?"

"She's wearing silver and diamond earrings. She wouldn't mix the two."

She heard Frank's sigh. "You can't know that."

"This is the woman who had two wedding rings—one in platinum, one in gold. She had a dozen watches upstairs. Why would she wear a gold watch and silver jewelry?" She paused. "She wasn't wearing that watch when she died."

## Chapter 9

The next two days raced by so quickly, Jocelyn barely had time to think, which wasn't such a bad thing. Interviews with Leona confirmed Jocelyn's suspicion—Catarina would never have worn a gold watch with silver and diamond earrings. Leona admitted that Catarina was a purist when it came to jewelry.

It wasn't much—but it bought Jocelyn some time. The DA agreed to hold off on indicting Zach but Jocelyn had to come up with something soon.

The Chief, however, wasn't pleased. It made him look bad to have arrested Zachary Simons and the DA not follow through with the indictment. Jocelyn did her best to ignore him and focused on finding the evidence she needed. It came quickly. The watch that had damned Zachary proved his savior. The forensics team had inspected it quickly before. Time of death had been determined easily. Between Catarina's call to Jonathan and Zach's 911 call there had only been fifteen minutes. The watch just solidified the time.

The forensic team re-examined the watch and determined that the face had been struck with more force than Catarina would have caused falling against the table.

Jocelyn read the report and listened to the DA agree that Zachary should be freed from charges until further notice. Stress that had bound her body for days evaporated and Jocelyn sagged in her chair.

The DA called Zach's lawyer and Jocelyn went home.

After two days of no rest, she fell on the bed and was asleep within seconds.

And was woken up three hours later by Karen's gentle tap on the door.

"J.B.? Someone's at the door."

"Who is it?" Jocelyn mumbled as she dragged herself out of bed and trudged down the stairs. Her sleep-fogged brain didn't register Karen's answer. Jocelyn opened the door. And stared at Zachary.

"W-what are you doing here?" She dropped her voice, even though Karen knew who was at the door.

"I thought it best to do this face to face."

"Keep your voice down."

"Why? I'm not being charged with murder—at least not any more. Thanks to you." He didn't sound happy or thankful about that.

"But, if someone sees you here they might think—"

"What? That you were screwing the killer and that's why you set him free?"

Jocelyn slipped out the front door and waved Zachary toward the freestanding garage. She swung the door shut behind them and watched Zachary storm across the small space. She let him walk a few laps before asking, "Why are you mad? I thought you'd be pleased."

"I am. I'm thrilled."

"Yeah, you sound thrilled. What's wrong?"

"I get free, you don't come tell me. I hear about it from my lawyer. And then I think you'll come by or call, but I hear nothing. They've been reconsidering the charge for two days. And when they formally drop them, I don't hear from you."

Jocelyn openly stared at him, not sure she'd heard him correctly. "You're pissed because you didn't get a personal visit from me?"

"It would have been nice."

"Well, I wasn't sure you'd want to see me again."

"I fucked you in a coat closet! I would have thought that indicated some level of interest."

Jocelyn opened her mouth to give a flippant response but couldn't think of anything. Zach just stood there, waiting.

Jocelyn squeezed her lips together, wanting to hold back the words, the confession. It seemed so silly with him standing before her now. Finally, she let her shoulders roll upward in a slow shrug.

"I thought you might have been interested in me because I could get you released and once you were free you wouldn't need me any more."

"What?!" He jammed one fist onto his hip.

"Well, it made sense to me. Why would a guy like you want to go out with a woman like me? What was I supposed to think?"

"How about you're sexy as hell and burn me up in bed?"

Air rushed from her lungs. "I figured we were done."

Confusion marked his usually stoic face. "Why the hell would you think that?"

"We'd slept together!"

"So, we fuck a few times, and you think we're done? I've got lots more I intend to do to that luscious body of yours."

"But—but..."

Zach walked forward and kissed her before she could answer. He was ruthless, taking what he wanted, demanding her response and commanding more when she gave it. She acted on instinct, wrapping her arms around his neck and pulling herself against his body, desperate to feel him again. As quickly as it started, it was over. He lifted his head and looked down at her.

"You really thought I was using you?"

"I had a moment of insecurity." She offered a half smile. "Several moments of insecurity." She stepped out of his arms. "People watch me. I have a history of believing the wrong people. I trusted a guy once. He was using me to avoid being arrested. He got away with a lot because *I just swore* to the other cops there was no way he could be

doing that stuff. But he finally got caught." She rolled her eyes in self-disgust. "Can you see why I was a little uncertain?"

"So I'm not the first criminal you've helped?" He didn't seem to understand the gravity of her confession. He was laughing. "Jocelyn, I don't care. He was guilty. I'm not. I see that as an improvement. But to soothe my shattered ego, you could seduce me."

He opened his arms wide.

Jocelyn propped a hand on her hip. "It would take more than me to shatter your ego," she said but she walked forward and wrapped her arms around his neck. "But I'll give the seduction a try." She leaned forward and placed a kiss on the underside of his jaw. "I've missed you."

She continued the light kisses along his jaw, his neck, occasionally letting her tongue flick against his skin. "Hmm, you taste so good." She felt the muscles in his arms ease slightly. She knew how he liked to hear her talk, liked to hear the words—auditory sex along with his physical pleasure. "I've missed your taste, missed feeling you move inside my mouth. I've dreamed of it. Dreamed of your cock hard between my lips, filling my mouth—"

He groaned and pulled her close, covering her lips with his before she could finish the thought. It didn't matter. The angry tension that had held his body had faded and a new tension took its place. He started to move her back, to push her against the car behind her. She shook her head and pushed against his shoulders. He let go and watched her.

This was her show. She would seduce him, show him she believed in his desire for her.

Barely conscious of the fact that they were standing in her garage, she unbuttoned her blouse and flipped the edges open. He watched her with warm, dangerous eyes. This would be no slow striptease. She rolled one shoulder and shook the thin material free, letting its weight pull the other sleeve down until she was standing topless in front

of him. Her breasts were bare; her nipples hard and eager. She unhooked the button on her trousers and let them drop to the ground as well.

She stood before him — naked and open.

She slid her hands up her body, the movement reminiscent of the way she'd touched herself that first time in his office, only this time, she wasn't moving to hide her body. She slipped one hand downward, sliding her fingers between her legs. The other hand, she trailed across her skin until she reached her aching breasts. She let her fingers brush across her nipples and felt them grow even tighter.

"I get like this when I think about you." She eased her hand farther between her thighs, cupping her sex. "I get so wet and all I want is for you to touch me, fill me." Zach's eyes glowed with undisguised lust.

She walked forward, and transferred one hand from her skin and skimmed it across the silk of his shirt. His eyes flared as he reached down and removed the hand between her thighs, lifting it to his lips. Jocelyn opened her mouth as his tongue licked her juices from her skin. He kept his gaze trained on her.

"Zach..."

She didn't know what she was going to say but he bent down and covered her mouth with his. It was a soft kiss — gentle, like nothing they'd shared before. Suddenly, this was about much more than sex or seduction. She wrapped her arms around the back of his neck and held him softly as he lingered over her mouth, tracing lines, not to seduce but merely to share the contact.

This time when Zach moved her backwards, she let him, feeling the cool brush of metal against the backs of her legs and buttocks. He picked her up and set her on the hood of the car. No words were spoken — they weren't needed. She couldn't have said what was in her heart. She couldn't speak of the welling emotions that threatened. Instead, she let her feelings pour through her eyes as she trailed her fingers across his skin.

He moved slowly. This was no hurried fuck, even if they were doing it on her

roommate's car in a garage. It was a slow, soft loving. Jocelyn bared her neck to his kisses, the light nips of his teeth. He wanted to do to her—and she would let him—anything he wanted, as long as he wanted.

His mouth was hot, tasting her and leaving behind a trail of cool fire. He cupped her breasts, holding their full weight and massaging gently. Her nipples pressed against his palms.

"Please," she whispered.

His smile was slow and dangerous, but there was an edginess that made her wonder. She had no time to figure it out. He bent down, pushing her back and arching her breasts up to his mouth. He teased the peak of her breast with the very tip of his tongue. Jocelyn moaned, the focused touch sending shockwaves through her body.

He repeated the action, then began circling her nipple with long strokes of his tongue until it was so tight it hurt. He covered her with his mouth and started to suckle.

Jocelyn sighed and fought to stay upright. It was too delicious. He smoothed his palms down her hips and spread her legs wide. Her body melted from the heat of his slow hands. She looked into his eyes. He watched her as he eased two fingers into her wet sex.

She smiled, loving the feel of his penetration. He moved his hand in short pulses. She moaned and pulled him to her, clinging to him, capturing his mouth for a long kiss.

Seconds later his fingers were replaced by his cock.

Jocelyn groaned into his mouth as he slid into her. It had only been days but it felt like years since he'd been inside her pussy.

He didn't hold back. He moved, holding his thrusts steady and slow, not to torment her but savoring the feel of her cunt. He couldn't stop his moan. She was so sexy.

He watched her as he moved inside her. Her face was expressive, breaking free with emotions he never allowed himself to show. Only here, only inside her did he feel safe in letting go.

His thrusts grew deeper, heavier, solid inside her, his movements more frenzied. He was desperate for release, the release she could give to him.

He pumped faster, driving deeper. Jocelyn moved with him, whispering soft words of encouragement, telling him how good he made her feel. His eyes flared and he pushed into her one more time.

"Jocelyn!" he cried as he flooded her cunt. His body tightened as the orgasm ripped through him.

Jocelyn held him, running her hands across his shoulders. Her body was still tight and needy but she loved the feel of him, the glorious way he'd lost himself in her. She couldn't stop her triumphant smile. He hadn't been able to hold off long enough to make her come. Considering his usual level of control, she considered it a victory.

He lifted his head. His chest still bellowed in deep pants. Her smiled widened to a grin as he slipped his clever hand between their bodies, touching, finding her clit. He teased her clit, rubbing with enough pressure to ignite her orgasm.

It was fast and hard and left her gasping. He covered her mouth with his, swallowing her moans. Moments later he raised his head.

Jocelyn didn't know what to say. She had no idea where they went from here.

"Damn," he finally sighed.

"Yeah," Jocelyn agreed.

"Will we ever be able to actually go out with each other?" He lifted his head. "I mean, this is exciting and all, and I've discovered a strange fascination for closets that I never knew I had, but I liked having you in my bed."

Jocelyn's lip trembled as half of it curled into a smile.

"We don't have to be seen together for me to be in your bed."

Zachary pushed himself away.

"Is that what you want?" His voice held the same casual tone she'd heard that night at the Charity Ball, like he didn't care about her answer. She knew differently. "You just



want to fuck me in private."

"Well, no. I'd like to be with you."

"How?"

"I don't know what you mean?"

"How? Occasional sex? Regular sex? Dinner, movies, dates? What are we looking at?"

No one had ever asked her that question before. "I think regular or even frequent sex would be good."

Zachary nodded. "I agree."

"And dinner, movies, dating—it all sounds good."

"You're willing to be seen with me in public?"

Jocelyn jumped off the hood of the car. "I'm not ashamed to be seen with you, Zach. I just don't want anything to ruin your chances of being completely cleared and if the world knew we had been together, they might believe I'd fixed the investigation to get you free."

"But you didn't."

"No."

"There are a lot of people who still think I'm guilty." He put his hands on her hips and pulled her forward.

"They don't know you like I do."

"And they don't know Catarina's jewelry issues."

"Yeah."

"So, it will be awhile before we can go out to dinner. Can you cook?"

"No."

"Well, that means take out or we're starving because I can't either."

Jocelyn smiled at Zach's lighthearted tone. So much had happened. And there was

the future to deal with.

"It would be helpful if we could figure out who killed your wife." Jocelyn stepped free of Zach's embrace and paced the space between the car and the bike rack, chewing the edge of her lip. "Maybe we've been looking at it wrong. We were focused on you, then on clearing you, now let's look at other options." She lifted her head and looked at Zach. He was smiling. "What?"

"I'm just fascinated by the way you drop into detective mode so quickly. And being so naked at the time."

Jocelyn felt a blush creep up her cheeks. She'd forgotten she'd stripped for him. Trying to hold onto her dignity, she bent down, picked up her shirt and dragged it on.

"Ignore that and help me. Had anything happened that changed your status with Catarina?"

Zach shrugged and shook his head. "Not that I can think of."

Jocelyn snapped her fingers. "But it had. You'd decided to agree to her settlement terms. That's what you said."

"So?"

"What did you do?"

"I told Jonathan and we started the audit of my assets. I wanted to be able to give Catarina a complete summary, pay her off and get her out of my life."

Money. Money was always a good motive for murder. "What happened with the audit?"

"Nothing. We shut it down once she was killed. It wasn't necessary. We do company audits each year but I knew Catarina wouldn't be satisfied with something internal. She'd want an outside firm to go through everything. Make sure she got her just due."

"Can you still do it?"

"The audit? Sure. Why?"

"I don't know, but that's what changed. Maybe someone didn't want you doing that audit."

"Killing Catarina was a little extreme."

"Death always is."

"I'll start it up tomorrow."

"Can you keep it quiet? From everyone?"

"Sure. I'm good at hiding things."

Jocelyn grimaced, the cop in her rising to the surface. "Don't tell me things like that."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Well?"

Zach looked up from the stack of papers as Jocelyn entered his office a week later. He'd called moments ago with the audit results but had refused to tell her anything over the phone.

"I think we found it."

"What? Who?"

"Jonathan."

Zachary might be adept at hiding his emotions, but there was no way Jocelyn could hide her shock. Her jaw fell open.

"Your lawyer? Your wimpy, whiny lawyer? What did he do?"

"Embezzled millions of *my* money."

"*Your* lawyer?" Jocelyn repeated, still too stunned to let the truth sink in. Every time she'd met him, he'd seemed so ineffectual. But he had to be smart or Zachary would never have hired him. It made a lot more sense now. "Every time we met, he subtly threw suspicion your way. I was so focused on making sure I wasn't biased

toward you that I didn't question it."

Zach leaned against his desk. "Embezzling, I can see, but you're thinking he murdered Catarina? And framed me?"

"You only started the audit once you agreed to the divorce."

Zach nodded. "Until then, Jonathan had been telling me to hold the line—that Catarina would take what we gave her and nothing more."

"He didn't want you to do a complete audit."

Again Zach nodded. "We did annual audits of course, but they were internal." He grimaced and she could tell he was silently kicking himself. "And Jonathan is in charge of audits."

Jocelyn didn't know how to comfort him so she distracted him. "You realize, this is a great theory but we have no way of proving it." She wandered around the office, letting her eyes drift along with her thoughts. She stopped in front of the supply closet. Both she and Zach had avoided any mention of their brief encounter in that little room. "Your secretary."

"What?"

"Your secretary was in here, having phone sex with your lawyer."

The memory sparked in Zach's eyes. "That's right and she was reading him my charitable contributions."

Zach pulled open a desk drawer. Meticulously organized files were evenly spaced the length of the drawer.

*Someone needs to mess up this man's life.* Jocelyn smiled. She knew just the person to do it.

He lifted the audit sheet. "That's how he did it. I donated two million, they got one-point-seven-five."

"He was stealing from charities? That's tacky."

"Yes, but it was in amounts I didn't notice."

"That's where your world and mine differ. I'd notice if someone stole a quarter of a million dollars from me."

"I have a strict policy that the level of my giving is never reported."

"So no one came up and said 'thanks for the one-point-seven-five' when you donated two." She shook her head. "You lead a weird life."

"Get used to it."

Her stomach fell away at his casual comment. Did he mean that? Or was he teasing? Was there really a future between them?

She definitely liked him. Liked the way he thought and the way he listened to her – as if he was interested in what she was saying.

And there was the sex. She definitely liked the sex.

Speaking of which...she trailed her fingers across the rough wood of the desk. The fantasies she'd created when she first saw this room returned. She looked up.

Zach was watching her.

"Why, Detective, I sense you're distracted by something."

She nodded. "Very distracted."

"And what would that be? Is forensic accounting that interesting to you?"

She walked forward, sliding between him and the desk. She pressed her chest against his as she hitched her hips back onto the edge of the desk.

"Oh, it is. I get turned on by all this talk of numbers and audits." She dropped her voice into a deep, husky whisper. "It makes me soooo hot."

Zach laughed a little at her overly dramatic invitation but that didn't stop him from accepting. Moments later she was lying on the papers that covered the desk, panting and begging for him to enter her – the overblown seduction evaporated by a true case of need.

"Oh God, Zach, please."

He slid into her hard. "It's a good thing this desk is sturdy," he said through gritted

teeth.

"God, yes."

Then they both stopped talking—the room filled with the sounds of their groans and sighs as they rocked together.

Jocelyn went over first, taking Zach with her as she cried out her climax. When their breathing slowed, he stood and rearranged his clothes.

"That was interesting." He brushed his hair back and straightened his collar. "I'll never look at this desk the same way again."

"Glad I could help." Jocelyn smoothed her skirt and tried to act as cool and as casual as Zach did.

"I'll never get any work done now. Every time I sit at this desk, I'll think of you." He pulled her close, holding her softly in his arms. "And how tight and wet you are."

Jocelyn nodded and looked up at him with all seriousness. "Kind of like me and the coat closet."

They shared a conspirator's smile. "Exactly." Zach stepped back and dropped into his chair. Jocelyn sat on the desk, dangling her feet over the edge. Zach looked relaxed, laid back, as she'd never seen him before. But there was still a murder haunting them.

"So, what's next?"

"Well, the Chief isn't going to let us do anything without some kind of direct evidence." She thought for a moment. "I think I should meet with Jonathan."

"Won't he think that's strange?"

"Not if it's a date."

Zach raised his eyebrows. "Excuse me?"

"Your lawyer asked me out. Said I was 'intriguing.'"

"I'll kill him."

Jocelyn laughed. "No. This is better. We'll have him arrested."

Zachary smiled and Jocelyn felt a wicked shiver run down her spine.

“Good idea. I know from experience what a joy that is.”

## Chapter 10

Jocelyn stepped into the restaurant and looked around. Jonathan sat in the corner where he had said he'd be. The rest of place was almost empty. Good. She didn't think he was the violent type but that was sometimes difficult to predict. Luckily, she wasn't alone. The warrant was signed and waiting. All nice and legal. She and Frank had positioned cameras around the room earlier in the day. She was wired. Frank was outside listening and watching.

They could get Jonathan for embezzlement but she wanted him for murder.

And for that, they needed something more.

But if she wanted Jonathan, it was nothing to Zach's reaction. He'd hid his anger but she could tell. It had been difficult to get him to stay home tonight.

She smoothed her dress and took a deep breath. She'd chosen a short skirt, hoping her long legs would impress Jonathan.

"Uh, Jonathan's a tit man. It might help if you showed a little more cleavage."

Jocelyn tensed as Zach's voice rang in her ear.

She'd assumed he'd been telling the truth when he'd promised to stay away tonight. He was obviously in the truck with Frank, watching and listening to everything that was said.

Knowing she couldn't growl at him as she wished, Jocelyn rolled her shoulders, loosening the front of her dress just enough to show some extra skin.

"More. There you go. You're about to fall out of that dress and that will be perfect."

Jocelyn ground her teeth together and tried to make it look like a smile. She strolled



across the room, adding an extra flip to her hips as she walked.

Jonathan's smile brightened as she approached. He stood and helped her into the booth.

"Detective. Don't you look lovely."

"Please, call me Jocelyn." She pushed her hair back over her shoulder. "It's been a long week for me as a detective."

*"Nice, now sit down and lean forward."* She followed Zach's whispered instructions. *"God, you have beautiful breasts."* His voice grew soft and husky, like he was hiding his words from Frank. *"I can't wait to get you naked, suck on them, feel them in my mouth."* Jocelyn felt her breasts tighten.

"There's something different about you tonight, Jocelyn."

She smiled. "As I said. It's been a long week." She shook her head, doing her best to flip her hair and make it flow around her like the very best shampoo commercials. "I'm ready to break free. Do something different." She shrugged, knowing what it did to the valley between her breasts.

And Jonathan's eyes dropped to her chest. He licked his lips and stared for a moment before returning his gaze to her face. She should have felt sleazy or even violated, but she didn't. She felt powerful. Jonathan was watching her, lusting after her, and she was in control – until the man in the truck outside decided to come get her.

Jonathan took a short breath and lifted the bottle of wine. "Would you like some?"

"Oh, definitely."

"I'm sure it's been difficult for you."

"Well, it was tough case. It's always difficult when you're dealing with a case like this – someone who doesn't seem like a killer."

"Zachary's my friend so it's very hard to believe. I didn't think he was capable of it."

Jocelyn leaned forward eagerly. "But you knew something was wrong, didn't you?"

I just get this sense that—" She stopped herself. "Never mind. I'm not here to talk about Zachary or police work."

She thought she saw a flicker of suspicion in his eyes but she held herself steady. She moved closer to Jonathan and took a sip of her wine. As the liquid flowed down her throat, she let her head fall back—playing to the crowd on two levels—Jonathan and Zachary. Jonathan inhaled sharply through his nose. Zach grew silent. She could almost imagine his lips squeezed together.

She hadn't flirted in a long time but it came back quickly, especially knowing Zachary was watching. She wasn't really flirting with Jonathan—she was sending it all outside.

"I was a little surprised to get your call," Jonathan said, interrupting her thoughts. "When you declined the first time, I didn't expect to hear from you."

"I was involved in a murder case." She forced a sexy chuckle to the surface. "It just didn't seem, you know, appropriate to be accepting." She took a drink of wine, smiling over the rim. "But now that's all over." She rolled her eyes and tightened her grip on the glass stem. "I mean, it's mostly over. There's just that—no, I'm not going to talk about it." She shook her head as if clearing away her thoughts. "Tell me what you do. I'm fascinated with anything that doesn't involve police work."

Jonathan seemed stunned for a moment but he began to talk. Jocelyn vaguely listened to his words but she knew Frank was focused on that. She watched the way the lawyer moved and she responded. She trailed her finger across the edge of her glass, capturing a drop of wine. Slowly, as he spoke, she raised the fingertip to her lips and licked the moisture away. Because she knew it would drive Zach crazy, she sucked the tip of her finger into her mouth and let her tongue swirl around it. Jonathan gulped and took a large swallow of his wine.

*"You'll pay for that."*

The waiter approached the table and took their orders. Jocelyn smiled and said she'd have whatever Jonathan was having.

"I'm still a little confused by you're being here," he said. "I got the impression that there was something between you and Zachary."

Jocelyn shrugged, shifting the neckline of her gown. "Unfortunately, he's a murder suspect. I could never get involved with a murder suspect."

"But I sensed something between you. Or was I misreading it?"

The blush that crept up her cheeks wasn't faked.

"I guess there was something there." She shifted closer and flashed her best "take me to bed" smile. "I'm attracted to powerful men. I was able to ignore it, most of the time." She trailed her fingers across her collarbone and across the upper curves of her breasts, letting her eyes fade at the memory of Zachary's touch. "You're single. You know what I mean. Sometimes it's just so hard—the hours alone, wanting someone, wanting to be wrapped around a hot, sexy body." She closed her eyes and let her mind wander to the previous afternoon and Zachary sliding his cock into her. She ran her tongue along the inside of her lip. "Sometimes, I just need someone. Someone sexy, strong, hard."

She opened her eyes and saw a tiny line of sweat across Jonathan's upper lip.

*"I'm going to fuck you hard when you get done."*

Jocelyn took a deep breath. She could feel her face flushing and the heat between her legs grow. She wanted Zach, right here, right now. She hoped there was a closet nearby.

*"The car. I can fuck you in my car,"* he whispered like he'd read her mind.

Jocelyn gasped and looked at Jonathan. Heat flared in his eyes.

She lowered her hand, making sure she brushed her extended nipple as she passed.

Finally she shrugged. "It's just hard. And I meet someone like Zachary Simons who would be perfect, except for the fact that he probably killed his wife." She caught the edge of her lip between her teeth. "I have all this extra energy now." She paused. "I guess I'll just have to find someone else."

Jonathan paused. "I know what you mean." He sounded sympathetic and understanding.

She wanted to reach out and smack him. He obviously wasn't hearing what she was saying. She'd basically told him she wanted to be fucked. Hard. Any other man would have had her spread eagle across the table by now — Zach certainly would have.

She made a mental note to slap Zachary for having such a dense lawyer. Or maybe Jonathan was just spineless. That fit. Embezzlement was a spineless crime.

It almost made murder difficult to believe. She looked at his face.

*No. He could kill.* Just like Zachary. Either of them would kill for the right reason. For Zachary, it would have to be pain or passion. For Jonathan — money or power.

Jocelyn shook her head. "I'm sorry. I'm just rambling. My mind's still back at the office."

Jonathan reached out and covered her hand with his, holding it gently on the table.

"It's obvious you want to talk about it. I know Zachary, perhaps I can help."

Jocelyn hesitated, hoping she looked indecisive. Finally, she sighed.

"It's just this whole thing."

"I don't understand. I thought it was finished."

Jocelyn tilted her head to the side. "Have you spoken with him?"

"No. I took myself out of the situation. My strengths are definitely corporate law."

"I bet you end up knowing a lot about the financial aspects of a company." She sighed dramatically. "It looks like I'll be learning all about it as well."

Jonathan tensed for a moment then instantly relaxed. He re-filled her glass. "What? Why?"

"Well, the DA wants a better motive so the department's doing an audit. They think money has to be involved. Why else would he kill Catarina?"

"She wouldn't divorce him." He said it like it was the obvious answer.

"No." Jocelyn shook her head. "He was willing to give her the divorce, we know

that much. So why suddenly kill her?"

"Maybe she was having an affair."

"Yes. But he knew about that."

"He knew?" The question came out as a squeak and for the first time tonight, Jocelyn felt like she'd rattled him.

"Oh sure. He told us about that." He hadn't, but Jonathan didn't know that. She thought for moment about Zach's reaction to that information but she couldn't let that stop her. She'd comfort him later. And knew just how to do it. "It didn't bother him at all. From what everyone has told me, they weren't exactly happy bedmates. She sounded awfully vanilla."

The skin around Jonathan's eyes tightened. "Or he was too wild," he countered, his voice laced with disgust. "Not what a *lady* would want."

*This man does not like Zachary Simons. But why kill Catarina? Why not go after Zachary?*

"No. I think she was frigid. I mean she had a man like Zachary Simons? What woman wouldn't want to fuck him?"

*"What are you doing?"*

She gave a subtle shake of her head to tell Zach to keep out of it. This might be where they needed to push.

"Maybe that's the problem," Jonathan snapped. "Maybe she didn't want to *fuck*. Maybe she wanted to *make love*. To be intimate with someone worthy of her."

Jocelyn stuck out her bottom lip and looked up, making it obvious she was having a hard time imagining that. "Do you think? I can't see it. A stud like Zachary Simons, or a wimp from her world. I mean, she was all dressed in lace—just waiting for Zach. She definitely wanted him back. I'll bet she missed him. I'll bet she'd started craving his huge cock." Jonathan's cheeks flushed pink. "She'd realized her mistake. She was dumping the wimp lover and going after Zach. He had it all. Money, power, and the sex—" Jocelyn groaned. "It had to be incredible."

"She *hated* him," he snarled, the veneer of the cool, controlled lawyer weakening. "She never wanted him. She couldn't bear the thought of his hands on her."

"That's what she said," Jocelyn countered, "but I know women. I'll bet she was just waiting there to jump his bones. A good fuck. That's what she wanted. A long, hot fuck with Zachary."

"She did not want to fuck him!" He shoved the table away. "He's a low life from the streets who doesn't know how to treat a lady. I knew what she wanted, what she needed."

"A man like you?"

"Yes."

"But you didn't have the money to make it in her world, did you? That's why you embezzled nearly seven million dollars. To get Catarina. To *keep* Catarina."

Jonathan froze, his face instantly void of all emotion. Only the lingering red in his cheeks told the truth. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Zach had the audit done," she said, her voice and her smile smug. "I asked him to. It seemed odd that all of the sudden, Catarina is killed and Zachary is implicated in the murder. Something had to have started it. It was that audit. You couldn't have the audit done because you wouldn't be in control of it. It would have revealed your embezzlement."

"What was the problem? Catarina wanted something you couldn't give her? She wanted Zachary's money but she'd let you fuck her." He stood, his spine straight as steel rod. "Nice vanilla fuck, are you, John? Just what Catarina would like."

"You don't know anything about her." He turned to face Jocelyn. "She was perfect and he ruined her, but she wouldn't listen. She didn't believe me that I could support her and give her what she needed."

"But she obviously *wanted* Zachary. She was all dressed for him."

He leaned over and snarled. "She was waiting for me. I was the one she'd dressed for." He kept moving closer, his eyes turning white as he hissed the words at her—all

his hatred focused on her. "She kept pushing—wanting more. And then *he* calls and says he's going to give her what she wants. She didn't understand. I told her she had to stop pushing. She wouldn't listen. She was going to ruin everything. She—"

His words died in his mouth when Frank's hand landed on his shoulder.

Jonathan snapped back to himself.

"Take your hands off me."

"You're under arrest."

"For what?"

Jocelyn smiled. "We'll start with grand larceny but I'm pretty sure there'll be a murder charge thrown in with that as well."

Frank turned Jonathan around. The lawyer was back in control.

"Nothing she heard was legal."

"Wire tap warrant. Already in hand."

Jonathan glared at Frank but stood quietly while he was handcuffed. Under other circumstances, Frank might have let him go downtown without being cuffed but Jocelyn agreed with his decision to do so. There was something decidedly unstable about Jonathan Street.

Frank began to read Jonathan his rights when Zachary walked in. He barely glanced at Jonathan, instead focusing his eyes on Jocelyn.

The cool calm that Zachary had perfected was paper thin, as if he were at the edge of his control.

"Catarina wanted me," Jonathan sneered as Zach approached. "She hated the thought of touching you, of sleeping with you."

Zachary ignored him.

"Get him out of here," Jocelyn ordered.

"Let's go," Frank said, pulling Jonathan towards the door.

She followed them outside, knowing Zachary was behind her.

"Can I follow you down?" she asked Frank quietly as he loaded Jonathan into the back of his car. Zach's still form waited in the shadows of the building. She cocked her head toward him. "I need to take care of something first."

"Sure."

She would owe Frank for this but something warned her that she shouldn't leave Zach in this state. She wasn't quite sure what state that was, but she needed to get him back to normal. Hearing that his wife was having an affair with his thieving lawyer couldn't have been easy.

Zach took her wrist as she approached, and began pulling her down the street. A big black sedan sat in the corner of the parking lot half hidden in the shadows.

"Don't listen to what he said," she started. "I'm sure Catarina just told him those things to make him feel better."

He was silent as he opened the back door of the car and helped her in. He followed right behind her. Before she could speak, or think to ask what he was doing, he kissed her, desperate, hungry kisses, as if he needed her taste to survive. When she was breathless and clinging, he lifted his head. She could barely see his face in the dim light of the parking lot.

"Do you honestly think I care who Catarina was fucking? I wouldn't have cared if Catarina fucked the entire bar association once we'd separated, but I'll tell you now —" His fingers tightened on her arm. "Don't ever let me catch you touching another man. I'll break his legs." The words were raw, jolting Jocelyn from the sensual haze created by his kisses.

Zach was jealous. Of the wimpy lawyer? She almost laughed but she knew Zach wouldn't find it funny. Not now.

Jocelyn sat forward reached behind her, unzipping the back of her dress. With a quick shimmy, she inched the straps off her shoulders, baring her breasts. Zach's eyes fell to her chest. He might be an ass man, but he liked her tits too. She leaned into him, offering herself.



He watched her for a moment, almost as if he didn't trust her but then he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her upward, bringing her nipple to his mouth. She slid her hands across his shoulders loving the feel of his mouth as he sucked first one peak, then the other. He kissed the valley between her breasts, lingering long on the curves and slopes.

Jocelyn bit the edge of her lip and pushed him away, forcing Zach to straighten. He sat back, startled and disappointed.

"Don't worry. We're not done." She traced her finger across his lower lip. "But I know what you need."

Knowing she had his full attention, and praying to heaven no one decided to check the cars in the parking lot, she leaned across the back seat until she was almost fully reclined. Then she began to squirm, inching her tight skirt up her legs until her crotch was bared.

His eyes widened.

"You didn't wear panties?"

She was surprised at the irritation in his voice.

"I thought you'd approve."

"Not when you're meeting another man," he grumbled.

"I dressed with you in mind." She spread her legs and began to trace lines down the inside of her thighs with her long red fingernails. "I knew I would feel sexy if I thought about your mouth, licking my pussy, sliding that strong tongue into my cunt."

Her words inflamed him and he fell on her. Like a starving man, he buried his face between her legs and began to taste her.

Jocelyn gasped, the first wave of pleasure shooting through her. She hadn't realized how aroused she was. The first orgasm hit her hard and fast, leaving her panting. Zach didn't seem to notice. He kept on, loving her with his tongue.

She lost track of time, knowing only the feel of Zach's mouth. After she came for the

third time, he lifted his head. Her juices shone around his mouth and a furious fire blazed in his eyes. She'd never seen him like this. All traces of the cold businessman were gone.

"I need to fuck you."

"Yes."

She reached down and pulled him up, her hands moving quickly to his pants. He was long and hard when she released him. Her fingers cupped his length but he pulled her away.

"I need to fuck you." He wrapped her legs around his waist and placed his shaft at her entrance. "I'm not letting you go," he said, as he shoved his cock into her cunt.

Jocelyn groaned and let her head fall back. He drove into her hard but it was lovely. His desperate need to be inside her fueled her arousal. She let the sensation cover her body.

Their groans and sighs blended, a counter beat to the rhythm of their bodies rocking together.

"Oh, Zach, I need you, please, come in me," she begged

His eyes flared at her plea and he thrust harder into her pussy.

"Oh, yes, that's it. More. You feel so good." Zach dug his hand into her hair and pulled her head back as if to watch her face, to track the truth of her words.

She opened herself to him and let every movement fill her.

Jocelyn couldn't have stopped her cries. She lost all recollection of what she said, only knowing she was pleading with him.

Heat spiraled from the center of her body, burning deeper until her core melted and she begged him to finish. He stiffened in her arms and she felt a warm flood in her pussy.

They lay together, neither knowing what to do next. Finally, Zach lifted his head.

"I don't know when this will end." His voice was quiet. "But let's see where this

goes."

"Yes."

## Chapter 11

### *One year later*

Jocelyn stood outside the ballroom door and scanned the crowd. Zach was supposed to be here by now. He'd called to say his plane had landed and he was changing into his tux in the car. The annual hospital charity ball was just starting and this year, Zach was the guest of honor. Jocelyn felt her skin flush red. She remembered quite clearly what had happened at last year's event. Zach had sat her on the bar, and licked—Jocelyn broke off the thought and fanned her face to cool it.

She strolled across the open walkway, smiling at the other guests. Over the past year, she'd seen them often enough to recognize many of them. She hadn't quite realized that dating a rich man meant going to a lot of charity functions. At least, it did if that man was Zachary.

Their collective lives had changed. Zach remained the ice-calm businessman, but at home, he was learning to let go, let her see behind the mask. Sometimes she still had to remind him that it was okay to show his emotions. He usually decided that was good time to show her the emotion of lust.

The silver-purple gown she wore swirled around her legs as she walked, teasing her skin with light touches. Zach had picked out the gown. When she'd protested that she was capable of choosing her own clothing, he'd said this was really a gift for him. Tonight, he'd asked her to wear the gown and nothing else. Now she knew why he considered the gown a gift to him. The satin lining of the bodice was teasing her nipples like crazy and every step she took brushed the material against the sensitive skin between her legs. She was getting aroused just walking.

Of course, Zach had been gone for five days. It wouldn't take much to arouse her. Nightly phone calls had left her tortured and aching for him. His seductive voice had teased her each night with promises of what he would do to her body when he returned. She would have taken matters into her own hands, so to speak, if it hadn't been for his dare. Just before he'd left, he'd dared her not to bring herself to orgasm while he was gone. She'd issued him with the same challenge.

She'd almost lost it last night on the phone but had somehow managed to hold on. Damn, she hoped he didn't have too many long business trips. She wasn't sure she could take it.

"Waiting for me?"

Jocelyn spun around. He'd managed to sneak up on her.

"Well?" he asked. "Did you wait for me?" She knew he was asking about their agreement.

"Yes. Did you?"

"I did," he answered with a serious nod. "But the hotel is going to wonder about their extremely high water bill this month. All of it cold." He glanced up the corridor behind her and into the ballroom, nodding casually to familiar faces walking by.

Jocelyn laughed and waited. Surely he was going to kiss her hello. They hadn't seen each other in five days. She needed to reconnect with him in some small way. Her body was fairly thrumming with excitement and he was barely noticing her. She worried the edge of her mouth with her teeth and tried to think if he'd given any indication he was tired with the relationship. They agreed to see where it went. The one thing she'd promised herself when they'd started out was that she would take it as it came. She wouldn't try to second-guess everything he did. It had freed her up from boundless levels of worry. Now, she wondered if she'd missed something.

When he looked back at her, she drew in a deep breath. She knew that look. He wasn't ignoring her because he didn't want her. He was trying to keep himself under control. It was the same look he'd had after they'd arrested Jonathan. It was possession,

claiming. He took a step toward her. She felt hunted and backed up until she was against the wall.

"Zach, no." She plopped her hand on his chest to stop his forward motion. He picked up her hand and kissed her fingers, stepping past her weak defenses. Her firm gaze should have been enough to back him off but there was something different in his blue eyes. The fire still burned but there was something behind it, something almost vulnerable and uncertain.

She brushed the thought aside. Zach had never been uncertain about anything in his life.

He gently bit down on the pad of her thumb, then licked the tiny mark. "I'm hungry." He wasn't talking about dinner. He ran his tongue over his lips and stared down at her body.

"Zach, we can't."

"Hmm."

"Zach, you're the guest of honor. You can't just run off and—" He sucked her index finger into this mouth. The rough edge of his tongue distracted her for moment. A swarm of black passed on the edge of her vision. More guests. She jerked her finger from his mouth and tried again, "You can't run off and...and—"

"Go down on my girlfriend?"

She glanced around to see if anyone was listening. "Exactly."

"Yes, I can. They'll wait." He was serious.

"Zach, we can't."

He pulled her into his arms and she was helpless to stop her own hands from clutching his shoulders. She tried to make it look like a casual embrace but his hips were pressed against hers and the erection his suit jacket covered was hard against her sex.

"You did a security check on this building, right?"

Jocelyn nodded. She'd quit the force six months ago, finding the day-to-day grimness of that life too much to handle. She'd joined a firm that handled corporate security. They'd done security for this event.

"Find us some place or I'll start right here, right now."

"You wouldn't," she said with confidence, then saw she was wrong. The fire in his gaze was sparkling with the extra seduction of the forbidden. Grabbing his hand, she dragged him along behind her to the coat check. She smiled at the eighteen-year old taking coats. "I'm with corporate security. We need to, uh—"

"Count coat hangars?" Zach suggested. She elbowed him in the stomach.

"We need to use the back room for just a few minutes. Security business."

"Very hush-hush." He pressed one finger to his lips and winked at the coat check girl. She nodded but the confused look never left her face. Jocelyn dragged him behind her to the secondary coatroom. It would be opened later if needed.

Zach chuckled as soon as the door was closed. "You should see your face. You're bright red."

"I'm embarrassed," she hissed.

"You need to learn to lie better."

"We don't have to sneak around. We have a perfectly good bed at home," she pointed out. She'd finally given into his pleadings and moved in with him two months ago. As he'd pointed out, she spent all her time there anyway, and having two households meant they felt compelled to sleep alone sometimes. Zach didn't like that. That had been the argument that had finally won her over. He'd said that when they fought, he didn't want either of them to have the option of sleeping elsewhere. It left too much unfinished.

"We have a *great* bed at home," he corrected, kissing her neck. "And we're not sneaking around because we have to, but because it's fun." He slid the strap of her gown off her shoulder, freeing her breast for his touch. "And because I'm desperate for

a taste of you." His mouth closed around her nipple and she was lost. Her body was primed by a week of waiting. All thoughts of the party drifted away and she relaxed against the wall, using it to support her when her legs wouldn't. Zach dropped to his knees and lifted her gown. "Now remember," he whispered against the soft skin of her inner thigh. "No screaming."

\* \* \* \* \*

From the side of the room, Jocelyn stood watching the people enter. She brushed one loose tendril of hair back from her face. It always amazed her that Zach could make love to her and leave them both looking relatively un-mussed.

"You look remarkably composed," he whispered in her ear. He stood behind her shoulder, resting his fingers on her waist. "For someone who just experienced an incredible orgasm at the hands, and mouth, of her very talented boyfriend."

"I was faking it," she replied without looking at him. A firm pinch to her backside jolted her. "Besides, I'm still not happy with you. I can't believe I let you do that."

"You love it."

Her heart flinched. Anytime either of them used the word "love", even if it was only used to describe a favorite television show, they tensed. They weren't ready. *He* wasn't ready.

"I've got it figured out, you know. You don't just love what I do to you," he added. "You love me." Tension arced through her spine. "Don't you?" he pressed.

Jocelyn continued to stare out at the crowd. She didn't know the right answer to this one. Did she play it cool or tell him the truth? She wasn't sure which one would send him running the fastest.

"I figured it out on this last trip."

Jocelyn flipped through her memory to see what she'd done to give herself away.

"You just had a brain-wave that I was in love with you?" She tried to keep her voice



light and casual.

"Yes. It was right about the time I realized that I love you."

Her heart dropped to her stomach. "What?"

"Want me to repeat it? I love you."

Jocelyn spun around in his arms. Thoughts crowded her mind so fast she couldn't think of what to do, what to say. Zach loved her. The furious rhythm of her heart drowned out the noise in the room.

"Well?" he demanded. Something almost desperate, hidden in the depths of his voice, brought her back.

"Huh?"

"I was sort of hoping for a similar response." She stared into his eyes. She'd seen it before but hadn't recognized it. This was the vulnerability she'd seen earlier but had dismissed. This was the one thing Zach wasn't confident about.

"Of course I love you." Her words came out in a rush. Some of the tension slid from Zach's body. "I've *been* in love with you."

"Since when?"

She slapped his chest. "Since I had to arrest you and it almost broke my heart."

He nodded. "That long? You beat me to it, but I have great staying power."

"As I'm well aware," she said with a sexy whisper. He didn't smile. Something still wasn't quite right. Zach hadn't let go of the tension.

"So, are you going to marry me?" he demanded.

Jocelyn felt her jaw drop open. That was *not* what she expected. "Marry you? You just decide this week you're in love with me and now you want to marry me?"

"I just *figured out* that I've been in love with you for a long time. So, now, I want to marry you."

"No."

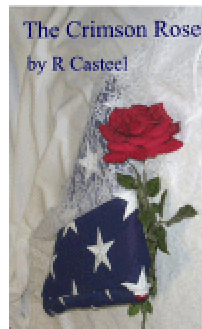
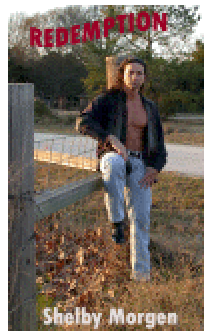
"No? You won't marry me?" Shock and pain combined on his face, then quickly

disappeared. He was so used to hiding his emotions, it only took a moment to crush them.

“Yes, I will marry you, but no, you cannot propose to me this way.” The stress eased from his body at her words. “I will not remember my proposal as something you casually tossed off before we sat down to a rubber chicken dinner. I want the whole thing. Wine, roses, you on your knee in front of me.”

The fire flickered once again in his eyes. “I guess I could arrange that. I like being on my knees in front of you.”

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