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His Bare Obsession

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# ***HIS BARE OBSESSION***

**Lacey Thorn**

*This book is dedicated with love to the following people:*

To Mom who listened to every dream I ever had and said, "I can see you doing that."

To Dad who showed me that the first step to turning a dream into a reality is typing the first word.

To Shelly, the best friend and idea bouncer a girl can have.

To Bob, who believed in me even when I didn't.

I love you all!

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## Chapter One

Moira loved this time of night. The stars were bright and the breeze had just a touch of cool in it to soothe her flushed skin. She felt wonderful. She had just finished teaching her last kickboxing class at Knowledge Is Power. That was the name of her new baby and her lifelong dream. She had always wanted to have her own health club that catered to women, mostly abused women with low self-esteem. Now she had that and the knowledge that her girls would at least have a chance with what she taught them. The only negative was the man who made it all possible for her, the man who had left her sixteen-year-old mother alone and pregnant at the hands of an abusive father. It was amazing that she had ever been born at all with the extreme physical abuse her mother had suffered, but those were thoughts for another time. At the moment she just wanted to enjoy the quiet and the breeze as she took the long way home.

She wore loose-fitting jeans over her slim boyish hips and a comfy sweatshirt to hide her 36D breasts. As always tennis shoes adorned her feet and her long blonde hair was well hidden under a snug-fitting hat pulled low over her eyebrows. Her brilliant catlike green eyes scanned the streets as she walked, missing nothing even though she seemed lost in thought to the casual observer. She believed it paid to never be caught unaware.

She saw the lights still on in Dee's Diner just up ahead and thought she might as well see if her roommate Cass was still working. That way they could walk back to the apartment they shared together and catch up on what they had done over the weekend. Cass was to go home to see her parents this weekend and Moira wanted to spend some time with her before she left. Cass' mom had been diagnosed with breast cancer years ago and now it was back and had started spreading to her bones. Moira was worried about how Cass was going to hold up as things got worse. She was as close to her mom as Moira had been to hers. She knew the devastation that was to come all too well and prayed that Cass was as strong as she seemed.

She pulled the door open and was overwhelmed by the smell of beef stew and some type of delicious-smelling dessert.

"We're closed," Cass said without looking up from the counter where she was restocking supplies for the morning crew.

"Then maybe you should flip the sign and lock the door, Cass."

"Oh hey, Moira. I was just heading that way to do just that."

"Worried about the weekend, hon?" Moira asked as she flipped the sign and locked the door for Cass.

"It's going to be rough," Cass said on a long sigh. "Mom is in so much pain but she says that she's not ready for hospice care yet. Dad says she is weakening more and more every day. I just don't know what to do!"

"Cass, you know that I love you like a sister and I would never do or say anything to hurt you, right?" At Cass' nod Moira continued. "But this is not your fight. As much as you want it to be, as much as you want to take all the pain and suffering on yourself, you can't. You have to respect your mother's wishes and let her get where she is going in her own time. I know that I've only known your mom since she was diagnosed, but I can tell just by knowing the incredible daughter she reared that she is a woman of immense strength and strong will. Listen to her. She'll tell you when she is ready, until then enjoy every moment you have."

Cass came over and hugged Moira hard. "Sometimes it is so hard to remember that you are only five months older than me. To hear you speak no one would believe that you are only twenty-four. Look at how successful you are, owning your own business at your age. Sometimes I find myself envious of you and then I remember all that you've been through to get here. Thanks for being my friend, Moira. I don't know what I would do without you."

Moira laughed Cass' praise off but the humor didn't touch her fiery eyes. "We both know how I got my own business so young, Cass, guilt money and nothing more."

"Have you heard from your father?"

"Don't call him that! I may have taken the money that he offered me and the use of his warehouse and crew to convert it. He owed me that much. He owed my mother that much. But I will never see him as my father! He just supplied the seed that made me, nothing more!"

"I'm sorry, Moira. I didn't mean to upset you. It was just a slip of the tongue, I promise. I understand how you feel. I really do."

"No I'm the one who's sorry, Cass. I know what kind of weekend you're in for. I should never have yelled at you. Now let's get this place closed down for the night and we'll head home together."

"Great! I just have to drop the deposit bags in the night drop at the bank on our way."

"You were going to do that on your own!" Moira exclaimed. "Why didn't you call me? I know that Legacy seems like the ideal town, but we do have crime here. Have you forgotten the rape and murder just last month?"

"No of course I haven't." Cass shook her head at Moira's blazing look. "Moira, you trained me well. Hello! Star pupil! Remember that?"

"Just because you know how to defend yourself doesn't give you an excuse to do something foolish."

"All right, all right!" Cass laughed. "You're right. I won't do it again. Actually I wouldn't have done it tonight if Pete hadn't been in such a hurry to get home to his wife. You know that Dee is due any day now and Pete is a nervous wreck."

"Still, Cass, you have to think of yourself sometimes too. Put yourself first once in a while. Pete could have easily dropped those bags off when he left in his car instead of you walking after dark with them. It isn't safe."

"Moira, the bank is two blocks away. It's not like I have to walk a mile out of my way to do a favor for Pete."

"I don't care if it's right next door. It is still a risk for a woman alone after dark to walk to a bank with night deposit bags. You've seen the women I've seen. You know their stories. Don't even tell me that you believe it could never happen to you. No matter how strong you are, there will always be that one person who is just a little bit stronger."

"Hey, just because I'm only five foot three to your five foot six doesn't mean that I'm a lightweight. I may not be as beautiful as you, but my mind is just as cunning and resourceful."

Moira couldn't help but laugh at that. Only Cass would see herself as not beautiful. She was definitely a five-foot-three-inch dynamo, with her thick golden brown hair that hung down to the middle of her back and her big brown eyes that also had flecks of gold in them. Where Moira had slim hips and big breasts that always made her feel lopsided and made people think that she had been surgically enhanced (*Ha! As if!*), Cass had the body of a Greek goddess. That perfect hourglass figure that made men's mouths water. With perfect 36C breasts, a tiny waist and hips just lush enough to have men look at her and think of nothing but sex, Cass was every man's fantasy and every woman's worst nightmare. Thank God she had a bubbly laugh, strong morals and absolutely no sense of the kind of power she had or she would be impossible to live with.

Within a half hour they had the diner restocked and ready for the morning crew. Turning off the lights, Cass grabbed her purse from behind the counter and met Moira by the door where she was grabbing the gym bag that she had dropped on her way in. Cass passed Moira the deposit bags, which she zipped into her bag before stepping out of the diner. Cass set the alarm, pulled the door closed and locked up. Talking and laughing, they headed the two blocks to the bank.

\* \* \* \* \*

Across town Detective Gil Daniels sat with his partner Ben Marcum staring at the case file of Audrey Lane. It had been a month since the brutal rape and murder of Audrey and there were still no leads. As Gil looked at the crime photos, he tried to visualize the victim as the twenty-six-year-old vivacious blonde that she had been. But he couldn't see anything except the image in the photos. A beautiful young woman she might have been, but the photos showed only what was left after she had been viciously beaten and brutally raped. It appeared that she had been caught from behind and dragged deep into the back of the alley. A small nick on her throat indicated that a knife of some kind had been used to keep her from crying out for help. The rape had taken

place first. From the autopsy report it must have been vicious. She had many tears in her vagina as well as bruising on her breasts, hips and thighs. Even that wasn't enough for this guy. He had then taken some type of blunt instrument and beaten her face so badly that she was unrecognizable. This was one sick puppy they were looking for. It angered Gil that they had yet to have any break in the case. He wanted this guy locked away forever. Anyone who could do something that vicious should not be walking the streets of Legacy.

Gil stood up and paced across the floor to the window. It was dark out and the moon cast a pearly glow on the hard planes of his face. A former Marine, Gil stood six foot three and still maintained his rock-hard physique. His jet black hair was just a little bit too long and thick enough to make women want to bury their fingers in it. His blue eyes that normally sparkled with humor were now as hard as steel. He was not an exceptionally gorgeous man, not like Ben with his blond-haired, blue-eyed, boy-next-door look. They both stood six foot three and had the same muscular build, but where Ben's was from the local health club, Gil's was compliments of Uncle Sam's Marine Corps. They may have looked evenly built, but there wasn't a man in the department who would take Detective Daniels on, especially in his current mood.

Gil walked back to his desk and dropped into his chair. Glancing down, he shoved everything back into the file and slammed it closed.

"What are we missing?" he yelled. "There has to be something that we've overlooked."

"We've gone over that file so many times, Gil, that I'm starting to see that girl in my sleep," Ben replied. "Trust me it isn't pretty. I wake up with sweat pouring off me and my heart in my throat."

"I know that I'm pushing hard. I just want to get this guy and lock him up for good. This is one sick piece of shit we're dealing with and I can't seem to shake the thought that we're missing something."

"Well, let's at least go out and get some decent coffee. We'll both feel better with some fresh air and food. Then we can come back and look over the file again."

"Sounds good, Ben. Just let me lock this up," Gil said as he scooped up the file from his desk.

There were still a few things about the murder that were unknown to the public and anyone not associated with the case. As he and Ben were the detectives working the case, it was up to them to make sure that it stayed that way.

Everything locked safely away, they headed companionably to Gil's black Trans-Am. Gil refused to drive anything else and he refused to be driven. They peeled out of the lot and headed across town to an all-night diner that they both knew and liked.

\* \* \* \* \*



He waited in the shadows as he watched the blonde take money out of the ATM. It had been a whole month since his last taste and he couldn't wait any longer. She would be the next. Tonight he would taste the power again. He could feel it already singing in his veins. Oh to be a god and have women fear him, cower before him and beg him to spare them. He rubbed his hands in anticipation.

She pocketed the money, card and receipt and with a quick glance around headed past the alley on her way down the street to meet her boyfriend at the movie theater a few blocks over. They were going to see the new thriller movie that was out and she was looking forward to being scared enough to let him protect her. She smiled until she felt the press of the blade against her throat and heard the voice by her ear tell her to keep quiet or she would die.

He dragged her deep into the back of the alley and threw her roughly to the ground. Before she could move he was on top of her with the knife blade gleaming silver in his hand. He wore a mask over his face and spoke so softly that she could barely hear him. But she did and her eyes filled with terror as he told her what he had planned for her.

## **Chapter Two**

Moira and Cass were laughing as they stopped just beside the bank doors so Cass could unlock the night drop. Moira scanned the area and waited for Cass' nudge before she unzipped her bag and handed out the night deposit bags from the diner. Cass dropped them in and shut the hatch, waiting for the click and then tugging at it to make sure that it was locked tight.

"All done," Cass said, "the night is ours. You want to catch a late dinner at the all-night diner or maybe take in a late show? That new horror movie is out."

"You and your horror movies. How can you stand to watch those things? Some wack job stalks the silly little campers, hikers, et cetera, until he gets almost everyone but the hero and his love. And how pathetic is it that the first one to die is usually a big-breasted blonde who runs up the stairs to get away from the killer instead of outside. It's the same story, only the scenery and the actors change."

"You're just upset because you're one of those big-breasted blondes," Cass laughed. "Come on, let the hero run up and rescue you before the killer steals your virtue."

Moira slugged Cass playfully in the arm and laughed with her.

"Oh please, only if I had your body would my virtue be in danger."

"Ha, you know that you are lusted after by all who meet you. Not only are you beautiful, but you have the most toned body I've ever seen on a woman."

Moira started to laugh then stopped and glanced back toward the alley entrance they had just passed.

"Did you hear that?" she asked Cass.

"Hear what?"

"I'm not sure. It was almost like a whimper or something. I'm going to check it out."

"What do you mean you're going to check it out?" Cass started to say but it was already too late as Moira had entered the alley.

Cass quickly followed her. As they moved deeper into the alley Cass could hear the noise that Moira had spoke of. It definitely sounded like a whimper and it definitely sounded human. Moira hurried deeper into the alley. A figure suddenly materialized out of the darkness in front of Moira. Although the figure was hard to make out, they could definitely tell that it held something in its hand, something with blood on it.

Moira turned her head even as she prepared her body for the inevitable and screamed at Cass, "Run!"

Cass went flying down the alley back to the street and started yelling at the top of her lungs, "Fire! Fire!"

She kept screaming and running, praying to find help in time. God, she thought, please protect Moira. All she kept hearing in her head was Moira screaming for her to run. Then she kept hearing her say that no matter how strong you are there is always that one person who is stronger. *Please, God, don't let those words prove true for Moira tonight.* She glanced behind her to see if anyone was giving chase, Moira or the killer, and ran into the hardest chest she had ever felt in her life. It felt like she had just hit a brick wall and would have bounced off him and hit the sidewalk if arms of steel hadn't wrapped around her and prevented it. She looked up at the man holding her against his chest and glanced at the guy standing next to him. They were both big and strong. My God had she left Moira in one situation only to find herself in one as well? She felt frozen by those blue eyes. They said that Ted Bundy had looked like the boy next door as well. This big blond was definitely boy-next-door material. All these thoughts flashed through her mind even as her scream of fire changed to one of help.

With a gentle shake of her shoulders Ben got the attention of the goddess in his arms and at last her eyes seemed to focus in on him and the fact that they were standing just outside the front windows of the all-night diner.

"Please! Oh God, please, I have to get help! I have to get help before it's too late!"

"What seems to be the trouble?" Gil immediately took control of the situation. He could tell that something had really spooked the girl.

"Please I have to get the police as fast as I can. My friend and I stumbled on a murder. I have to get help right away!"

Gil glanced around and didn't see anyone following the girl.

"Where is your friend at?" he asked.

"She's still in the alley. Please, I have to get help right now. Please!"

Without thinking, Gil opened his sport coat to get his badge. At the sight of his gun in the shoulder holster the girl's eyes become so huge that he hurried to reassure her.

"It's okay. I'm just reaching inside my jacket to show you my badge. I'm Detective Gil Daniels and this is my partner Detective Ben Marcum," he said, nodding toward Ben, who was still holding her loosely in his arms and had yet to open his mouth.

"Now why don't you take us to where your friend is waiting? Is she with the body of the victim?"

"Victim?" Cass asked confused for a moment.

Gil lifted his eyebrows. "You did say that you and your friend stumbled on a murder," he prompted.

"I'm not totally sure if there has been or not," Cass snapped back into focus, "but if we don't hurry there could be."

"What do you mean there could be?" Gil grabbed her out of Ben's arms and gripped her shoulders tight.

"We heard a whimper type noise from the alley and Moira went to investigate. I followed her because I didn't want her to go back there alone. Moira was ahead of me. We heard the whimper again and it sounded like someone moaning in pain. Moira went to rush forward when this figure suddenly stepped out of the shadows in front of her."

"What kind of figure?" Ben asked, finally getting some moisture back into his mouth.

"A big hulking figure! Hell, I don't know! I was too busy noticing the blood on the thing in his hand to pay much attention to him. Then Moira turned and yelled at me to run. We don't have time for this! Just follow me before she gets hurt."

Gil and Ben took off at a run with Cass close behind them. She was yelling to them that it was the alley just by the bank.

All Gil could think was that it was six long blocks to the alley. The girl probably didn't even realize how far she had to run for help. He prayed that they got back to her friend in time.

Moira heard Cass running back to the street screaming "Fire" at the top of her lungs. *Good, she thought. Always scream fire, more people will respond. God give her swift feet to find help quickly. I can't believe he caught me unaware. Why the hell didn't I think that this could be a possibility? Because this isn't the movies, Moira, that's why.* She heard the whimper again but kept her attention focused on the figure in front of her. She balanced on the balls of her feet, dropped her bag and relaxed her arms. She planned to either be ready to run or defend herself. *You can do this, she kept repeating in her head. You've trained for this. You've trained others for this. Focus and breathe. Focus and breathe.*

The figure just stood there looking at her. She could hear his deep breathing. He sounded like he had just run a marathon. Although it seemed like hours had passed since they stood facing each other it had been only seconds. He reached out to snag Moira's arm but she was quicker. She ducked and backed away from him. She could smell the metallic scent of blood on him now. It was overpowering and making her nauseous. He grabbed for her again and still she got away. This seemed to infuriate him and he lunged for her. She ducked and feinted left and he went down behind her, effectively blocking her way back to the street. *Fuck! she thought. I AM a stupid big-breasted blonde. No, don't back out of the alley, let him get around you and trap you in it.*

He started coming toward her, tapping the object in his hands on his thigh. All she could see of his face were his eyes and lips. The eyes were dark, almost black, and his lips were smiling. *He thinks he has me trapped, she thought.* She'd lost her cap when he lunged and her long blonde hair now surrounded her, falling in thick waves to her waist. *I should have braided it like I do for class, she thought as she shoved it behind her ears and shoulders.* She was scanning the alley as she walked backward searching for a weapon to use, anything that might help her to knock that thing out of his hand. It was driving her crazy the way he kept tapping it on his thigh as he stalked her.

She heard a moan right behind her and glanced back only to trip and sprawl hard on her back. There beside her was what had been moaning. She could tell by the exposed breasts that it was the body of a woman and that she had been raped. There was blood on her thighs and the beginnings of bruises there, as well as on her breasts and arms. That wasn't the worst of it though. She would like to believe that she could have handled it if that was all there was. But it was the sight of the woman's face resembling something out of a horror movie that made her heart slam into her throat and choke her. The woman's hair and face were covered in blood. There was so much blood. Now she knew why the instrument in his hand was covered in it. He had used it to bash this poor woman's face in. It had literally been pulverized. It no longer even looked like a face. Then the monstrosity seemed to turn toward her and she could swear that she heard the woman say, "Help me. Please help me." She heard the man above them and glanced up. Even as she began to scream he swung the thing in his hand down toward her head.

The beautiful blonde was unconscious at his feet. He could have her right now if he wanted, but what was the fun in that. He spared a glance for the now-still figure of the other blonde and then looked at the new one. This one was by far the most beautiful that he had ever seen. She had courage as well. She had been giving him a pretty good fight before she tripped and fell. She made his blood hum like nothing else could. He should be feeling euphoric over his conquest. He had gotten such a high from the last one that he had been able to wait a month before the urge was too strong to hold back. Now he could feel the urge swelling in him again so strong that he could easily feast on her. He glanced back and went to retrieve her bag. He was curious about this woman. She was somehow different from the others. He bent down and grabbed a handful of her hair and brought it to his nose. He inhaled deeply and drank in the scent of her. She smelled like honeysuckle and melon. Just the smell of her was making him hard again. He brushed a hand over her sweatshirt and stopped at the feel of the full breasts hidden beneath. He dropped her hair and moved his other hand to the hem of her sweatshirt and began to push it up while his other hand still squeezed her breast. He licked his lips in anticipation. He was so lost in the moment that he almost didn't hear the rushing footsteps in time. He had just revealed the lush breasts in the turquoise lace bra when he heard a voice tell someone to stay put while they investigated. *Damn*, he thought. He grabbed her gym bag and maneuvered over the back dumpsters. He disappeared into the night with thoughts of an angel on his mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

They were still two blocks away when they heard the scream. It pierced the air and then cut off abruptly. Gil's heart almost stopped with it. With a spurt of energy they reached the alley entrance. Gil and Ben pulled their guns out and stepped into the entrance.

"You stay put. Detective Marcum and I will go investigate," Gil said to the young woman. "Don't move one step into this alley until you see one of us come back out for you."

Cass just nodded her head and practically shoved them forward.

Gil and Ben slowly made their way toward the back of the alley. They scanned the surrounding darkness as they moved, quietly searching everywhere for the woman. Gil was the first one to see the two bodies. All he saw were the legs at first. They were very close together. He knelt beside the first one and took a quick visual while he felt for a pulse. Her face had been beaten and there was blood everywhere. By the position of her body and her clothes it appeared that she had been sexually assaulted. There was no pulse. Damn, he thought and quickly moved over to the other victim while Ben continued on to the very back of the alley. There wasn't very much blood on this one. Her face had splatters of blood on it but he couldn't tell if it was hers or the other woman's. Her clothes were still in order with only her sweatshirt raised high on her rib cage displaying a turquoise lace bra and very full breasts. Her long blonde hair seemed to be everywhere. There was so much of it and there was blood soaking it as well.

"All clear," Ben came back to Gil and knelt beside him. "What have we got?"

"Another homicide, same MO. This one still has a pulse," Gil said, pointing to the blonde with all the hair as he snapped his cell phone closed. "Ambulance is on the way."

"Oh my God! Moira! No!" Cass whispered at her first sight of Moira. "I shouldn't have left you. I should never have left you to face him alone."

Ben moved to intercept her before she could get to the girl, Moira. "You shouldn't be back here. This is a crime scene. Come on and I'll walk you back to the street."

She shoved his arm away so forcefully that he almost lost his balance. Before he could recover, Cass was on her knees beside Moira. She gently brushed Moira's hair from her face and tugged her sweatshirt down, glancing meaningfully at Gil and Ben.

"She's still alive," Gil spoke softly to her. "Her pulse is strong."

Gil did his best to keep the other woman's body hidden from view behind his back.

"You did exactly what you should have. You had to go for help. If you didn't, you could both be lying here."

"She has to be all right. I couldn't live with myself if..." Cass started to say just as a low moan started from Moira's lips.

Three sets of eyes focused on Moira as she began to move and try to open her eyes.

Moira could hear the voices above her talking but she couldn't make out what they were saying. She opened her eyes and blinked several times before she was able to focus. There was a man leaning over her with his hand on her shoulder. He seemed to be mostly in shadow except for his crystal blue eyes. He seemed big and muscular and his eyes were the most beautiful that she had ever seen. All this ran through her mind

and then memory come flooding back with a wham. Moira shoved the man with all her might and backpedaled away. With a safe distance between them she jumped to her feet and took her fighting stance.

"Moira, no! These are the good guys," Cass hollered and jumped in front of where Gil was still getting to his feet. She ran to Moira and wrapped her arms around her. "My God, Moira, are you all right?"

Moira hugged Cass back tight and began taking deep breaths to try to calm down. Cass could feel Moira shaking and realized how upset her friend was.

"There's a bench just outside the alley on the sidewalk. It's right in front of the flower shop. Why don't we go sit down and talk. We'll wait there for you, Detectives," Cass stated as she grabbed Moira by the elbow and began leading her toward the front of the alley. She knew that she needed to get Moira away from where they were quickly before Moira lost it.

Police cars and an ambulance began to arrive just as the girls took a seat on the bench. Cass held tightly to Moira's hand, giving her support through silence. She knew that Moira needed to catch her breath and calm her pulse before she would be able to talk about what had happened.

One of the detectives came back out of the alley with an EMT and headed toward the bench where the girls were sitting. This one was blond, Moira noted, with blue eyes, a softer blue than the other detective, more like a beautiful blue sky. He stopped and knelt in front of Cass. He placed his hand over where Cass' still gripped Moira's tight.

"Miss?" Ben looked closely at Moira, trying to get her attention. "This is Bob. He is an EMT and would like to check you out and make sure that you're all right."

Moira just looked at him as if she didn't know what he was saying. Ben turned to Cass for help.

"Moira," Cass said as she gave her shoulder a little shake. "Moira, you need to let the EMT take a look at you. We need to make sure that you're okay."

Moira seemed to snap out of it when the EMT knelt before her. "I'm fine. I'm not hurt anywhere."

"Moira, you have blood all over you," Cass said. "Are you sure that you're okay?"

"It's not mine. It's hers," Moira whispered. "It's hers. Oh my God, that poor woman! How is she?"

Ben stood up before Moira and Cass. "We can discuss everything later. Why don't you let Bob take you with him in the ambulance and Detective Daniels and I will meet you at the hospital."

"No," Moira said, sounding firmer, "I'm fine. I just want to go home and take a shower."

"If you want to sit here for a minute, Detective Daniels and I will see you both home. We need to sit down and go over exactly what happened tonight."

"I understand. First I plan on taking a shower and then I'll answer your questions."

Ben went to speak to Gil and returned a few minutes later. "One of the officers will take you home and Detective Daniels and I will be by in about an hour to talk to you both."

He glanced at Cass, "Do you think that you could stay with her until we get there?"

Cass smiled up at him. "That will be no problem since we've been roommates for the last four years. Here is our address," she said, handing him a piece of paper that she had written it down on. "We'll see you in an hour."

"My bag, it's in the alley." Moira glanced at the detective.

Ben looked at Cass questioningly.

"Her gym bag, it's black and says Knowledge Is Power in gold lettering on the side."

"We'll bring it by with us when we're done here."

Cass nodded to him as she led Moira to the back of the waiting police cruiser.



## Chapter Three

Moira stood under the spray of hot water, letting it run over her head and shoulders. The water was as hot as she could physically tolerate. She had scrubbed herself twice and still didn't feel clean. She had a small knot on the back of her head and a bruise on her breast that she didn't remember getting. He must have touched her after she had fainted. She could still smell the blood and the woman's face would not leave her mind.

Moira heard Cass knock at the door.

"Moira, are you okay? I've got coffee made and the detectives should be here any minute. Moira?"

Moira shook her head and turned the water off. She took a deep breath, opened the shower door and grabbed a towel.

"I'll be right out, Cass. I'm just toweling off."

Moira rubbed her skin vigorously with the towel and then wrapped it around her hair. She took her time dressing in a pair of black yoga pants and coordinating sleeveless red top. There was about an inch of bare skin on her midriff. She shook the towel free and began to brush her still damp hair. She pulled it back in a long ponytail and glanced at herself in the mirror. Her top fit in a way that emphasized her well-built chest and flat stomach. The yoga pants showed her long legs to great advantage with a flare at the bottom covering her bare feet. With her hair pulled back and her face free of makeup, she looked about eighteen years old again. Moira saw none of this though. As she looked in the mirror she just saw a face, while in her mind she kept seeing the woman in the alley who didn't have one. It was a sight that she would never forget. That poor woman's face and her whispered "Help me" would haunt Moira for a long time.

She heard the doorbell and Cass' greeting. She just wanted to forget, but first she had to face the detectives and go over everything with them. She took a deep breath and grasped the door knob. She was as calm as she was going to get.

Cass opened the door and greeted the two detectives standing there.

"Detective Marcum," Cass smiled at the gorgeous blond man when he passed through the door. "Detective Daniels?" she questioned as the dark-haired man moved to enter. At his nod she closed the door and turned to lead them into the living room.

"If you'll make yourselves comfortable, I'll go get some coffee. Moira should be out any minute."

Ben smiled and took a seat on the end of the L-shaped red sectional. He noticed that she had changed clothes since he had last seen her. Cass wore a pair of snug jeans with a form-fitting pink shirt tucked in. Her feet were bare and her hair hung in loose waves down to the middle of her back. She was the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen.

"Thanks," Gil said, "but please don't go to any trouble for us."

"The coffee is already made," Cass tossed back over her shoulder as she headed to the kitchen. "I'll just be a minute."

Gil glanced at Ben when they were alone. "Snap out of it, Ben. I'll grant you that she is nice looking, but don't forget why we're here."

"As if I ever could," Ben responded.

Gil walked around the room they were in. The couch took up most of the space. The carpet was a deep plush cream color and the walls were just a shade lighter than the carpet. There was a low coffee table in front of the couch that was covered in fitness magazines. The built-in bookshelves in the corner were filled with exercise and nutrition books as well as psychology books. There was a big comfy chair next to the bookshelf with an end table close by. There were two current bestsellers lying on the table next to the ceramic lamp. There were a few pictures of the two women together. There was one of the blonde standing in a gym with a huge grin on her face. There was one of the brunette with an older couple that he took to be her parents. There were a few paintings on the other walls. The pictures by the bookshelves were the only personal photos in the room.

Gil turned at the sound of a door opening across the hall behind him. He saw the blonde walk out of what must be the bathroom. She looked so young and innocent that he felt a wild protective urge to shield her from the brutality that he knew she had seen in that alley. She was wearing some type of workout outfit that made his mouth water. He couldn't believe that she had been hiding such an amazing body. Her breasts were full, high and incredible and she had a small waist and slim hips. She might look young but her body was definitely all woman.

Moira felt eyes on her and looked up to encounter the blue eyes of the dark-haired detective. He was taller than she had thought and sexy as hell. She smiled in greeting as she entered the room. She noticed the blond was there too and that he was just as tall as his partner.

"Hello, my name is Moira," she said. "I need to thank you for your timely arrival back in the alley. You saved my life."

"We're just glad that we got there in time," Gil stated with a smile of his own. "You're a very lucky woman, Ms?"

"Please just call me Moira."

"Moira then." Gil paused as the other woman re-entered the room with a coffee tray with a carafe and four cups.

"Let me get that for you," Ben took the tray from Cass and set it down on the coffee table.

Cass filled a cup with strong black coffee and handed it to Moira. She glanced at Gil with the carafe in hand and raised a questioning eyebrow.

"Just black please," Gil said.

"Ah, just like Moira. I have to have cream in mine," Cass replied as she handed him a cup. "And you, Detective Marcum?"

"Ben please, and I take mine black also." He watched her pour the coffee and smiled his thanks when she handed him the cup.

Gil waited until Cass held her own cup of creamed coffee before he spoke again. "If we could all be seated there are a few things that we need to go over with you both."

Moira and Cass seated themselves in the middle of the couch on either side of the built-in storage with tabletop. Ben seated himself to Cass' right and Gil sat at the opposite end of the couch on Moira's left. Leaning forward, Gil placed his coffee cup on the table in front of him and took out a notebook and pen from his inside pocket.

"I'd like to go over general information first."

"Do you mind?" Ben asked, holding up a palm-sized tape recorder. At Moira and Cass' nodded assent Ben spoke the date and time into the recorder and placed it on the table.

"I'd like for each of you to identify yourselves for the record please," Ben said.

"Cassandra Emily Sinclair."

"Moira Jackilyn Madigan."

Gil frowned at Moira's last name, trying to place where he had heard it before. "This is Detective Gil Daniels with Detective Ben Marcum here at 334 East Pacific Lane, Apt 2B. At approximately ten forty-five p.m. this evening Detective Marcum and myself encountered Ms. Sinclair on the sidewalk outside Sid's Twenty-Four-Hour Diner. Ms. Sinclair was running and screaming 'Fire'. She collided with Detective Marcum and began to scream for help. Now then, Ms. Sinclair, I would like you to take us back to the beginning of the evening and walk us through to the point where you left the alley."

"At ten this evening I began closing up Dee's Diner where I work part time. Moira showed up about fifteen minutes later and helped me finish up. I had to drop off some deposit bags in the safe at the bank on my way home and Moira walked with me. After doing that we headed past the bank, laughing and talking about something, a movie that was showing at the theater here in town, when Moira, umm, Ms. Madigan heard a noise in the alley beside us, the one between the bank and the flower shop on Main Street. Anyway, Ms. Madigan started into the alley and I ran after her. As I got to the middle of the alley I heard the noise as well. It sounded like a whimper of pain and it was coming from the back of the alley. Moira was up ahead of me and when we heard the whimper she began to move quickly toward the sound. Then out of nowhere this figure seemed to materialize."

At Moira's shiver Cass reached over and clasped her hand. "I saw something in his hand. I remember the moon glistening off it. I don't know for sure what it was. The next thing I know Moira was yelling at me to run. I didn't want to leave her, but I knew that I needed to get help quickly. So I took off running. I was scared to death and had no idea where I was until I ran into Detective Marcum."

"Ms. Sinclair ran six blocks down Main before she ran into myself and Detective Daniels," Ben stated for the record. He glanced at Cass and saw the fear and worries on her face. "You did the right thing by running for help, Ms. Sinclair. Don't ever think otherwise."

"Thank you," Cass said and placed her free hand on his knee.

Gil faced Moira and began speaking again. "At this point we will begin with Ms. Madigan's encounter in the alley. Ms. Madigan."

At the detective's prompting Moira closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "I saw him before me and yelled at Cass to run. I heard her running and screaming 'Fire' as I faced him. I dropped my gym bag and tried to anticipate his movements. He grabbed for me a few times but I managed to stay out of reach. Somehow I ended up with my back to the back of the alley with him blocking the way to the street. He started walking toward me and he was tapping something on his thigh. He was all in black. His face was covered except for his eyes and mouth. His eyes were so dark. I remember thinking that they looked almost black. I could smell the blood by then and it was overpowering. I was backing away from him. He was smiling at me and it was so evil that it scared me. I heard a moan just behind me and when I glanced back I tripped and fell hard."

Moira shivered and took a big gulp of air. She glanced up when she felt a hand on her clenched fist. Detective Daniels took her hand in his and, straightening her fist, held it clasped firmly in his. "It's all right now, Ms. Madigan. He can't hurt you now. You're safe. I hate to put you through this but I need to know what you saw when you fell."

She took another deep breath and with a shudder began. "There was a woman lying beside me. I must have tripped over her legs. She was moaning. Her face, oh God, her face was gone. He must have beaten it until her features were unrecognizable. She didn't look human. I remember thinking that she must be dead. I thought that I was imagining the moaning. Then she turned toward me. I swear I heard her ask me for help. She begged me to help her."

Gil took one look at her pale face and huge eyes and did something that he had never done before. He moved closer to her and pulled her into his arms. She seemed to melt into him and rested her head on his shoulder. She put her fist in her mouth to try to stifle her sobs. He stroked his hand up and down her spine and spoke softly in her ear.

"It's all right. You're safe. Take a deep breath. That's good. He can't hurt you now. I've got you. Everything's going to be fine now."

Moira glanced up at him but kept her head on his shoulder. She couldn't remember ever feeling this secure before. She took a deep breath and began again.

"The next thing I knew he was standing over us. He raised something over his head. I saw it coming toward us and I screamed. I must have lost consciousness then because the next thing I remember is waking up and seeing you leaning over me. I'm sorry that I knocked you down."

Gil smiled at her, "That's all right. Under the circumstances I understand perfectly. Did he hurt you in any way?"

Moira pulled her head off his shoulder and touched the back of her head gingerly. "I have a knot on the back of my head, probably from where I fell, and a few bruises."

Gil noticed her blush and avert her eyes from his when she said bruises. "Where exactly are your bruises, Ms. Madigan?"

Ben glanced at him with a question in his eyes but Gil couldn't help his need to know if this guy had touched her and bruised her with his hands.

Moira glanced up too. "I have a few on my hips and elbows and a few others."

"Where else?" Gil probed. At her continued reluctance Gil reached forward and turned the recorder off. "You were found with your shirt pulled up and your bra exposed."

Moira blushed a brighter shade of red and mumbled, "On my breast. There are bruises on my breast."

Gil saw red. He didn't know why the thought of someone doing that to her bothered him so much, but it did. He felt her shudder beside him and took her in his arms again. "I'm sorry that I put you through that but we need to know everything that this guy did while in the alley. Every little thing can help us."

"It's okay. I just..." Moira glanced quickly up into his eyes. "The other woman in the alley. How is she? Is she going to be okay?"

Gil exchanged glances with Ben over Moira's head before speaking. "I'm afraid that she was dead when we got there."

"Oh God no! She asked for help. She begged me to help her and I let her die."

"You did no such thing." Gil gently shook her shoulders to snap her out of it. "It was already too late for her before you got there. There was nothing you could do for her. Which brings me to ask you why you went into the alley alone? Why not call and report suspicious noises? Why go into the alley at all?"

"Instinct. I felt like something wasn't right. I heard someone moan and went to help."

"If you felt that something wasn't right then you should never have entered the alley," Gil stated angrily. "You could have got yourself killed. You're a woman for God's sake. Why would you go into that alley alone?"

"For your information not every woman needs a big strong man to take care of her." Moira pushed away from him and jumped furiously to her feet. "I can take care of myself."

Gil got to his feet as well. "Oh you sure proved that, didn't you?"

"Listen here, you big jerk. I've been taking care of myself for a long time. I teach self-defense classes for a living. I may be a helpless woman in your eyes, but I still managed to knock you on your ass. Didn't I?" Moira sneered.

Ben quickly turned his laugh into a cough at the fire in Gil's eyes.

"Adrenaline," Gil muttered, embarrassed at remembering that she had indeed knocked him on his butt.

Ben cleared his throat, "I think that we've gotten off the point here somehow," he pointed out to the room at large, with a meaningful glance sent to Gil in particular. "The point is that you're both okay. Where do you teach classes?"

"Knowledge Is Power. Cass teaches there as well."

Ben glanced beside him at Cass. "What do you teach?"

"I teach aerobics, kickboxing, spin and stripper-cize."

Ben felt his tongue grow dry at the last one. "Umm, that sounds interesting."

Cass laughed at the look on his face. "You guys should stop by some time, take a class or something."

"Isn't that a woman's gym?" Gil asked, trying to shake off his anger.

Moira took a deep breath before she answered. "Not anymore. We still have a private portion of the gym that is for women only, but we now accept everyone who passes our security check. There are a lot of cops who come in."

"Security check?" Ben just barely beat Gil in asking.

"Known felons are not allowed to become members. Quite a few of our clients have been victims of spousal abuse or other violent crimes. Their safety has to come first. I have a staff of ten all trained in self-defense in case of trouble. We take care of our own."

"I take it that you are the manager then," Gil said. "You seem awful young."

Cass started giggling from her position beside Ben on the couch.

"I'm twenty-four," Moira replied dryly, "and I own Knowledge Is Power."

"Wow, that's quite a feat." Ben smiled.

"If you brought my bag with you I'd be happy to give you a card."

"What bag?" Gil asked.

"The one I dropped in the alley. Detective Marcum said that you guys would bring it with you." Moira looked back and forth between the two. "You did bring it, didn't you?"

"There was no bag in the alley, Ms. Madigan," Ben said.

"Then where is my bag?" Moira exclaimed with wide eyes.

## Chapter Four

Moira sat at her desk feeling every bruise on her body. She was so sore that she had to have another instructor cover her schedule for today. That had never happened before. Usually it was Moira that covered for everyone. She was trying to remember what all was in her bag so she could get the information to Detective Daniels. Just thinking about him made her body react. She had never felt such instant attraction before.

So far her list consisted of her black spandex biker shorts and a black sport bra, a red sleeveless yoga shirt, socks, tennis shoes, a black thong, her driver's license, a twenty-dollar bill and some business cards and flyers for Knowledge Is Power. She felt exposed listing all of her clothing items. The thought that someone, especially a murderer, could be handling her things unnerved her.

"Hey, Moira, Kip found this outside the back door," said Lacey Meadows, the receptionist at Knowledge Is Power, as she placed a black gym bag on the desk. "Yours is the only one with the gold print on the side. The rest are all in red."

When Moira just continued to stare at the bag without comment Lacey leaned forward and snapped her fingers in front of Moira's eyes to get her attention. "Are you all right, Moira?"

"I'm fine," Moira mumbled, staring at the bag. "Tell Kip that I will need to see him please."

"Sure thing," Lacey said, already on her way out of the office.

Moira sat and stared at the bag on her desk, afraid to open it. She carefully reached for the phone and dialed the number for the police department. "Detective Daniels please. This is Moira Madigan. Yes, I'll hold."

Gil and Ben sat at their desks going over the events of the previous evening. After leaving the girls' apartment they had gone back to the alley to look again for the gym bag with no luck. It was just nowhere to be found.

"So what was the deal with Ms. Madigan last night?" Ben finally asked, unable to hold onto his curiosity any longer. "I've never seen you offer comfort like that before, definitely not up to your usual by-the-book standards."

"I don't know. There is just something about her, a sweetness and an innocence that I've never encountered before," Gil replied, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, she must have felt it too. You could feel the sizzle between the two of you all over the room."

"I'm surprised that you noticed anything what with your tongue hanging out of your mouth over the little brunette. I thought you might pass out when she said that she taught stripper-cize."

"Well, damn, can I help it if I had no problem envisioning that? What red-blooded man wouldn't? The woman has a knockout body. I was damn grateful that I didn't embarrass myself."

Gil laughed and raised an eyebrow. "Who said that you didn't?"

Before Ben could reply the phone rang.

"Detective Daniels. Hello, Moira, how are you doing this morning?" Gil said with a smile on his face, but her next words had it quickly wiped away. "What? When? We'll be right there."

Ben could tell by the intensity on Gil's face that something was wrong. He was ready to go before the telephone was back in its cradle.

"The gym bag showed up at the back door of Moira's gym this morning. Looks like our man had it and he left a message inside."

Moira paced her office waiting for him to arrive. Everything would be fine as soon as he got there. Detective Daniels would take care of everything. For now she couldn't seem to stop shaking.

She heard his voice outside her office and ran to the doorway. Without stopping to think she flung herself at his chest. He caught her easily and gently led her back to her office, away from the curious stares of her staff. She vaguely noticed that the other detective was with him. She remembered he was Detective Marcum. He shut the door while Gil led her to her chair behind her desk.

"Everything will be all right. You're safe here," Gil continued to stroke his palm up and down her back. He was having trouble catching his breath. He didn't understand the feelings that had exploded in him when she'd run into his arms. He wanted to sweep her up and hold her close. He wanted to throw her down and fuck her until she screamed. She brought out feelings that he'd never experienced before. It left him shaken.

Ben stepped forward, pulling gloves on, and glanced at the black gym bag open on the desk. It appeared that she had dumped the contents on her desk and left them there. There were some workout clothes, shoes, a card, some money, a bottle of lotion and a crumpled piece of paper.

Gil, gloves already in place, had already noticed the spilled contents on the desktop. He picked up the crumpled paper. "Is this the note that was in your bag?"

At her nod he opened it and read it out loud. "Honeysuckle and melon, a truly glorious scent. It suits your skin to perfection. One whiff and I knew that you were meant for me. The goddess has spoken and we were meant 2B." At her shudder he pulled her close again. "The guy thinks he's a poet."



"The lotion isn't mine. I use one similar. I'll never be able to use it again," Moira murmured against Gil's chest.

"Was anything missing from the bag?" Ben asked.

"I don't know. I made a list before it arrived. I haven't checked it. I don't want to touch any of it."

"Where's the list?" Gil questioned as he continued to hold her in his arms. She had a grip on his shirt and showed no signs of letting go.

"The notepad on my desk."

Gil picked up the pad and a pen and started crossing out items as Ben held them up with his gloved hand and placed them back in the bag. Moira noticed what was missing just as Gil did.

"Oh my God, he kept my underwear!" Moira said, turning a few shades whiter. "I think I'm going to be sick."

Gil felt the rage course through his body at the thought of this pervert having something so intimate of Moira's. He understood her feeling of disgust and violation. He pulled her head to his chest and stroked her hair.

Ben cleared his throat to get their attention before he spoke. "I think that we have an even bigger problem than that. This guy has your driver's license and 'meant 2B' makes me believe that he paid attention to that fact and now knows where you live."

"Who knows where we live?" Cass spoke from the door of Moira's office. She noticed Moira's white face and then the open gym bag on the desk. "What's going on? Where did you find the bag?"

Ben noticed the snug outfit and the faint layer of perspiration on her skin and realized that she must have just finished a class. Her long hair was in a ponytail and she looked positively edible.

"Kip found it at the back door when he came in at ten. It was just sitting in front of the door. He thought that I must have put it down for some reason and then forgotten about it," Moira stated with her eyes glued to the open bag on the desk. "There was a note inside. Oh God, Cass, he knows where we live. He knows where we work."

Cass hurried around the desk and knelt beside Moira's chair, taking her hand in both of hers. "Our security is top-notch at both places. You know that better than anyone. He can't get to us."

"Those are the words of a fool," Ben said harshly as he realized that Cass would be in danger too since she both worked and lived with Moira.

At Cass' look of outrage, he quickly tried to soothe her. "This guy is smart. He has killed at least two women that we know of. You both saw what he is capable of. It would be best if you found somewhere else to stay. Both of you."

"Cass is right." Moira stood up and gripped Cass' hand tightly. "We have the best security available. Midnight Inc. takes care of the security on both buildings. Actually both buildings are owned by Midnight Inc. as well."

"I know that Midnight Inc. has quite a reputation for top-notch security, but still it would be better if you moved elsewhere." At Moira's firm shake of her head Gil let out his breath. "Then we will need to talk to someone from Midnight Inc. to convey the seriousness of this situation."

Just then they heard a voice bellow from Lacey's desk just outside Moira's office. "She'll damn well see me right now. I don't care who is in her office."

Moira's body went rigid at the sound of that voice. Cass, sensing what was coming, stepped quickly out of the line of fire.

"Looks like you are about to get your chance," Moira spoke through gritted teeth just as the door to her office was thrown open.

The man that filled the doorway was big. He was maybe an inch or two taller than Ben and Gil with a heavily muscled body. There was just a touch of gray at his temples and a scar ran from his left eyebrow into his hairline just above his ear. The rest of his hair was a sandy brown and his eyes were the same startling green as Moira's. Right now those eyes were flashing fire at Moira.

Gil realized two things. First, the irate man in the doorway was related to Moira, either her father or uncle. Secondly, that man was none other than Jack Madigan. The man was a living legend. Every Marine had heard the tales of his exploits. It was said that more than a few men owed their lives to him. Gil could see why so many people feared him. He was really something to see in his anger.

"Just what the hell has been going on, Moira? Why didn't you call me? My daughter almost gets killed and I don't hear anything until this morning. An employee wanted to know if you were okay after last night. How the hell do you think I felt when I didn't have a clue what he was talking about?" Jack seemed to notice that there were other people in the room only when Gil stepped toward Moira and put his hand on the small of her back. Moira seemed to lean toward Gil.

"Who the hell are you?" Jack let his gaze scorch Gil and Ben who had sat in one of the chairs in front of Moira's desk at Jack's entrance. Cass stepped forward to gain attention and try to defuse the tension that was thick in the room.

"Hello, Cass. You okay, honey?" Ben felt his own anger at Jack's calmer voice speaking to Cass. He could see the tenderness in Jack's eyes.

"I'm fine, Mr. Madigan. Moira's the one who has had the scare. This is Detective Daniels and Detective Marcum," Cass said as she moved around the corner of the desk to give Jack a quick hug and lead him to the chair beside Ben. "If you'll sit down maybe we can all go over what has happened in the last twenty-four hours."

Jack sat down next to Ben and let out a weary sigh. He was tired. As he listened to the detectives relate what had happened, he noticed the way Moira seemed taken with the dark-haired detective. He also noticed the way that the detective kept his arm around her back. He would have to look into that. It also seemed that there might be something blooming between Cass and the blond detective. He had noticed the flash of anger when he had spoken so softly to Cass. She was like a daughter to him as well. He

had promised her father that he would keep an eye on her. He knew what she was going through right now with her mother's illness. Moira didn't know it but Cass kept him pretty informed about things. He knew that she was the one who had called his office and left the message about Moira's attack. It hurt him deeply that his own daughter wouldn't let him know. He had been shut out of so much of her life, first because of his military career and then because of her great-grandmother. That bitter old woman had kept Moira hidden from him as long as she could. By the time he had found Moira she was a teenager and filled with nothing but hatred for him. He had no idea what she had been told, but it hadn't been the truth. He'd at least managed to make a deal with her to pay for her college and then to help her set up her business. His daughter had a lot of pride but she had finally agreed to his condition. Once a month she had dinner with him. She didn't like it but she did it.

Jack sat up straight at the mention of the note. Gil held it so that Jack could see it and Jack felt his anger renewed when he read it. He couldn't believe what Moira had been through. He was done waiting for her to open up and let him be a father. He would just do it.

"That's it. You and Cass can move into my house. You'll be safer there until this guy is found." Before Moira could protest Jack held his hand up and stated matter-of-factly, "It's either that or I will move in with you. There are no other options here, Moira. I'll lock you out of the entire building if I have to."

Gil felt Moira's body shake with anger and spoke before he thought about it. "There are a few other options on the table. I know that Detective Marcum and I could help find the ladies somewhere else to stay or we could take turns staying with them if they insisted on staying in the apartment."

Jack raised his eyebrow at the offer and looked at Moira. She looked just as surprised as he did. "Well, what is it going to be, Moira?"

Moira glared at her father before turning to Gil. "If you really don't mind, we do have a spare bedroom that one of you could use. We keep it for whenever Cass' family comes to visit. I refuse to let some psycho chase me out of my own apartment. I'm staying."

"I'm with you." Cass came to stand beside Moira.

"Fine. Just remember, Detective, that I will hold you personally responsible for my daughter's safety and for Cass' as well. My daughter may not like me but she is all I have. Remember that."

Jack stood and glanced at Moira before turning to leave the office. He turned at the doorway and looked once more at Moira. "Tonight is our dinner night. Since you'll be having guests, I'll bring takeout to your apartment. I'll be double-checking security in the building anyway. I'll be by around seven. Be there, Moira." With that Jack Madigan made his exit.

"We need to get back to the office as well. I'd like to get this note into the lab as soon as possible to check for prints. I'll pack a bag later and head over to your place

around seven as well. Ben and I will work out a shift between us so that one of us is always there at night."

"Thank you," Cass said. "But please don't let us interfere with either of your personal lives. We'll get you a key card to the building and a key to the apartment so that you can come in late if you have a date or something." Cass was trying hard not to look at Ben while she said this last bit.

"Neither of us is seeing anyone right now," Ben said with a smile. "The job takes up a lot of time. We'll both stop by tonight and go over a schedule with you. Make sure that you leave work with your staff. No staying late by yourself. Until this guy is caught it's best that you're not caught alone."

"No problem," Moira said. "Thank you, Detective Daniels. I really appreciate what you're doing for me, for us."

"I'm sure that it will be a pleasure," Gil answered. "Until this evening, ladies. Be safe. Call if you need us. Use my cell phone number on this card. You'll be able to reach me no matter where I am."

Moira and Cass watched as the detectives left the office and then looked at each other and smiled.

"I know that I should be scared as hell and I am. But I am so looking forward to having that man in our apartment. There is just something about him that makes me feel safe and cherished."

"I know what you mean, Moira. I know just what you mean."

## Chapter Five

It was a quarter to seven and Moira was a bundle of nerves. She was looking forward to seeing Gil but apprehensive about her dad. Jack had a way of dominating any room that he was in. He had really shaken her up when he had said that she was all that he had. She didn't know what to make of it.

She was dressed in a pair of faded jeans that were her favorite pair. They were the most comfortable pair that she had and molded themselves to the shape of her butt and thighs. She had paired them with a wraparound shirt in a deep shade of red. It had a vee in the front that showed her cleavage to advantage. She normally wore only loose shirts or yoga tops but she wanted to look nice for Gil. She was barefoot, which was her norm whenever she was at home.

Cass let out a soft whistle when Moira entered the living room. Cass was wearing a soft white halter dress that brought to mind Marilyn Monroe. She had on her typical three-inch heels and her hair, like Moira's, was long and loose.

"Wow! You look super sexy, Moira." Cass exclaimed. "I don't believe that I have seen you wear that blouse since I bought it for you last year. It looks good on you."

"Thanks, Cass. I suddenly feel exposed in it. Do you think that it's too much? Maybe I should go change into something looser before anyone gets here."

"Stopped by the bell," Cass laughed when the doorbell rang. "I guess that you'll just have to stay as you are."

Cass crossed to the door and opened it. Jack stood in the doorway holding two bags stuffed with Chinese food. He leaned down to kiss Cass' cheek before crossing to the table.

"Evening, ladies. I'm so glad to see that you dressed up for me," Jack stated blandly, taking in the girls' choice of apparel. He placed the bags on the table and started taking out the paper cartons and chopsticks. "So when will the other guests be here?"

"Any minute now," Moira said. She could tell by the look in Jack's eyes that he wanted to talk to her. She wasn't sure that she wanted to listen to him. She sat on the couch and waited for him to get to the point.

Jack didn't disappoint her. "I'd like to talk to you before those detectives get here. I'm not sure that it's such a good idea for them to stay here. What do you actually know about them, Moira? How do you know that you can trust them? Are you willing to risk your life just to keep me shut out? Are you willing to risk Cass'?"

Moira shot up off the sofa and crossed to the table. "Oh that is rich, Jack. Shut you out. As if I have ever been able to shut you out of my life since you hammered your

way into it. And yes, I do trust Detective Daniels with my life and Cass'. There is just something about him. I like Gil, Jack. He is welcome to stay here."

"I'm just concerned, Moira. I've never seen you take to someone as quickly as you seem to have taken to this detective. I don't even remember you ever really dating. Hell, Moira, it just makes me nervous. This is a complex situation you're in. Just don't rush into anything. That's all I'm asking."

"I appreciate the show of concern, Jack, but I can look out for myself. I've been doing it since I was seven."

Jack opened his mouth to say something just as the doorbell rang. He clenched his jaw together and stalked into the kitchen for plates and napkins. If she only knew how hard he had tried to find her. Someday he would force her to sit down and listen.

Moira slammed into the bathroom to cool off just as Cass opened the door to Gil and Ben. They were both dressed in jeans and t-shirts. Gil was wearing a black shirt that molded to his muscled arms with a black biker jacket over it. He had on black scuffed biker boots. He looked like every woman's wet dream. Ben was in a classic white t-shirt with a blue button-down shirt opened over it. He wore a soft suede brown jacket and a pair of brown deck shoes. To Cass, he looked good enough to eat.

Gil lifted his brow at the sound of the slamming door. He carried his bag through the door and dropped it beside the chair in the corner.

"Did we interrupt something?" Ben queried.

"Just another loving moment between father and daughter," Cass rolled her eyes as she spoke. "Jack is in the kitchen and that was Moira slamming into the bathroom. Nothing unusual."

"Is Moira all right?" Gil asked, studying the closed bathroom door.

"She's fine," Jack snapped, coming back in the room. "She's just stubborn and unwilling to listen to reason."

Moira burst out of the bathroom yelling at Jack. "Unwilling to listen! That's funny, Jack, that's real funny."

She realized that Gil and Ben were there and flushed scarlet in embarrassment. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize that you guys were here. Can I take your coats?"

Gil slipped out of his jacket and crossed to Moira. He liked the way her jeans caressed her ass and the way her shirt stretched tight across her full breasts. She had her hair long and loose and it hung down to the small of her back. He wanted to bury his fingers in it. He wanted to bury himself in her, period. Staying here just might kill him. He wondered what she slept in, or if she slept in anything at all. Taking a deep breath, he handed her his coat and smiled at her.

"No harm. You two argue a lot?" Gil asked.

"Only when they're in the same room," Cass laughed. She took Ben's coat and tossed it to Moira who was standing by the closet. "Come sit down at the table. What can I get you guys to drink? We have soda, beer, bottled water..."

"I'll take a beer," Gil said.

"Make that two," Ben piped in.

"Three beers and a soda. You want your usual, Moira?"

"Yeah, thanks, Cass."

"Have a seat and we can eat while we talk." Moira led Ben and Gil to the table while Cass disappeared into the kitchen for the drinks.

Jack took a seat at the table and immediately started questioning the detectives.

"So tell me what you know about this guy."

"We can't discuss an ongoing investigation." At Jack's black scowl, Gil relented a little. "You know what happened with Moira in the alley. He's killed at least two women in the same manner now. However, our guy has thrown in a curve with the note to Moira. He's deviating."

"If he is obsessed with my daughter then you know that she is in more danger than those other women," Jack broke in.

"We don't know for sure that the other women didn't receive notes. We just have no evidence to the contrary. Both victims were caught alone and forced into an alley. He could have had previous contact with the vics and they just didn't report it. We just don't know a lot about this guy yet," Ben explained.

"How do you two plan to keep my daughter and Cass safe?"

Gil glanced at Moira and Cass who had been sitting quietly and listening to the conversation. Moira seemed a little pale and the water bottle in her hand laid claim to the fact that her hands were shaking.

"I'm going to stay here for tonight and through the weekend. I'll be at the gym tomorrow after work to bring the girls home and again on Saturday morning. Ben will take over on Monday. We'll keep a similar schedule all next week."

"I won't be here this weekend," Cass stated. "I'm going home to spend some time with my mom. The café finally hired a replacement so I don't have to work there anymore. I thought that I would take advantage of a weekend free and spend the whole time with my mom instead of the usual quick trip. I should probably change my plans though. Moira needs me more."

"Oh no you don't. Don't you dare change your plans for me. Your mom needs you more and you need to be with your mom. Besides Detective Daniels will be here. You go ahead." Moira smiled at Gil and then glanced back at Cass. "You'll be safer there anyway."

"She's right," Gil stated. "Plus it will allow us to keep a closer watch on Moira. When did you plan to leave? Are you driving?"

"I was planning to leave in the morning. I only teach one class on Friday. It's a night class. I was going to ask Kat to teach for me."

"No need. I'll take your six thirty. I'm sure that one of the guys can stay and see me home afterward."

"I'll be there after work tomorrow. I'll bring you back here when you're ready," Gil murmured.

"Thanks," Moira grinned. "If you get there early enough maybe you can watch the class."

Cass started laughing so hard that she almost choked on her soda. "I think that you'll really enjoy it, Detective Daniels."

"Please call me Gil, both of you."

"And call me Ben. We'll be spending too much time together to keep up the formality."

"Thanks," Cass and Moira replied in unison.

"Well, now that we've got all of that out of the way, I want to take you both through the security that the building has. I'll show you all of the extra measures that I've put into play."

"Anything that you should go over with me?" Moira sneered at Jack.

"Plenty, you let me know when you're ready to sit down and listen," Jack shot back at Moira, pushing his chair back from the table. "I'll see you both downstairs when you're done." He nodded at Ben and Gil. "Be careful on your way home, Cass. Tell your parents that I said hi."

"I will, Jack. I'll see you next week I guess."

"What?" Moira snapped to attention. "Why will you see him next week?"

"Until I know that you are safe, I will be stopping by the building and checking in on you both. Humor me, Moira. I'll be doing it whether you like it or not."

"Fine," she snapped at him. "Suit yourself."

Moira sat rigidly at the table while Jack walked out the door. She just couldn't figure him out. There was no way that he could love her as much as he claimed and have neglected her for so much of her life. Her mother was dead because of his desertion. Nothing could change that and she could never forget that. She startled at Gil's hand on her shoulder.

"Are you all right?"

"I'm sorry. I was lost in thought. Let me show you where you can sleep tonight." Moira pushed back from the table and headed toward the hall, stopping by the chair to get his bag.

"I'll get that," Gil insisted, taking it from her and following her into the hallway.

"The first door here on the left is the bathroom. Then this is Cass' room here next to it. Your room is here." She stopped at the last door on the left and opened it. She pointed to the door at the very end of the hall just a few feet from this door. "That is my room. I know that this room is small, but the bed here will be more comfortable than the couch."

Gil entered and placed his bag on the bed. "Where does this door lead to?"



Moira seemed to blush as she answered. "That goes into a half bath that connects to my room. The locks are on the inside so that you can lock me out if you're using the room and vice versa. You'll have to use the main bathroom to shower but this one does have a mirror and sink you can use to shave."

"What time do you head into the gym?" Gil asked.

"I like to be there by seven to go over schedules and paperwork. My first class isn't until nine, but I can go in earlier if you need me to."

"Seven is fine. If you can be ready to leave by six forty-five that would be great."

"No problem. I'm an early riser. Breakfast will be ready by six a.m. I like to eat a big breakfast to jump-start my day."

"Sounds good," Gil grinned. "I like a good breakfast myself. With my job, I never know when I'll get to eat again before I get home."

"Perfect," she smiled. He really was gorgeous when he grinned like that. "Here is a key to the apartment and a pass card to the building. Come and go as you please. Help yourself to anything in the fridge and the pantry. Add to it anything that you want that we don't have. There is a grocery pad on the fridge. We keep a running list of things that we need or run out of. Write down anything that you need. I'll go to the store this weekend."

"Sounds good to me. I'll be happy to take you."

"Thanks, Gil. I want you to know that I really appreciate you staying here with me. I know that it's an inconvenience and all. I hate to take up so much of your personal time."

"It's not an inconvenience at all. Your safety is very important to me."

Gil reached out to tuck a strand of hair behind Moira's ear. She gasped at the flames that coursed through her at his touch. Gil zoned in on her softly parted lips. Before either of them realized what was happening Gil's lips were hovering over Moira's. He seemed to catch himself before he followed through on his instinctive need to kiss her. But Moira wasn't to be denied. She leaned the rest of the way in and pressed her lips boldly to his. The flames engulfed her entire body. She felt his tongue on her lips and his hands curving over her hips to pull her close. She opened wide to his tongue play and tasted beer. She could feel every delicious hard inch of his body against her.

Gil backed Moira up until she was caught between him and the wall. He leaned into her until he could feel her full breasts pressed into his chest. Lord she had the most exquisite body that he had ever seen or felt. He was as hard as stone and he knew that she had to be able to feel his cock against the softness of her belly. He wanted to take her right there against the wall. He put his hands under her firm ass and lifted her against the wall until his cock was nestled against her pussy. At Moira's moan Gil began to rock against her while he deepened his kiss. She felt like heaven. He had to get inside her before he exploded.

Moira moaned as Gil lifted her and pressed himself boldly between her thighs. She felt the moisture in her panties as he began to rock against her. God, his cock felt so

huge. She didn't know if he would fit but she wanted him enough to try. She brought her legs up and wrapped them around his waist to hold him exactly where she wanted him. He leaned in closer, pinning her more firmly against the wall. He squeezed her ass and then began slowly moving his hands up under her shirt until they were at her breasts. He boldly cupped her full breasts in his palms and brushed his thumbs across the hard pebbles of her nipples. Moira moaned again as Gil's lips left hers for the new territory of her throat. With one quick tug he had her shirt opened fully to his sultry gaze. She heard his groan as he pushed her breasts up over the cups of her bra.

He put his hands behind her back to force her to arc her breasts up toward his waiting lips. She had beautiful breasts with hard pink nipples that were begging him. Gil bent forward and sucked her nipple hard into his mouth. He heard Moira's gasp of shock and pleasure and reached his hand back around to pluck at her other nipple. He couldn't suck her nipple deep enough into his mouth. He had to get her on her back on the bed behind him. He had to be inside her soon or it would be too late.

Just then there was a knock at the door and he heard Ben ask if he was ready to go meet Jack downstairs.

Gil had to clear his throat twice before he could reply. "I'll meet you down there in just a few minutes." He felt Moira pulling away from him, but he was so close that it was doing her no good.

He glanced at her and saw the confusion and vulnerability in her eyes. "I'm sorry, Moira. I didn't mean this to happen."

Moira was embarrassed by her wanton behavior. If the other detective had not interrupted she would have let him take her right there against the wall, not a very dignified way to lose one's virginity. She unclasped her legs from around his waist and moved her hands to readjust her clothing. Before she could Gil was there again. She felt his lips kiss both of her nipples before he put her back in her bra cups. He pulled her shirt back together and tied it deftly. With a deep breath he stepped back from her but kept his hands firmly on her waist.

"I'm sorry if I went too far. I can't deny though that I want you very badly. I think that you want me too."

Moira just gazed up at him with her wide green eyes. "I...I'm not sure what I want."

"Yes you are and if I didn't have to head downstairs I would prove that to you. Soon, Moira, we will finish this." With those words, Gil swooped in and gave her a hard kiss of possession before turning to leave the room. Once in the hall outside the apartment Gil shook his head to bring his thoughts into focus. What the hell was he thinking? He was here to protect her not to fuck her. He prayed that he would remember that the next time he had that incredible body against his, cause Lord willing there would be a next time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Across town a figure hid in the shadows of the parking lot behind Knowledge Is Power. He watched the many women leave the gym and head toward their cars in the lot. He had timed his arrival to coincide with the time the employees left for the evening. He hoped that Moira would be the last to leave for he needed to see her. He could still smell her scent and feel the weight of her full breast in his hand. He would have her tonight. He couldn't wait any longer.

He watched the lone figure leave the gym and lock the back door. She turned toward the parking lot and the outdoor lights played across her dark hair as she made her way to the lone car. It wasn't her. Where was she? She should have been the last to leave. Damn her! She would pay for this. She would pay dearly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Moira snuggled deeper under the covers when she heard Gil enter the guest room. She had gone to bed right after he and Ben had left to consult with Jack. She couldn't face anyone with her emotions as churned up as they were. She was so confused. She had never before felt the way that Gil made her feel. With Cass going to her parents for the weekend she was going to be alone with him in the apartment. What was she going to do?

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil and Ben looked at the body of the woman who hadn't been discovered until nine thirty this morning. The body had been dragged behind the trash cans this time, but it was most definitely their guy. What bothered Gil the most was that this time there had been a message left behind. Their killer had placed one of Moira's missing business cards in the dead girl's hand. On the back was printed one word, *SOON*.

"What are you going to tell Moira when she hears about this new victim?" Ben asked.

"I can't tell her about the case. You know that. All I can do is keep a closer eye on her. Our perp seems to have formed an obsession with her and he's getting even more violent."

"Cass left this morning for her parents' place. Are you going to be impartial enough to stay with Moira this weekend?"

"I won't let anything happen to her. We'll get this guy before he can lay a hand on her."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hey, Lacey, I'm going to go get set up for the six thirty class. If Detective Daniels or Detective Marcum shows up before it's over could you send them up?"

"Sure thing, Moira. I'm sure they'd love to see you in action." Lacey laughed at her double meaning.

Moira tried to look sternly at Lacey but couldn't quite manage. She grabbed the bag she was using while hers was still at the police station and, laughing, headed up the stairs. Tonight was the start of a new session of stripper-cize so Moira was supposed to do a demonstration of what they would all learn to do during the course of the class if they could learn to embrace their own femininity. Some would be too self-conscious to be able to let themselves really go and would need extra encouragement. Then again some would be so wanton that it could be embarrassing. But that was what this class was all about. The ability to let go and just be a woman, to cast all inhibitions aside and embrace the sexy woman inside.

She began setting up everything to begin class. Her music was ready to go and she had on a wraparound yoga shirt and long yoga pants over her biker shorts and sports bra. She put her hair up in a bun with a few pins that would allow her hair to fall exactly when she wanted it to with very little effort on her part. It was her job to show the class how okay it was to embrace your body. That it was okay to be a sexual being and to be comfortable in your own skin. Stripper-cize was about letting yourself go, about learning to be okay with the body under the clothes as well as the person in that body.

She watched the class file in and take seats on the floor in front of the stage. The classroom was set up so that there was a little stage in the front of the room with a stripper pole on it. Eventually everyone in the class would be given the opportunity to perform on that stage. Until then there were poles at the back of the room for them to get familiar and comfortable with.

As the last person entered and took a seat, she forgot all about Gil and lost herself in the class. After going over the basics of what they would learn during the course of the class she asked for questions and got all of the usual ones. "What if I can't do it?" "What if I'm no good at it?" "Will everyone be watching?" She fielded them expertly.

"The main thing to remember about this class is that it is all about you. There is no right or wrong way. There is only your way. What one woman may be comfortable with may make someone else nervous. This class is about more than dance. It's about learning to be comfortable in your own skin, about embracing your own sensuality. When you move to the music it's not about sex, it's about what feels right to you. It's about learning to accept who you are and making yourself feel good. Now tonight I'm going to give you a demonstration of what you will be able to learn during this class if you can open yourself up enough. We all have a goddess hidden within us. I hope to help you find yours and bring her out. So while I'm dancing imagine that you are doing what I'm doing. Feel the sensuality of the music and go with it. After that we'll work on some basics. Now if there are no more questions I'll dim the lights, start the music and we'll begin."

Gil slid in just as the lights were dimmed. Lacey had gladly led him to the dance room and with a big smile on her face told him to enjoy the show. He heard the music start, something slow and sultry. It made him think of a slow, cool breeze on a hot sultry night. Then she stepped on the stage with the pole and all thought fled as she

began to move to the music. She moved in a way that had all of his blood pooling in his dick. And with all that long blonde hair piled loosely on top of her head. He had never wanted anyone so badly before in his life. Then the tempo of the music picked up and before he knew it she had removed her long-sleeved top to reveal a form-fitting sports bra that did nothing to confine her big beautiful breasts. Her hair came down next and her movements were even more sensual. Her hands caressing her own body like a lover's hands should, like his had. He closed his eyes, trying to cool his blood, only to open them and almost explode in his jeans. Her long pants were gone and she had on the tiniest biker shorts that he had ever seen. But what had him in such an aroused state was the way her long legs were wrapped high around the pole, her head hanging down so that her long hair brushed the floor. Damn! She worked that pole like a professional stripper and he had seen his share of those as a Marine. Hell he'd been to strip joints all over the world and no one had ever had him as worked up as this woman. As the music got faster she seemed to undulate on the pole. It looked like she was using the pole to masturbate and from the look on her face she was enjoying every moment of it. He had to leave before he embarrassed himself by coming in his jeans. With a deep breath he placed his leather bomber jacket over his arm and held it strategically where he needed to hide the obvious bulge of his cock. Maybe he could get control of himself if he waited in her office. Stifling a groan and doing some readjusting, he quietly slipped out of the room and headed back down the hall toward the stairs.

Moira threw her yoga pants back on and slipped on some shoes before picking up her bag and heading out. Class had gone pretty well. She'd enjoyed dancing tremendously. She had thought of Gil and the way his hands had felt on her last night. She had been so lost that the applause from her students at the end of her dance had given her a real jolt. *Man, she had it badly.* She had hoped that Gil might show up and see a little of her class but he wasn't here so she would just head back to her office and wait for him.

Lacey was already gone when she got downstairs. Kip and Kat were getting ready to close up the nautilus room before heading off to the locker rooms to make sure no one was still here before they closed up for the night. With a wave Moira headed into her office. There in the chair behind her desk sat Gil. She smiled at him as she entered the office.

"Hey, Gil, how long have you been waiting on me?"

"Close the door and come here."

At the look in his eyes Moira shut the door and rushed across the room toward him. "What's wrong? Has something happened?"

Gil grabbed her and pulled her down on his lap and she felt exactly what was wrong against her hip. She blushed and went to wiggle out of his lap only to stop instantly at his groan of pain.

"I'm sorry," Moira mumbled and blushed an even brighter shade of red.

"God!" Gil groaned. "I thought that I was going to embarrass myself watching you dance like that. It was the most erotic thing that I've ever seen."

Moira gasped as Gil moved her so that she was straddling his lap. "I didn't see you there." She moaned as he grabbed her hips and pushed his cock up against her.

"I've never wanted anything in my life as much as I want to be buried deep inside you right now." Gil pulled her long legs over the arms of the chair, opening her wide to his continued thrusting. He leaned forward and latched on to her nipple through her sports bra, nipping it with his teeth while his hands kept her legs pinned to the arms of the chair. He reached down between her legs to release his hard cock from his jeans and she knew that he was going to take her right here, right now. She moaned in anticipation and wantonly pushed against his knuckles. He groaned in response and left his jeans zipped to start rubbing her through her clothes. She was so hot, so wet and so ready for anything that he wanted. She opened her mouth to tell him when they were interrupted by a knock at her door.

"Moira, are you okay in there? I thought that I heard you groan or something," Kip said from the other side of her door.

Moira took in a deep shuddering breath and tried to get control so that she could answer him. Gil had no such problem.

"She's fine," he bit off.

"Moira?" Kip asked anxiously from the other side of the door.

"I'm fine, Kip," Moira finally got out. "Just give me a minute, okay?"

"Sure. No problem. I'm just going to do the walk-through and get ready to lock up for the night. I'll see you Monday."

"Thanks, Kip. Have a good weekend."

Gil let her legs slide off the arms of the chair and helped her to her feet. "Let's get your stuff and head out. I have an urge to get you alone. I don't think that I can handle any more interruptions."

Moira took a shaky hand through her hair and an even shakier breath. She was nervous now and not sure that she could go through with what he wanted.

Gil saw the uncertainty in her eyes and understood. He would have to tread carefully or he would never get her alone again. "Why don't we pick up some dinner on the way to your apartment? What do you feel like tonight?"

It was a loaded question and they both knew it. But she pretended otherwise and put a vote in for Chinese again. She grabbed her bag and took her yoga shirt back out and put it on. Gathering her stuff together, she let him lead her out of the office. Before she realized it she was seated in his car and they were headed for her apartment.

"Why don't I drop you off at the apartment? We can call in an order from there and I'll pick it up while you shower and relax."

Moira nodded her head in agreement. "Sounds great, Gil."

But she had no idea when she would ever be able to relax again.

## Chapter Six

She took too long in the shower but she couldn't help it. He had her wound so tight that she didn't know what she was doing. What had she got herself into? Deranged killers, sexy detectives, she was living in a novel. When had this all happened? She was pretty sure that Gil was going to push her to go all the way tonight. Hell, who was she kidding? He merely had to look at her and she was climbing him like he was Everest. Was this what she really wanted? She hadn't waited twenty-four years just to throw her virginity away. But, God, it felt so right. He felt so right. That scared her more than anything else.

She stepped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around her body. She took another towel and began to squeeze the excess water out of her hair. It would take forever to dry so she just settled for pulling it back in a scrunchie. She threw her dirty clothes in the hamper and realized that in her dazed state she had forgotten to bring clothes in with her. Well, she'd just have to hurry to her room before Gil got back with the Chinese food. She didn't want to think about what would happen if Gil came upon her in nothing but a towel. She didn't want to think about what she would do to him. She would probably end up having sex on the hallway carpet. She laughed at that thought as she opened the door and stepped out into the hall.

"A penny for your thoughts." Gil's voice stopped her laughter in her throat. He stood in the doorway to the bedroom that he was using. He was barefoot with nothing but his jeans on. The top button was undone like he had been in the process of changing clothes. Her tongue was glued to the roof of her mouth and she couldn't have answered him if her life had depended on it.

She could tell the exact moment that he realized she was in nothing but a towel. His eyes got that hooded look and his breathing became heavier, like he was having trouble getting oxygen.

Moira took a deep breath and tried for a tremulous smile. "I didn't realize that you were back yet. I'll just get something on and meet you at the table."

As Moira tried to slip past Gil in the hall, he reached out a hand and pulled her against him in the bedroom doorway. "I want you, Moira. Tell me that you don't want me and I'll let you go. But so help me if you want me then don't keep me waiting any longer. I hunger for you. I ache for you. Let me show you how good we can be. Let me fuck you."

Moira felt his hands on her hips tugging her closer to that part that seemed to always be like steel when she was around. He kissed her neck and nuzzled his way up to her ear. She heard the murmured "Please" and was lost. There would be no more interruptions for them. She pushed closer to him and rubbed against him. He caught

her hand before she could undo her towel and said, "Say the words, Moira. Tell me that you want me too."

"I want you more than I have ever wanted anything. I want..." Just like that she was in his arms and he was standing her beside the bed. With tender fingers he unwrapped her towel like she was the best present in the world. As the towel hit the floor his eyes seemed to devour her. She felt her nipples tighten under his intense gaze and blushed when he zeroed in on her breasts.

"You are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. Your body was made for fucking. I keep seeing you dancing so sensually in my mind. I'm so worked up, honey, that I don't think I can last that long the first time, but the next time I promise I will make it so good for you."

Without realizing how, Moira found herself on her back on the bed with Gil standing above her shedding his jeans. She couldn't help the gasp that escaped at her first look at his swollen cock. He was huge and thick and her mouth went completely dry at the thought of him putting that inside her. There was no way physically possible that it would fit. She felt immense disappointment.

Gil knelt beside her on the bed. He wanted to dive right in to her. He saw the anxiety in her eyes and figured either it had been awhile or her last lover hadn't been quite as well endowed as he was. As much as it was killing him he knew that he was going to have to slow down. He started kissing her, slow nibbling kisses across her lips and jaw. He began to softly stroke his hand down her side, just brushing the side of her breast with his knuckles. He kissed his way down her throat to her collar bone while his hand continued the slow sensual strokes down her side. Finally he made his way to her nipple. He laved it into an even tighter bud and sucked it deeply into his mouth. At the same time he moved his hand from her side to her other breast and began plucking her nipple between thumb and finger.

Moira arched her back and moaned. It was heaven. He was heaven. She felt the pull on her nipples all the way between her legs where she had grown very moist. He slid his hard thigh between her legs and she could feel him hard against her hip. She realized with another moan that she was rubbing her pussy against his thigh like a cat and she could swear she heard herself purr. He had to feel how wet she was but his mouth never left her nipple and his fingers kept her other nipple just as stimulated. Her own fingers were fisted in his hair, holding him to her breast, begging him not to let go of her. She was so concentrated on the sensations shooting from her nipple throughout her body that she gasped out loud when she felt his finger enter her. She'd never had anyone touch her there before and he wasn't just touching, he was exploring.

Gil lifted his head and groaned in agony. "God, your pussy is so tight and wet. I can't wait any longer, baby. I'm dying to get inside you."

Before she could even get her breath to tell him this was her first time he was between her thighs. He swiftly lifted her legs over his arms and spread her wide. Then with one swift thrust he was buried deep inside her. Moira let out a sharp yelp of pain



as she felt him ram through her virgin barrier. The pain was intense. She felt like he had ripped her in two.

"Oh God, baby, why didn't you tell me? I'm sorry, honey. Just lie still for a minute and let your body adjust to me. Just relax, Moira."

Moira ceased her struggle to move out from under him. His cock was buried so deep inside her that every movement caused more pain. "Relax? Relax?" She swore through clenched teeth. "How am I supposed to relax with you tearing me apart? It hurts, Gil. Make it stop. Please."

Gil shuddered above her and she could tell by the slight trembling in his arms that it was taking a lot of effort for him to hold still. He leaned down to kiss her and whispered that he'd make it all better. His kisses were deep and drugging and she felt her body begin to relax like he wanted. He left her mouth and began to nibble at her earlobes. "I'm going to move now, Moira. I've got to move." Just like that she felt him start to slide out of her until only the thick head of his cock was still in and then just as slowly he slid back in deep. She heard his groan of pleasure and couldn't control her own shudder. It was just an ache now and as he slowly pumped in and out of her pussy, that ache seemed to grow more intense. She didn't know what to do to relieve the pressure. She was reaching for something but she didn't know what. She was so close.

"Please, Gil," Moira moaned, "I need. Oh God, I want."

Gil reached a hand down between her legs where they were joined and began plucking at her clit. Then he started working her with his thumb. He worked her until she was surging up against his every thrust.

"More," she screamed, "give me more!" Now he fucked her hard and fast. He slipped both hands down to grab her ass and tilt her for deeper penetration and she exploded. She moaned his name as her vaginal walls clenched and released around his still pumping cock. Just when she thought it would end she heard his guttural cry and felt the hot jets of his cum expel into her body. He was so deep and his body continued to give little thrusts deeper until with a groan he collapsed on top of her.

She held him close, stroking her hands up and down his back. She felt incredible. She knew that she should be embarrassed but she wasn't. God, she wanted him again. Then it dawned on her that she had felt him spurt inside her body. If she had felt him then that meant that he hadn't used anything.

"Uh, Gil?"

"Umm."

"Did you happen to use anything? You know, a condom?"

Gil's head popped up and he looked her in the eye. "Does that mean that you're not on anything?"

"I am. But it won't protect against everything."

At that he groaned. "I'm sorry, Moira. After watching you dance, I thought you were experienced. I didn't know that you were a virgin. Hell, I didn't stop to think at all once I had you naked. But you don't have to worry about getting anything from me. I've got a clean bill of health." Gil looked deep into her eyes. "Did it hurt too bad, baby?"

"Yes, it did," Moira said with a straight face, then added with a grin, "but you made up for it in the end."

Gil leaned up and kissed her before he slowly pulled out of her to lie beside her on the bed. He noticed her wince of pain as his cock left her sweet pussy. He couldn't believe what a clod he had been. He had lost his head literally when he got between her thighs. He had just rammed on home without thinking about how tightly she had gripped his finger. Then he hadn't even thought to grab a condom. He had never done that before in his life. He always suited up. He looked at her lying next to him completely comfortable in her nudity and felt his loins begin to stir again. He'd just had the most intense orgasm of his life and he was ready for round two. He'd be lucky if she ever let him touch her again.

Moira popped up on her elbow and leaned over him. She let her hand wander over his chest as she planted kisses along his jaw.

"I know that we need to talk, but I can't think right now. I want you again, Gil. I would ask if you wanted me too but I can see for myself that you're up for another round."

Gil wasn't going to give her time to change her mind. He quickly rolled her to her back and moved between her thighs. He knew that she was expecting him to just ram it in again like the clod of before, but he was in better control this time. He started at her mouth with a long slow wet kiss. He thrust his tongue in, pantomiming what he had done earlier to her body. He almost forgot what he intended to do for her when she caught his tongue in her mouth with a soft sucking motion. *Concentrate*, he told himself, *concentrate*. He moved from her mouth and starting working his way down her body, stopping at all the good parts until he reached the honey pot between her creamy thighs. He felt her stiffen in confusion just before he began to lick and suckle her where he really wanted to.

Moira felt him halt between her thighs and stiffened in confusion. She wasn't naïve even though she had been a virgin. She knew about oral sex but she had never experienced it before. Then she felt his tongue on her nether lips. He was licking her like she was a bowl of fresh cream. It felt incredible. He kept licking, stopping to nip with his teeth at certain places. Then she felt his finger moving inside her pussy again. She moaned deep in her throat and couldn't stop herself from surging up toward his mouth. She saw his grin through lust-glazed eyes and then forgot everything as he began to work her in earnest. He sucked deeply on her swollen clit while his fingers pumped in and out of her pussy, working her into a delicious frenzy. She felt the pressure building and waited eagerly for what she knew was to come. She felt his teeth

scrape her sensitive flesh and splintered into pieces as her orgasm rocked her. Before her body could quit spasming in aftershocks he was inside her, fucking hard and fast.

"Put your heels on my shoulders, baby," Gil panted to her. She did as he asked and gasped at the new sensations this position opened her up to. She felt him rub against her clit with each hard thrust. He was so deep that she could feel him at her womb. She moaned with such surrender that it seemed to send him into a frenzy. He pumped hard and fast and deep and in only a few moments she felt him explode inside her again, taking her along with him. She felt the tremors in his arms and thighs as his cock exploded deep in her pussy, releasing his seed.

Gil let her legs slide down his shoulders and off his arms and then with a deep shudder he collapsed on top of her and fell asleep. Moira held him close and drifted off with a big smile on her face.

## Chapter Seven

Moira woke slowly. Her body ached all over. She'd never been this sore before. She glanced over at the now empty spot where Gil had spent the night and couldn't help the smile that overtook her lips. They must have made love at least five times and each time had been even better than the one before. Her body may have a delicious ache to it this morning, but she felt like she was floating on a cloud.

She bounced out of bed and winced at the soreness between her thighs. She had gone from virgin to wanton in one night and her body was reminding her of that this morning. She headed into the half bath to wash her face and brush her teeth. She couldn't help but notice the glow about her face. Detective Daniels had certainly rocked her world. She finished up in the bathroom and headed on through to her own bedroom. She quickly dressed for her Saturday morning run and headed off to the kitchen. It was empty.

Gil was not in the apartment. After a quick search, she found a note taped to the inside of the front door. He had left to run a few errands and would be back soon. She was not to leave the apartment until he returned. No mention of last night and her life-changing experience and he hadn't even signed his name to the note. Who did he think he was to tell her that she couldn't leave without his permission? Obviously their night hadn't meant enough to him to keep him in bed with her this morning. The more she thought about it the more angry she got. She grabbed her bag up and slammed out. She was already at the bottom of the stairs when she remembered that there was a killer stalking her. What was the matter with her, how could she have forgotten? She didn't understand how she could love Gil to distraction... Oh my God! She was in love with Gil, head over heels, can't-think-of-anything-else in love with him. What the hell was she going to do about this?

Moira continued down the stairs and stopped at the front desk where the morning guard Howie sat behind his wall of cameras talking to a man. Howie glanced up at Moira, concern in his eyes.

"You doing okay this morning, Moira?"

"I'm fine, Howie. Can I use your phone to make a quick call?" At his nod Moira called Kat to see if she could catch her at home. Before she could finish dialing the number though Jack entered the lobby and headed over to her.

"Moira, what are you doing downstairs? Where is your detective guard boy?"

"Oh he left a couple of hours ago," Howie helpfully informed his boss.

Jack looked back at Moira and raised an eyebrow. As he looked at her, he noticed the glow about her and thought of her spending the night alone with the cop. He felt his temper begin to simmer at the confusion in her eyes. Something had happened between

her and the cop and it didn't take a genius to figure out what with all the chemistry between them. And Mr. Detective Boy wasn't here. Had been gone for hours according to Howie. So his girl had woken up alone. Simmer went to full boil and Jack was about to blow. Thank God Howie chose that moment to interrupt him.

"This is the gentleman that I told you about, Mr. Madigan."

Jack turned his attention to the man in front of him and gave him a once-over. "So the O'Donnells are subletting their apartment to you for the next couple of months? I presume that you have something from them in writing."

Moira glanced over at the man in front of Jack. He was probably about six feet tall with dark black hair and dark brown almost black eyes. He had an easygoing manner and a very nice smile. She couldn't help smiling back at him when he glanced her way.

"I'm John Dugan. I'm the O'Donnells' godson. They've asked me to keep an eye on things since they've decided to extend their stay at my parents' bed and breakfast in Ireland. They haven't seen each other since I graduated from university five years ago."

"So that makes you what, twenty-seven, twenty-eight?" Jack asked.

"Twenty-eight. My degree is in art history. I just moved to Legacy. I needed a fresh view to rejuvenate those creative juices."

"What exactly is it that you do, Mr. Dugan?" Jack felt irritated by this whole meeting. He just wanted to get Moira alone and see if she would talk to him.

"I'm a creator." John laughed at the expression on Jack's face. "I create art. At least that is what I like to call it. I paint, Mr. Madigan, and sometimes I work with clay."

"How long do you plan to be here?"

"Six weeks tops. My godparents will be back in two months, so I just plan to crash at their place until I can find someplace of my own with good light and space for a studio."

"Fine. Howie will get you started on the paperwork. This is a secure building. Now if you will excuse me, I would like to talk to my daughter for a few minutes."

Moira ignored Jack and held out her hand to Mr. Dugan. "I'm Moira Madigan. I'll be your neighbor in 2B. The O'Donnells and my roommate and I are the only ones on the second floor. Please feel free to stop by if you need anything."

John opened his mouth to say something when Jack grabbed Moira's arm and started walking her toward the front doors.

"If you'll excuse us, Mr. Dugan, my daughter and I must be going now." And with those words Jack had Moira through the doors and outside before she could say anything else.

"Let go of me, Jack. I do not need a confrontation with you this morning. I've got to get to work. So if you'll excuse me, I'll go catch a cab."

Jack opened the passenger door of the car that he had parked at the curb earlier. "Get in, Moira, and I'll give you a ride to work. I'd like to talk to you on the way."

Closing the door on the rigid form of his daughter, Jack went around and slid behind the wheel.

"What happened, Moira? The whole reason that I agreed to let you stay in your apartment was because I was told that one of those two detectives would be with you. So where are they?"

Moira gritted her teeth. "You heard Howie. He left a few hours ago. He'll meet me at the gym later. End of conversation."

"When are you going to talk to me, Moira? When are you going to listen to my side of things?"

"Listen to you tell me how you got a sixteen-year-old girl pregnant and abandoned her to her abusive father. What could you possibly say to me?"

"A lot, Moira, a hell of a lot. First off like the fact that I didn't know that your mother was only sixteen. We met in the park and started talking. She was the most beautiful girl that I had ever seen. She told me that she was eighteen and I believed her."

"How convenient it is to tell tales on a dead woman. I've seen pictures of her at sixteen, Jack. There was no way that you could have thought she was any older than she was."

"Maybe I made myself believe it because I wanted to. All I know is that it was the best two weeks of my life."

"Two weeks and then you just walked away without a backward glance."

"That's not true." At Moira's snort, Jack gave a deep sigh. "I asked your mom to go with me. I wanted to marry her and take her away with me."

Moira's head snapped up to look at him. "Then why didn't you? Why did she stay?"

"I don't know. She told me that she couldn't leave. I had to go back to duty so I left. I was only on a two-week furlough. I had been visiting my great-aunt. She was the only family that I had left then. I just figured that your mom didn't want to stay on a base by herself while I was gone. She said that she would wait for me and I promised to come back."

"Then why didn't you? Why didn't you come back for her?"

"All of my letters came back unopened. Finally a note was sent to me saying that your mother no longer lived there. I was told that she had married and moved away. So I never wrote again."

"Who would do that?"

"I have my suspicions," Jack said as he pulled up in front of Knowledge Is Power. "The point is that I loved your mother and I would never have left her there if I had known. I would never have left either one of you. I would have killed your grandfather for putting his hands on his own daughter."

"Well, you did leave us. Left us right in his greedy little grasp. And that is where we stayed until he finally killed my mother." Moira jerked the car door open and stepped out.

"I would have saved her if I could have. I'd give anything to go back and save your mother. The only thing that keeps me going is the fact that she took him with her and he couldn't get his hands on you."

"I really hate to burst your bubble there, Jack, but Mom didn't take him with her. He stood over her broken body laughing while her blood soaked into the floor. He just stood there and laughed while she died. I ran to our bedroom and got the pistol Mom kept in the shoebox in the closet. When I ran back in he was kicking her and saying how she would never talk back to him again. So I shot him. I fired until there were no bullets left. I remember the surprised look on his face. I knelt beside Mom and tried to stop the blood from coming out of her but she was bleeding too badly from too many places. I almost screamed when she moved her hand. She took the gun from me and said not to tell anyone what I had done. She made me promise. She died a few minutes later in my arms with your name on her lips. He may have gone with her, Jack, but I'm the one who sent him."

With those words Moira slammed the door and left a stunned Jack behind.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a much calmer Moira whom Gil encountered an hour later. Unfortunately for Moira, Gil was anything but calm. It certainly didn't help that she was surrounded by three men when he found her.

Gil grabbed Moira's arm and pulled her toward him. "I'd like to speak to you in your office. Alone," he said, pointedly looking at the guys around her.

Moira jerked her arm out of Gil's grasp and gave him a dirty look. "I'd love to speak to you for a few minutes, Detective, but I'm giving a tour of the gym to two new members. So if you'll excuse me."

As Gil went to grab Moira again, Kip stepped forward to prevent it. "I believe the lady told you that she didn't have time for you."

"Oh she has plenty of time. Now we can speak about last night in private or right here in front of everyone." Gil glared at Moira. "It's entirely up to you, honey."

As everyone turned to look at Moira, she blushed a bright red. Grabbing Gil's arm, she headed toward the privacy of her office, tossing words over her shoulder as she went. "Kip, if you would please take over the tour for me, I'll catch up to you in a minute. Greg, Eric, welcome to Knowledge Is Power."

Moira followed Gil into her office and slammed the door hard behind her. "You have a lot of nerve coming in here and treating me like that!"

"I have a lot of nerve? Do you know how worried I was when I got back to your apartment and you weren't there? What the hell were you thinking to leave your apartment alone? Did you forget why I'm staying with you?"

"Yes, I did! Silly me, huh? You sure didn't seem to remember why you were there either, otherwise you wouldn't have left me alone this morning."

"Is that why you left without waiting on me, because I left before you woke up?"

"I left because I take my job seriously, even if you don't. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to work."

Moira found herself trapped between Gil and the wall behind her desk before she could even attempt to move.

"The hell I will! I take my job damn seriously, honey, and don't you forget it. Until this guy is found you are not to go anywhere without me again! Do you understand me, Moira?"

Moira looked up at Gil and met fury with fury. "Fine," she snapped. His body was so close to hers, pressing her into the wall. She could smell his musky cologne mixed with his own natural musk and it made her hot. It made her hungry. It made her confused. How could she want someone who had found it so easy to leave her alone this morning? She had given her virginity to this man. He should have been with her when she woke up. He should have known that she would need that. But Gil had left her while she was sleeping. Did he regret what he had done? Was he wishing that last night had never happened? At the mere thought of those questions Moira felt her eyes fill with tears.

Gil watched the myriad of emotions flit across Moira's face until she was looking up at him with her big green eyes filled with tears. He gently swept her into his arms and sat back in her chair. He draped her across his lap and gently gripped her chin in his hand. "I never meant to hurt you, Moira. Last night meant the world to me."

"Then why did I wake up alone, Gil? Not just in bed, but to an empty apartment. I went from being happy to worrying that I had chased you away by sleeping with you. Is that all you wanted from me? Would you have been so uncomfortable with me this morning?"

"Never, Moira! I'll admit that part of me wanted to leave because I was afraid that I had taken advantage of you last night. You were an innocent and I am anything but. But that isn't why I left, Moira. Lying there watching you sleep, I realized something."

"What? What did you realize that made you leave?"

"I realized that at some point I had fallen head over heels in love with you."

"And that scared you so bad that you left?"

"No, surprisingly it didn't scare me at all. It made me unbelievably happy, so happy that I jumped out of bed. There were some things that I wanted to take care of before you woke up. I planned on being back in bed with you before you ever opened those beautiful green eyes. I swear, Moira. I never meant for you to wake up alone."



Moira sat up on his lap and looked deeply into Gil's eyes. "Really, Gil? You really didn't mean to leave me alone? You really love me?"

"With all my heart," Gil murmured, stroking his hand up her back to her neck.

Moira allowed him one tender kiss before pulling away.

"So what did you have to do before I woke up this morning?"

"I went back to my apartment to get a few things and make a few phone calls. The calls took a little longer than I expected."

"Who was it that was so important for you to call? A woman?"

"Yes, actually it was a woman that I called, two of them to be exact." At the look of outrage on Moira's face, Gil couldn't hold in his laughter. Clamping her in his arms, he whispered in her ear, "There are two women who are very important in my life. I had to tell them about you before I did anything else. I hope that you won't mind sharing me with them."

Moira glared into Gil's eyes and stated with quiet fury, "I'm not that type of woman."

"My mother and sister will be sorry to hear that."

"You told your mother about me?"

"Of course I did. I invited my family to come visit so that they could meet you."

"Just your mom and sister?"

"My whole family is going to try to make it. I have two brothers and a baby sister. Doug, Griff and Katie. Doug just turned thirty. He took over my dad's construction company. Griff is twenty-six. He owns his own dojo. Katie is twenty-two. She's in her last year of school. She's planning to teach high school English. Then there is my mom. She's an incredible lady. She's really looking forward to meeting you. I know she'll love you."

"What about your dad?"

"My dad was killed in an accident on one of his work sites three years ago. He fell off some scaffolding about twelve stories up. He broke his neck when he fell. Doug was with him. He damn near broke his own neck trying to get to Dad. Dad died instantly though."

"Oh Gil, I'm so sorry. That must have been so rough on your brother."

"Yeah, it was rough for a long time. But Mom is like a rock and she kept us all sane. I can't wait for you to meet her."

"What did she say when you called her? What did you tell her about me?"

"I told her that I met the most beautiful, courageous woman and that I intend to spend the rest of my life making her moan with pleasure."

Moira gasped. "You didn't!"

Gil laughed at the look of embarrassment on her face. "No, honey, I told her that I had met and fallen in love with the most incredible woman. I told her that I couldn't wait for her to meet you and for you to meet her."

"Oh Gil, I'm pretty sure that I've fallen in love with you too. It hurt to breathe when I realized that you had left. I thought that maybe sex was all that you wanted or that perhaps I was so bad at it that you couldn't wait to get away from me."

"Bad! Hell, Moira, if you had been any better I would have had a heart attack. Baby, I promise that I won't leave like that again. If there is ever a next time then I will wake you up. Okay?"

Moira sighed and laid her head on his shoulder. "Yes."

"Now then how are you feeling physically? I wasn't too rough on you last night, was I?"

"Ummm. No, I don't think you could ever be too rough with me. I was a little sore but overall I felt wonderful." Moira turned her head and nipped his ear. "If you had still been in bed with me this morning, I would have been more than willing to show you how good I felt."

Before she knew it she found herself flat on her back on top of her desk. With one quick tug her shorts and panties were down around her ankles. Gil took her mouth in a hard, hungry kiss that took her breath away. She heard the rasp of his zipper and then felt his cock surge deep inside her. It was hard and it was fast. It rocked her to her core. He swallowed her cries as she climaxed and then buried his own moans of pleasure in her neck when he followed her.

"You're going to be the death of me, Moira," Gil groaned.

Moira just stroked her hands under his shirt and smiled. Her day was definitely getting better.

## Chapter Eight

Cass arrived home looking pale and withdrawn. Moira immediately knew that something was wrong. She jumped up from the sofa where she had been cuddling with Gil and went over to Cass.

"Honey, what's wrong? Did something happen with your mother?"

"The cancer is spreading again. It's into her organs now. I...I'm so sorry, Moira. I've got to go back home. Six weeks. They're giving her six weeks at the most. I promised Dad that I would come home and stay." She looked bewildered, like she didn't know quite what to do next.

Moira grabbed her arm and led her toward the kitchen. She glanced quickly at Gil in a plea for privacy.

"I need to go downstairs and check in on things. I'll be back in a little while." Gil walked over and gave Moira a kiss goodbye. He patted Cass on the back and headed out the door.

"Sit down," Moira said as she pushed Cass toward the kitchen table. "I'll make some coffee and we'll talk."

"So what is going on with you and the handsome detective?"

"Oh Cass," Moira turned with a big smile on her face. "I am head over heels in love with him. We had an amazing time."

"Oh my God, you had sex with him, didn't you?" Moira's blush was all the answer that she needed. "Are you okay? How was it?"

Moira sighed. "It was the most incredible night of my life. He is amazing. He is everything that I could have ever wished for. And, Cass, he says that he has fallen in love with me too. He called all of his family to come here to meet me."

"Are we talking marriage here?"

"We haven't talked about marriage at all," Moira said as she went over to pour them both a cup of coffee. Setting the cups down on the table, Moira looked at Cass. "I just know that I'm happier than I've ever been. I'm in love. That's enough for now."

"I'm so happy for you, Moira. If anyone deserves happiness it's you. Just be careful please. Promise me that you will think things through. I don't want to see you hurt."

"I'll be fine, Cass. Well, as soon as this killer is caught and put behind bars anyway."

"Oh no. I can't leave you right now. You need me here."

"Cass, I will be fine. I have Gil and his partner Ben and whether I want him or not I have Jack too. I'll be fine. Your mother needs you. Your father needs you. You're their

whole world. And you need them just as much. I know how much they mean to you. You need this time with your family. I would never keep you from that."

"Oh Moira," Cass finally gave free rein to her tears. "I don't know how to let her go. God help me, I don't know if I can."

Moira held her while she cried herself out. It made her think of her own mother and how she missed her. She would have loved to introduce Gil to her. Her mother would have liked him. He was big and strong but he could be so gentle and loving. She was a very lucky woman. Holding hands, she went with Cass to help pack for her best friend to go home.

Gil ran into Jack Madigan in the lobby. Madigan didn't look happy.

"I'd like to talk to you, Detective, if you can spare a few minutes." Without waiting for a response he led Gil over to a set of doors to the right of the stairwell. They opened into a tastefully decorated office. Indicating a chair in front of the desk, Jack motioned to Gil with a brief wave of his hand. "Have a seat, Detective. Can I get you some coffee?"

Gil sat and stretched his long legs out in front of him. "Yes, black please." He waited patiently while Jack filled two cups and took his seat behind the desk. He sipped his coffee and sat quietly until Jack spoke.

"I took my daughter to work this morning. You weren't here. She was upset about something. I don't know what happened between you two, but I want you to understand something. If you hurt her in any way, shape or form, you will regret it."

Gil stood and braced his palms on the desk. "I left this morning to take care of some things. I had hoped to be back before she was up and around but it didn't work out that way. As for what is between Moira and myself, well, sir, that is between us. However, because I respect you as a fellow Marine I will give you the courtesy of telling you that I am in love with your daughter. I plan to marry her and spend the rest of my life making her happy. I'm not sure what is going on between you two but I'm sure that Moira will tell me when she's ready. I do know that she is the best thing that has ever happened to me and I plan to keep her safe and happy always. Now if you will excuse me I need to step out and make a few calls before I head back upstairs to Moira." With those parting words Gil stepped out of the office closing the door firmly behind him.

Jack sat behind the desk and with the closing of the door he smiled. A fellow Marine, huh, and the good detective was in love with Moira. Maybe everything would be okay. Now if he could just get her to accept him in her life. Only then would he be happy.

\* \* \* \* \*

He watched from the shadows as the woman walked along the tree-lined path. She appeared deep in thought and wasn't paying attention to anything around her. He smiled behind his mask at how she was playing into his hand.

He was enraged at the interruption of the detective earlier. He had finally decided to join Moira's gym. The sight and smell of her had nearly sent him over the edge. She had brought the beast to the surface and he needed release. The power surged in him as he waited for his prey to come closer. He would have her here in the shadowy darkness of the park. Just the thought of all that he would do to her made his cock swell against his zipper. He couldn't wait to hear her whimper and beg. She wasn't his angel, but that was okay for now. He needed a release for the tension coiling in his body. He would have his angel soon, but for now he would have the one in his web.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil was frustrated and angry. Their guy had struck again. Sometime last night he had attacked and killed a woman in the park. Two teenage boys had discovered her body when they decided to go smoke in the park instead of going to school. He was pretty sure that they would never cut school again.

The woman's face had been bashed in beyond recognition. Her clothes had been partly ripped and partly cut from her body. According to the preliminary report in his hand she had been raped several times. She had bruises and bite marks all over her body. The violence perpetrated on the victims seemed to be escalating. This guy had to be found and stopped soon. He shuddered to think of what this guy would do to Moira if he got his hands on her.

There was another business card for Moira's gym left with the victim. On the back was simply the one printed word, *SOON*.

He would make a move for Moira soon and Gil had to be ready for him.

"They identified our lady. Her name was Angie Donovan. She was twenty-eight and worked as a nurse at Community. No idea why she was in the park. Her shift ended at eleven p.m. I have the name of a few coworkers." Ben placed the papers on the desk and looked at Gil. "One more thing, Ms. Donovan was eight weeks pregnant."

"Son of a bitch," Gil exclaimed. "We have to stop this asshole."

"I know. These attacks are getting even more vicious, a thing that I didn't think was possible. I'm almost afraid of what he'll do next."

"I don't like that he has left one of Moira's business cards by the last two victims. I don't want him to get his hands on her."

Ben noted the look in Gil's eyes and smiled. "So how did it go this weekend? When do you need me to take over?"

Gil glanced up at Ben and the look in his eyes would have curdled milk. "There will be no need for you to take a shift. I'll be moving in with Moira. Cass has left to go home."

Her mom has cancer and is really badly off. She didn't know for sure how long she would be gone."

"That's too bad. I was really looking forward to getting to know her better. You don't have to move in with Moira though. We can still take turns watching her."

"Let me put it this way," Gil said. "I'd be moving in with her or she would be moving in with me whether this was going on or not."

Ben laughed out loud. "I thought that might be the case. It must have been one hell of a weekend."

"Moira is special, Ben. I've invited my family to come up this weekend and meet her."

"Wow! That is pretty serious. I'm really happy for you, Gil. I hope that everything works out for you."

"Me too. I've never been much for relationships, but this is different. I can't see ever not wanting her in my life."

Does the captain know yet?"

"Oh yeah. I've heard all about my unprofessionalism, about how the case always comes first. He told me he should pull my ass right off this case and put me back on foot patrol until I get my priorities straight and pull my head out of my ass."

"Wow. So you're pounding the pavement?"

"No. I told him that I love her and that I would just get in the way of anyone else he put with her."

"Bet he loved that."

"He just gave me a funny look and told me that if I fucked up and made him look bad he'd make me wish that I had never been born."

"Then we better get to work before this psycho finds a way to get to your girlfriend."

"Over my dead body," Gil stated and the fire in his eyes would have sent fear into the heart of even a hardened criminal.

Moira reached for the dial and turned up the heat in the sauna before stepping in. She unhooked the towel from her body and laid it flat on the middle bench before stretching her now naked body out on top. There was nothing quite like a wet sauna to help release the knots in her sore muscles. She was teaching both her and Cass' classes until she could find someone to help out. It had made for a busy day. Now she just wanted to relax before Gil arrived to take her home.

It was amazing how their schedules had coincided. She usually left for home around six thirty at night, which worked well with Gil's schedule. Tonight she had to stay late to teach Cass' advanced spin class. It was a high-intensity forty-five-minute class full of jumps and hovers as well as steep incline hills. It was one hell of a workout. Gil had a late night tonight as well. There had been another murder and he and Ben

were working late checking on information pertaining to the latest victim. They would both stop by to pick her up on the way back to the station where Ben had left his car.

Moira only had about ten minutes to enjoy the sauna if she was going to be ready to leave when they arrived. Stifling a yawn, she rolled over onto her back, keeping her eyes closed against the thick mist. She must have dozed for a minute because she was jolted awake by the firm shutting of the sauna door.

"Sorry it's so hot in here, but I really needed it," Moira said from her reclined position. "I'm leaving in a minute so I can turn it down a little if you want."

When there was no reply Moira sat up and opened her eyes. The mist was so thick that she could barely see. With a feeling of unease she stood up and grabbed her towel off the bench to wrap around her. She stepped down to the lower bench and started creeping down it toward the opposite side where the door was. She had gone only a few feet when she felt someone's breath hot on the back of her neck. Instead of turning around to look she began to move forward faster.

Just as she neared the door she jumped down to the floor and reached her hand out for the handle. Before her fingers could grasp hold of it she was jerked roughly off her feet and thrown to the floor. Before she could catch her breath he was there. He straddled her prone body and reached for her hands. Moira gasped for air and fought with all she had. She recognized the masked black eyes above her and she knew what she was in for if he got his way.

She bucked and fought with the intensity of a cornered wild animal. Through sheer blind luck her elbow caught him in the throat with enough force to send him upright gasping for air. Moira didn't stop to think about anything. She shoved with all of her might against his chest hard enough to get him completely off her and she scrambled for the door, leaving her towel behind in her rush for safety. She jerked the door open and took off down the hall screaming at the top of her lungs. She would never again take a sauna when the women's center was empty. She would gladly share if she could just get out of here. She was almost to the turn in the corridor that would lead her either to the locker room or into the main part of the gym.

She chanced one quick glance behind her as she darted around the corner. When she looked back she slammed into something in the corridor in front of her. She felt the hands grabbing at her and screamed as she fainted.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil had put in a long day. He was anxious to see Moira to know that she was okay. His brother Griff had arrived earlier than anyone else in his family. That was just the way that Griff worked. He had closed the dojo for the week and took off. So now Gil was late getting to Moira's club and he had a tagalong brother with him who was having way too much fun teasing him about Moira.

"So is this where I get to meet this Moira? Is she as gorgeous as Ben said?" Griff loved to tease his big brother. Usually his big brother just took it in his stride and

walked on, but this was different. Gil was different about Moira. There was no kissing and telling. In fact, Griff had really believed that Gil was going to take Ben's head off when Ben started describing Moira. Ben said that she was about five foot six with long blonde hair, green eyes and had lush full...lips. They all knew that Ben had been alluding to her breasts and Gil had just about taken his head off. Of course it hadn't helped when he had started laughing so hard either. At this point his curiosity was so great that Griff couldn't wait to meet this Moira for himself.

"Just shut up and behave. I'm running late as it is. And you had best remember that Moira is a lady, my lady, so treat her with respect. Understand?" Gil demanded as they headed toward the front door to Knowledge Is Power.

"Lighten up, will ya! I will act like a total gentleman." Griff grinned at Gil's snort of disbelief. "Oh ye of little faith."

Gil walked through the door and headed for Moira's office. As they passed the nautilus room, Kip stuck his head out and called them over.

"Hey, Moira is in the sauna. She was only going to stay a few minutes but I think that she probably fell asleep. She's been there about half an hour. I was going to send Kat to check on her when she gets done with her class in a few minutes, but you go ahead if you want. The woman's center closed at eight p.m. So she's by herself now."

"Thanks, Kip. Which way?"

"Go through that big door at the end of the hall. Follow the corridor past the locker room and the sauna is around the corner, the last door on the left. She might already be in the locker room getting dressed for all I know. Tell her that Kat is staying with me to close up tonight."

"Thanks again, Kip. I appreciate you keeping an eye on her for me. Just remember not to let her know that you're doing it."

Kip laughed, "I don't have a death wish!"

Gil grinned and turned to Griff. "Let's go. You can wait just inside the door while I find her."

"Ah come on, big brother. Can't I come with you to the sauna?"

Gil gave Griff a scathing look and stopped outside the door. "Look, don't let anything slip in front of Moira about me having Kip keep an eye on her, okay?"

"I understand that you care about this girl, bro, but aren't you taking this protective thing a bit far?"

"Listen, you'll find this out sooner or later anyway. This case I'm working on..."

"The guy the press had dubbed the Night Stalker?"

"Yeah, that's the one. Moira had a run-in with him when she and her roommate stumbled across him with one of the victims. Moira fainted or was knocked out or something and the perp made off with her gym bag. He's become fixated on Moira. He plans to get to her. I plan to prevent that. So just don't say anything about Kip, all right?"



"No problem, Gil. Why didn't you say anything to us?"

"I was hoping that I wouldn't need to, but I was going to when you were all here to meet her."

"Well, I'm here for the week and you know that I can't stand to be idle. Maybe Moira can find something for me to do around here. I could keep her with me while you're at work."

"We'll see what she says. Just behave yourself and remember that she is already spoken for."

"She's that good, huh?"

"She's mine and don't forget it."

With that Gil opened the door and stepped into the corridor with Griff laughing right behind him. Gil's hard look had Griff struggling to stifle his laughter just as they heard a bloodcurdling scream. Gil reached for his gun and took off. Griff followed closely behind.

As they reached the turn a woman came into view, a naked woman. Griff had an excellent view of long blonde hair, lush breasts, a flat stomach, long legs and lush blonde curls showing that she was a true blonde, before she ran into Gil and fainted.

Gil swallowed an oath as he eased Moira to the floor. He threw his jacket over her naked body and told Griff to keep an eye on her as he took off down the hall with his gun in his hand. As he neared the sauna he heard a door slam farther down. It was the exit that led to the back parking lot. There was no one in sight when he looked out. Cursing under his breath, Gil turned and headed back toward his brother and Moira.

Moira came to lying on the floor of the hallway. There was a jacket covering her and a strange man sitting next to her. He had long black hair that he had caught with a leather tie at the back of his neck. Moira kept her eyes slitted and thought quickly of what she could do to get away. If she could just get him close enough to take him by surprise she could punch him in the balls hard enough to get away. She hoped. Moira moaned and brought a hand up to her head. Just as she thought the guy next to her jumped up to his knees and knelt toward her. Just a little closer, Moira thought, waiting for him to get within range of her hands. As the man inched closer Moira's hand launched out and caught him hard enough on the chin to snap his head back.

Having been caught unaware, Griff took the shot on the chin but moved his leg quickly enough to avoid the shot to his crotch, taking it on his thigh instead. Damn, that was going to leave a bruise. His brother had sure picked a hell cat. Just the thought made him grin. This one would keep Gil on his toes and not let him get away with anything. He was going to really like her if he could ever get her to quit hitting at him.

Moira saw the grin and lost it. She grabbed the jacket and prepared to launch herself at him when she heard someone call her name behind her. She darted a quick

glance over her shoulder and saw Gil. Forgetting the jacket, Moira jumped up and ran to him, nearly knocking him over in her rush.

Gil looked past her at his grinning brother who was now standing and holding the dropped jacket out on the tip of his finger. Gil muttered an oath and pushed Moira around the corner and out of Griff's sight.

"What are you doing?" Moira demanded. "Get that guy before he leaves. He..."

Gil stopped her with a finger to her lips. "Moira, he's not going anywhere, baby. That's my brother Griff. He came here with me."

"Your brother?"

"Yes, my brother," Gil said as he stripped his shirt over his head and handed it to Moira. "Here, put this on. I think that my brother has seen enough of your naked body today."

Moira looked down in shock at her nudity and blushed a fiery red. She quickly donned his shirt, which was just long enough to cover her to mid thigh.

"Come on," Gil pulled on Moira's hand to lead her around the corner back to where his irritating brother was probably still grinning.

"I can't face him after what I did," Moira moaned.

"Moira, I need you to get dressed so that we can talk about what happened. Why were you running naked down the hall?" Gil said as he continued to pull her toward where his brother waited and then as her words registered, "What did you do?"

Griff overhearing that question laughed and rubbed his chin. "She just about snapped my neck. That's one hell of a punch you pack. Luckily for me and my future wife I was able to deflect your second one." He laughed again as Moira hid behind Gil's back.

Gil turned to face her and exclaimed, "You hit my brother?"

Moira glared at him and snapped out, "Well, I didn't know that he was your brother, now did I? I woke up naked on the floor after just running from someone who grabbed me in the sauna and see this stranger grinning at me. What the hell did you expect me to do? Ask about the weather?"

Gil glared right back at her. "What the hell are you doing running down the hall naked anyway? Did this other guy hurt you? Did he get your clothes off?"

"I was in the sauna, Gil. I wore a towel in and grabbed it to wrap back up as I left. I must have left it behind in my rush to get out of there. I'm so sorry to annoy you by being naked when I saved my own ass."

"What the hell are you doing being alone and naked when you know that there is a killer rapist after you? You know what he is capable of. Are you trying to make it easier for him?"

"You asshole! How dare you accuse me of that!"

"Now, Moira," Gil stammered as Moira tore his shirt over her head and threw it at him.

"I'm so sorry that I had to meet your brother naked, Gil. I surely didn't mean to embarrass you. I would apologize for getting away from the guy in the sauna, but I won't embarrass you further by lying to you."

"Put the goddamn shirt back on, Moira." Gil's face was livid.

"Kiss my ass, Gil," Moira said as she moved down the hall toward the locker room. As she passed Griff she smiled and nodded her head. "If you'll excuse me, I'd like to get dressed before we are formally introduced."

"Not at all," Griff grinned at her. "It's been a pleasure already."

"Thank you," Moira said and with one more scathing look at Gil she entered the locker room and shut the door firmly behind her. She leaned there for a minute and tried to catch her breath. She had never been so angry and embarrassed in her life. She wished the floor would open up and swallow her. With a sigh she moved over to her locker and quickly starting pulling her jeans and sweatshirt on. She stuffed her underwear and socks in her bag and quickly stepped into her shoes. She wanted to get back out there before Gil had a chance to come in after her. She didn't want to be alone with him right now. She was afraid that she just might kill him.

Griff stopped Gil before he could follow Moira into the locker room.

"Hey there, big brother, don't you think that you should give her a few minutes to calm down? You sure pissed her off." Griff couldn't help but laugh at the sour look on Gil's face.

"It's not funny. She could have been killed. She has no common sense whatsoever. What the hell was she thinking to go in the sauna all but naked by herself?"

"Perhaps she was thinking that this is her gym and that she should be safe here. She made a mistake, Gil. Give the poor girl a break. I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed meeting her," Griff said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh shut up, will ya? I don't want to even think about you meeting her while she was naked. And wipe that stupid grin off your face before I hit you."

"Damn, your lady already did. I couldn't help but notice her," Griff laughed and put his hands out to ward off his thoroughly pissed brother. "Her arms, Gil, I was going to say her arms. Great muscle tone and definition. She sure knows how to pack a punch. I shudder to think what would have happened if her second punch had made contact with my crotch, as it is I will undoubtedly have a bruise on my thigh. That's one hell of a woman you got there!"

"I know. Just remember that I've got her. So just keep your damn eyes and hands off her. Got that, little brother?"

"I couldn't forget that sight even if I wanted too, which unfortunately for you I don't. She's one hell of a woman!"

"Thanks," Moira said as she came back out the door to the locker room. She moved forward to the main door, leaving Gil and his brother to follow her.

She rushed ahead to speak to Kip and Kat before Gil could catch her. She felt his heat behind her before she was through talking to her employees. His body was like a furnace it gave off so much heat.

"If you guys will excuse us we need to get going," Gil said before grabbing her arm and herding her toward the front door.

Not one to make a scene if she could avoid it, Moira just smiled at Kip and Kat and said good night. Once they were outside Moira threw Gil's hand off and headed toward his car on her own. Seeing the look in his brother's eyes, Griff hurried and took her hand in his own. He brought it to his lips and kissed her knuckles.

"To think that such delicate hands could inflict such pain," Griff grinned at her. "Allow me to introduce myself, fair lady. I am Griff Daniels at your service. Although you've yet to meet my brother Doug, allow me to assure you that I am not only the best looking of the Daniels clan but the most charming as well."

Moira had to laugh at him. "I'm very happy to meet you, Griff."

"Not half as happy as I was!" Griff laughed again as Gil muttered a curse behind them.

Moira smiled even though she blushed as well. "I try not to let anyone see me in my birthday suit until we're much better acquainted."

"I feel honored that you made an exception for me. I'm not surprised though. It seems like everywhere I go I have naked women chasing me. It gets tedious after a while. I won't hold it against you. I have to warn you though that big brother wasn't too happy. Believe it or not, Gil tends to have a little bit of a temper."

Moira laughed so hard at this incorrigible brother that she had to grasp his arm to keep walking.

"Please try not to cling so tightly in front of him. It will only make it that much harder for us to be alone later."

Moira shot a glance to Gil's angry face and laughed again as they reached the car. Gil jerked the door open and gritted through his teeth, "Just get in the damn car!"

"Why what a gentleman he is," Griff exclaimed as he slid the passenger seat up. Before he could climb in Moira had slipped past him and seated herself in the back. While Gil stomped around to the driver's side Griff slid in beside her and shut the door before pulling the front seat back toward them, locking it in place. Gil slammed into the car and glared at them in the rearview mirror. Thoroughly enjoying himself, Griff put his arm around Moira and waved a hand at Gil. "Drive on, big brother, the lady and I would like to get better acquainted."

Moira laughed again at the antics of Gil's little brother. She was really going to like him. Griff grinned at Moira as Gil peeled out of the lot, leaving a good layer of rubber behind. "Now where were we, darling? Oh yes, we were discussing my many attributes and why I am the better brother."

Moira laughed again and leaned back to enjoy the ride back to her apartment.

## Chapter Nine

Gil hung up after discussing what had happened at the gym to Moira with his partner Ben. He had to admire the way that Griff had eased Moira into telling him about it on the drive to the apartment. In fact Moira was so comfortable and at ease with Griff that if he wasn't his brother, Gil might be jealous. He turned when he heard the bathroom door open. Moira stood there in her normal attire of yoga pants and loose top. She made his mouth water.

"Where is Griff?"

"I sent him over to my apartment for the night."

"Oh." Moira looked uncomfortable for a moment before she shrugged her shoulders and headed down the hall. "I'm going to bed then."

Gil moved after her down the hall and entered the bedroom right after her. "Sounds good to me." He sat on the foot of the bed and began to remove his shoes and socks.

"What do you think you're doing?" Moira glared at Gil from just inside the door.

"I'm getting ready for bed, Moira."

"I'm not sleeping with you."

"Yes, you are. I'm sleeping right here beside you like I have the last few nights."

"Fine, sleep here. I'll just take the guest room," Moira stated as she turned to leave the bedroom.

Moving faster than she could have imagined, Gil was there before she could take more than two steps. "You'll sleep here, Moira. We had an argument. I'm sorry for the way that I said some things. I was worried and upset about what had almost happened to you. I won't apologize for that. But I'm not going to let one argument stand between us."

"Well, I won't apologize, Gil. I should have been safe in my own gym. If I had even thought otherwise, then I would not have been in that sauna in a towel by myself, but I was. I can't change that, but I won't do it again. And I won't apologize for forgetting my towel when I got away. I was naked when I met your brother, deal with it. At least he didn't make me feel ashamed or embarrassed about it. No you did that all by yourself."

"Oh baby, I don't want to fight anymore. I spoke so harshly because I was surprised and angry. I should have been there earlier, but I was delayed and that made me later than I expected. If I had just been there on time maybe he wouldn't have been able to get to you."

"Gil, it's not your fault. No one could have foreseen him being able to get to me at work. The important thing is that I got away and you were there for me."

"I love you, Moira. I don't know what I would have done if he had gotten you. It would kill me if he hurt you." Gil took Moira gently into his arms and held her tight to his chest. "I don't want to lose you when I've just found you."

"You're not going to lose me. I love you too, Gil. I'll just have to be more careful at work."

"I suppose that I couldn't talk you into staying home until we find this guy, huh?" At her open glare Gil sighed. "I didn't think so. Griff would like to hang out at the gym with you while I'm at work. He'll be here the whole week and it will give him something to do to keep him out of trouble as well."

Moira laughed. "Your brother is amazing, Gil. I haven't laughed so much in a long time. I would love to have him at the gym with me during the day."

"If you would quit looking so damn happy at just the mention of his name, it would be a lot easier for me not to be jealous of my own brother."

Moira laughed again and hugged Gil tight. "Your brother may make me laugh, but you're the one who makes me tingle. It's you who makes me happiest. You're the one who I love and trust, Gil. You and you alone."

Gil gave her a long, deep, drugging kiss. While Moira was clinging to him Gil dropped the bomb. "I'm glad that you trust me so much, Moira, because I plan to talk to Jack about the security at your club."

"Jack?"

"Your father, Moira. I plan to talk to your father." He felt her body tense for battle and let her go. "Maybe it would help if you talked to me about it."

Moira took a deep breath and crossed the room to sit down on the bed. "I want to talk to you, Gil, but I'm afraid. It's not a very pretty story."

"Nothing you say could make me love you any less." Gil came and sat beside her on the bed, taking her hand in his. "I'll just sit here and hold your hand and listen. You tell me whatever you feel like."

Moira took a deep breath and let it out slowly. She took another one and another one before she finally began to speak. "My mom was sixteen when she met Jack. They dated for two weeks and then he went back to the service. About a month later my mom suspected that she was pregnant. Her dad was furious. My grandmother left him for another man and to him all women were whores." She shuddered and took another deep breath. "He beat my mom constantly during her pregnancy. He used his fists, his belt, whatever was handy at the time."

Gil pulled her into his lap and held her tightly. Her hands were like ice. She was so locked in the past that he wasn't sure she still realized he was there. "Wasn't there anyone to help her get away from him?"

Moira laughed but it was a cold and empty sound. "She ran away once to her grandmother, her father's mother. She refused to help. She called my mom a jezebel and said that she was only getting what she deserved. She refused to believe that her son

would do anything that he wasn't provoked into. She called my grandfather to come pick up my mother and that was the last time Mom tried to get away. He almost killed her that night. She was eight months pregnant at the time. He beat her and beat her until she passed out from the pain. Somehow she survived and I was born prematurely about two days later."

Gil stroked her back as the tears poured down her face. She was shaking so he pulled the quilt up over them.

"My earliest memory is of her speaking of Jack. She was so sure that he would come back for us. She never lost faith in him. I never had any. Either way, he never came and we were on our own. Things only seemed to get worse for her after my birth. My grandfather hated me and Mom tried to keep me out of his way. I was only a child though and I didn't understand. He broke my arm when I was six. Mom refused to do something he asked her to so he grabbed me up and snapped my arm in two."

Gil felt such helpless rage for the child that the woman in his arms had been. That anyone could be so cruel to a child made his stomach clench in knots. Although he was afraid that he knew the answer, he asked the question anyway. "What was it that he wanted your mom to do?"

"He knew some men who were willing to pay to sleep with my mom. He didn't see the difference between being one man's whore or a whore to many. My mother refused and he hurt her the only way that he still could. He used me. After that men would show up at all hours at the house. Mom seemed to curl into herself. It was like a part of her had died. She didn't even talk about Jack. She seemed to give up. On my seventh birthday mom took a stand and refused to work that night. My grandfather was furious. He had been making pretty good money from Mom and he didn't want to miss one night's income. I guess that he had agreed to let two of his buddies have her for the whole night for a nice sum of money. She lost it. It was the first and only time that I ever saw my mother hit him. She screamed at him that Jack would kill him when he found out what Grandfather had done and she started slapping at him. He punched her hard enough to break her nose and knock her to the floor. He started kicking and stomping on her, yelling at her the whole time about how her boyfriend would feel about her whoring herself. He was so cruel to her. He was hurting her so badly. She was bleeding so badly from so many places. She looked like a broken doll."

Moira shuddered and bit back a sob as Gil's hands tightened around her. She buried her face in his chest and took deep breaths until she could get control of herself.

"Where were you at during this time, Moira?"

"I tried to pull him off her but he knocked me back so hard against the wall that it dazed me for a minute. I remember focusing again and seeing him kicking her in the head and chest. I screamed at him to stop but he ignored me. So I went to the closet where I knew the gun was. I took it out of the shoe box and slipped the safety off. I ran back to where my mother lay and pointed the gun at him and ordered him to leave her alone."

Gil shut his eyes in pain at what he knew she was going to tell him. "What happened then, Moira?"

"He looked at me and laughed. Then he kicked her again. He didn't think I would use the gun." Moira took a deep breath and continued in a whisper. "I pointed the gun at him and fired until it just clicked. I remember his eyes being so wide in surprise. He fell to the floor and never made a sound. I went to my mother and dropped the gun. I tried to take her in my arms. I tried to stop the bleeding. She opened her eyes and told me to give her the gun." Gil gasped as Moira continued. "I grabbed the gun and held it out to her. She looked me straight in the eye and told me that she had shot my grandfather and did I understand. I knew that I was the one who had shot him but she kept telling me that she was the one who shot him. If anyone asked I was to say that she shot him. She made me promise her that I would say that. She died before the ambulance could get there. Our neighbor heard the gunshots and called it in."

Moira began to sob and Gil just held her and stroked his hand up and down her back, letting her get it all out of her system. He wondered if she had ever told anyone else what she had just told him. He doubted if she had. It devastated him that she had been living with this since she was a seven-year-old child. Her mother had been murdered and Moira had shot her grandfather to death all on her seventh birthday. He began kissing her hair, her eyes, tasting the tears on her lashes and cheeks. He wanted to kiss it all better but he knew that he couldn't.

Moira felt his kisses on her cheeks and turned her mouth up to his lips. His kisses were making the cold go away. She wanted him to hold her and never let her go. She looked up into his face and lost her soul. "Love me, Gil. Make me forget for just a little bit. Love me like nothing exists except you and me."

Gil looked into her big green eyes bright with tears and knew that he would never love anyone the way that he loved her. He took her in his arms and slowly began undressing her. As each inch of skin was exposed he worshipped her with his hands and mouth. When she lay naked before him he knelt between her thighs and loved her sweet pussy with his mouth, slowly taking her up again and again until she thought she would die from the pleasure. Only when she lay exhausted did he move his cock to the drenched opening of her pussy and slide deep inside. He loved her softly with a gentleness that took her breath away. Their shared orgasm washed over and through her in waves of pleasure that soothed her raw emotions. Here was the man she could trust with anything, the man she could love no matter what. She was his completely now, mind, heart, body and soul.

Gil held her close in the aftermath of their passion. It seemed that everything that he learned about her only heightened his passion and love for her. She was an amazing woman who had faced great tragedy in her life. Yet she still knew how to smile and laugh.

"What happened after?" Gil asked, resuming their earlier conversation. "Where did you go?"



"I stayed with my great-grandmother. She hated me because she thought that my mom had killed her precious boy." Moira gave a harsh laugh. "She made my life hell. I had to pay penance for my mother. Only the joke was on her because I was the guilty one."

"Did your great-grandmother physically abuse you?"

"She never raised a hand against me. No, that would have been too simple for her. She worked me from sunup to sundown. The only reprieve that I ever had was when school was in. That was the only time that I was allowed to leave the house. Education was important to her so I never missed school. I think she planned to marry me off after I graduated high school but Jack showed up. He said that he had been trying to get in touch with me for two years."

"And you didn't believe him?"

"Not then, but I don't know anymore. I look back now and see all of the hatred in my great-grandmother and wonder if she didn't keep me from knowing he was looking for me out of spite."

"Would she have done that?"

"Oh yes, she would have done anything to keep me from being happy. Jack showed up at my high school graduation. I was valedictorian of my class. Jack offered to pay for me to go to college, any college I wanted. I almost refused out of spite. I knew though that great-grandmother would never love me. I had spent my life doing everything she asked, hoping that some day she would forgive me."

"She's the one who needs your forgiveness, Moira. You did nothing that required her forgiveness." Gil hugged her fiercely to his side.

"I killed her son."

"You were a seven-year-old child who was trying to save her mother. You did the only thing you could."

Moira looked deeply into those steel blue eyes and felt some of the guilt she had held inside for so long slip away. "I made a deal with Jack. If he paid for me to go to college I would meet him once a month for dinner. I took a double load and went to college year-round. I was able to graduate in three years with a double major in Health Science and Psychology and a minor in Exercise Physiology. I worked as a manager for a couple of gyms but wasn't satisfied so Jack agreed to help finance a gym of my own with the condition that we begin monthly dinners again. I wanted my own gym, so I agreed. And now here we are."

"How much does Jack know about things?"

"He knows that I'm the one who killed my grandfather. I told him the other day when you left to run errands. He took me to work and we had a talk on the way. He said that he wrote letters to my mom but that they were all returned to him. That the last letter he wrote was sent back with a note that said she had married and moved away. I laughed when he told me but now I'm not so sure what to believe."

"Do you know that much about Jack, what his life was like?"

"No. I never really cared. I blamed him for my mother's death and my life with my great-grandmother. If he had just come for us everything would have been different."

"I can't tell you a lot but I do know that he is a legend in the Marines. He saved many lives in Vietnam. I do know that he went on missions that others considered suicide. He would volunteer for anything no matter what the danger. In fact it seemed like the more dangerous the better with him. Some said that he was like a man possessed, that he had a death wish. You would have been a few months old at the time."

"You're thinking it was because of the returned letters and being told that my mother was married, don't you?"

"Yeah, babe, I do. If he really loved your mother like he claims, like I love you, it would have destroyed him to think of her with someone else."

"Oh God. If that is true than I've put him through hell all these years for what? What have I done, Gil?"

"You were angry and hurt, Moira. You were still grieving not only for your mother but for the way things might have been. He won't hold that against you. He must really love you to still be here. Think about that."

"I don't know how to start over with him. Is it even possible?"

"Anything is possible. You lost your mother, Moira, but your dad is still here. Your grandfather and great-grandmother managed to take everything good away from you for so long, isn't it time you stopped letting them? Just make the first move. Tell Jack you want to get to know him, that you want to give him a chance to really be a part of your life."

"I don't know if I can, Gil."

"You can, Moira. You're one of the strongest women I know. Plus, I'll be with you every step of the way. I'm not going anywhere."

Moira took a deep breath and thought of all she had lost out on by closing her dad out of her life. She knew that her mother loved him and would have forgiven him anything. She realized that her mother would have been ashamed of her behavior toward Jack and that made her ashamed. Loving Gil like she did made her more aware of how her mother must have felt. She owed Jack a real chance to be a part of her life. Not just for him or her, but because she knew it was what her mother would have wanted.

"I'll call him in the morning and talk to him."

"You had better tell him about what happened at the club as well, Moira. It's only ten thirty. Why don't you call him now and tell him. Then you can invite him for dinner tomorrow."

"Okay. Here goes nothing."

Moira held tight to Gil's hand as she dialed her dad's number. Her dad. Somehow that suddenly sounded so right.

\* \* \* \* \*

He lay in the darkness with an icepack on his throat. His angel had actually hit him. He hadn't expected her to hurt him. He had expected her fear though and she hadn't disappointed him. Her fear was like an aphrodisiac. It made him hot and hard and hungry.

He stroked his throbbing cock between his thighs as he remembered how she looked when he first entered the sauna. She had been laid out on the bench like an all-you-can-eat buffet. His strokes grew firmer as he remembered her lush breasts with their big pink nipples and flat stomach. He moaned as he recalled the blonde curls between her thighs. She had been lying with one leg bent at the knee and he licked his lips as he recalled the silky lips of her exposed pussy wet with mist. He stroked faster as he visualized the firm globes of her ass as she tried to get away from him. He pumped into his fist as he recalled his domination of her when he threw her to the ground and straddled her. He remembered the feel of her skin under him.

He should have hit her instead of trying to restrain her. He hadn't wanted to hurt her though so he had been surprised when she hit him. Now he knew that she liked it rough. He would be prepared next time. She wouldn't mind if he hit her. In fact he bet that she would expect it. It would probably turn her on as much as it did him.

He imagined slapping her until she begged him to stop. That would be part of the game with her. That would be her way of telling him that she was ready for him to have her. And who was he to disappoint his angel. He would flip her over to her stomach and take her from behind. He liked it that way. It made him feel powerful and in control. He liked a woman on her knees in front of him where she belonged. That made him think of Moira's full lips and how it would feel to slam his cock into the warmth of her moist mouth. He thought of fisting his hands in that long blonde hair and slamming into the back of her throat. That thought was enough to send him over and he came violently in his fist with Moira's name on his lips.

## **Chapter Ten**

Moira wasn't surprised to see Jack waiting in her office after she finished her first class the next day. She had known that he would want to check on her. It made her ashamed to think of the way she had treated him. That was all going to change though, starting now. Moira took a deep breath and stepped into her office, closing the door behind her to afford them some privacy.

"I have to say that I've been expecting you."

Jack was seated in a chair in front of her desk. Instead of going behind her desk, Moira took the chair beside him.

"I'm really okay, Jack. I meant it when I told you that last night."

"I had to see for myself. Plus I wanted to check out your security in the building. I want a few of my men to set up here until this guy is found. Don't argue with me, Moira," Jack said when Moira opened her mouth.

Moira laughed. "Believe it or not, I wasn't going to. I was just going to say that they could use my office if they needed to. If not then I'm sure I could find them somewhere else to use."

Jack looked at Moira and quirked an eyebrow. "All right, what is going on? You're being much too agreeable about this."

Moira took a deep breath and looked Jack straight in the eyes. "I'm sorry, Jack."

Jack was taken by surprise. First Moira had actually called him to tell him about the attack on her and now she was apologizing. "For what, Moira?"

"For so much, Jack, for everything. I've not exactly been a very grateful daughter to you. You've done so much for me and all I've done is be hateful."

Jack saw the tears in Moira's eyes and felt like he couldn't breathe. "I understand, Moira. I wasn't there when you needed me. I can't forgive myself for that either."

"That's just it, Jack. You don't need my forgiveness but I do need yours. I understand now that you would have been there if you had known what was going on. Gil's opened my eyes to a lot of things but mostly to how poorly I've treated you. He made me realize how ashamed Mom would have been of my behavior."

"Your mother would never have been ashamed of you and neither am I."

Moira smiled and took Jack's hand between hers. "Mom never lost faith in you. She always loved you. I should have trusted her judgment instead of listening to the ranting of a hate-filled old woman. I've lost so much time with you because of that. If you're willing, I'd like to really get to know you. I'd like more than just a monthly dinner. I..."

"It's what I have always wanted, Moira," Jack said as he pulled her close for a hug. He felt her tears on his shoulder and was not ashamed of the ones in his own eyes. "I love you. You're all that I have left of your mother. You're all I have left in the whole world."

Moira pulled away to look in Jack's eyes. "I think that I just might love you too. I didn't realize until last night when I was talking to Gil just how much I have come to depend on you. You've been there for me in spite of how I treated you. Somehow even through my anger I think I realized that I could always count on you. Looking back, I can see how my mother could have fallen in love with you."

"I loved her too, Moira. I loved her so much. I wanted to die when I read that she had married someone else. I felt betrayed."

Moira remembered what Gil had told her about Jack's exploits in Vietnam and hugged Jack close again. "I'm so glad that you didn't die. I can't imagine what my life would have been like if you hadn't found me. I promise to try to be a better daughter to you."

Jack laughed. "I hope that doesn't mean that you don't plan to argue with me. I have to say that I've come to really enjoy sparring with you."

Moira grinned at Jack. "I do tend to have quite a temper and I don't like to be told what to do. I wonder where I got those qualities from," Moira replied, tongue in cheek.

Jack grinned down at her. "I hate to say it but you sound a lot like your father. He's been known to possess the same virtues."

Moira stood up and headed to the small fridge in her office. She grabbed two bottles of water and handed one to Jack. "As much as I've enjoyed this talk, I have another class in a few minutes so I've got to head up. You're still coming to dinner, aren't you? I'd love you to get to know Gil better. Plus his brother Griff is in town."

"I'll be there. You want me to pick up Chinese on my way? Say sevenish?"

"That would be great. Chinese is my favorite!"

"Mine too."

"Something else we have in common," Moira said as she headed out the door. "I'll see you later then...Dad." With those words she was gone.

Jack rubbed his chest where an old ache was finally easing. Moira had called him Dad.

\* \* \* \* \*

Moira was in the middle of teaching a women's self-defense class when she noticed Gil motioning to her from the window. Griff was with him wearing his now familiar grin.

"Let's pair up and try that, ladies. I'll be back in just a minute but I'll be watching from the window."

Moira went out to see what Gil needed. She had just stepped through the door when Griff grabbed her up in a bear hug, sweeping her feet right off the floor. Gil was tall at six foot three but Griff had at least three inches on him.

"I've missed you, love. You look almost as good now as when we first met."

"Shut up, Griff," Gil snapped while he tugged a laughing Moira out of Griff's arms. "Hey, baby." Gil snuggled Moira close and gave her a tender kiss.

"I'll just leave you two alone and see if I can be of assistance elsewhere." Griff went into the room Moira had just left.

"How is everything going this morning? Any problems?"

"Everything is fine, Gil. Plus Jack was here this morning and left a couple of his guys here to keep an eye on things. They've set up base in my office. Chetan and Shep have promised to keep their eyes on me the whole time that I'm here. You have nothing to worry about."

"Who and Shep?" Gil asked.

"Chetan—chay tahn. It comes from the Sioux word for hawk, at least that's what I've heard. Anyway, they're here."

"And where are they right now? I don't see anyone."

Moira grinned and turned to the room she had just exited. Sure enough there was a man standing in the corner talking to Griff. He was about Gil's height with shaggy blond hair and a Viking build. He glanced over and nodded toward Gil before his eyes moved to Moira. A slow smile took shape as she wiggled her fingers at him. Gil growled and pulled Moira back to him. Dipping his head, he kissed her deeply, stating his possession.

Moira laughed. "Why do I feel like if you were a dog you would be peeing around me to mark your territory? You don't have to worry about Shep."

Gil looked at her and chuckled. "I guess you're right. Sorry, Moira, I never realized how possessive I could be."

"I'm not going anywhere and I'm certainly not looking anywhere else. I love you, Gil."

"I love you too. I came here to leave Griff with you for the afternoon. He needs a sitter." He shook his head as he glanced into the room and saw Griff instructing the women on a new move. The women were all listening attentively. Moira stood in awe.

"Most of the women in that class are victims of abuse. They tend to be nervous around men, especially big men. I thought some were going to faint when Shep followed me into class. Yet look at how they have taken to Griff. Not a single one of them seems uncomfortable with him."

"Griff has that effect on women. He loves women, all women. No matter what they look like or act like he treats them like they are the only ones in the room. It drove Doug and me crazy when we were younger."

"I think he's delightful."

"Delightful? Griff?"

"Don't sound so put out. I still only have eyes for you." Moira kissed him lightly on the mouth. "I'd be happy to have him stay here."

"Ummm," Gil murmured pulling Moira into a deep satisfying kiss. "I've got to get back. Griff will take you home when you're ready. Is Jack still coming to dinner?"

"Yeah, he'll be there around seven with Chinese. We had quite a talk while he was here. We're going to work at a closer relationship. Thank you for helping me see things more clearly, Gil. I owe you."

"You don't owe me anything, baby, although if you're offering sexual favors I could be persuaded." Gil wiggled his brows at her, making her laugh and swat him on the shoulder.

"I'll see you later, you cad."

Gil watched her walk back into the classroom and caught Griff's eye. He nodded at his brother and glanced at Shep again. Moira's bodyguard just lifted a brow at him before turning his eyes to where she now stood. He just might have to talk to Jack about his men. Moira was using Griff to demonstrate how a woman could evade a would-be attacker. Gil watched Moira knock Griff onto his ass and walked away with a grin.

He watched her moving around the nautilus equipment, greeting members and answering questions. He felt the surge of adrenaline as she moved closer to him. Would she recognize him? He loved the fit of her shorts. He knew what her breasts would look like under her loose t-shirt and sports bra. He could still visualize her in the sauna spread before him like a banquet.

Finally she was there in front of him. He held his breath and waited to see what she would do. Moira nodded to him and smiled hello before moving on. She didn't recognize him. He almost laughed at his giddy sense of triumph. She couldn't tell who he was. He watched the sway of her ass as she continued around the room. He was so close to having her. She had smiled at him without a hint of recognition in her eyes.

She stopped in front of a man with a hulking Viking figure. He leaned down to say something to her and she threw her head back and laughed. Another guy walked up and slung his arm around her shoulders. He said something to the Viking and the blond giant shook his head and ambled away. Holding Moira at his side, the tall guy with black hair followed after him.

He would have to keep a closer eye on his angel. It wouldn't do for her to look elsewhere. She belonged to him. Perhaps he should remind her of that. He grabbed his towel up and headed to the door they had left through. He reached it just in time to see all three of them enter the room he knew was her office. There was a bronze man with a long black ponytail already in the room. The Viking entered first and said something to him that made Ponytail laugh. Moira followed and with a smack on her ass the tall guy entered behind her and shut the door.

What the hell was going on? Just what did she think she was doing? He felt his rage build. Had she been playing him for a fool? She was no better than any other woman. They were whores, every single one of them. She was even worse than some, engaging with three men at the same time and in the middle of the day in her office no less. Oh he would grant her no more mercy. She was unworthy of his love. He would treat her just as he had all the rest. He could imagine her right now on her knees before the Viking and Ponytail, taking turns sucking their cocks while the tall guy fucked her hard from behind.

Oh she would pay dearly for her deceit. She was the biggest whore of all and he would take great pleasure in punishing her. She would beg him to kill her before he was through and he would just laugh and take her again. Oh yes, he had plans for his fallen angel and he knew just how to get her attention.

With a smile in place he went over to speak with the woman behind the desk in the lobby. He remembered from his tour that her name was Lacey. She wasn't bad-looking with her short blonde curls and whiskey brown eyes. Her body was okay. She wasn't his angel but she would do for his purposes. A few minutes later he walked away with plans for the night. She was just another whore like all the rest as well. He had seen her look him over like a bitch in heat. He laughed as he headed down the sidewalk out front. He wouldn't disappoint her. In fact he would give Ms. Lacey just what she wanted and so much more than she could ever even imagine. Whistling "Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf", he headed off to make sure everything was ready for the night ahead.

Unaware of what was unfolding outside her office, Moira was listening to Shep and Chetan explain some of the upgrades in safety that Chetan had put in place while Shep shadowed her. There were new security cameras and hidden alarms. One wall of her office was now covered with televisions that displayed different rooms in the gym as well as all three of the parking lots. She watched as bigger and brighter lights were being put up in the employee lot. She should no longer be amazed at what the men who worked for her dad could accomplish so quickly but it still took her by surprise. Chetan and Shep along with another man called Roman had been with Jack for many years. Roman had told her once that they had all worked with Jack for so long that when he decided to leave the business they had just followed with him. She wasn't sure but she thought "the business" had something to do with being soldiers for hire, mercenaries. It would certainly fit with what Gil had said about Jack seeming to have a death wish for a while.

She had been startled when Chetan had asked how long Gil had spent in the Marines. Griff had told them that he had been in for ten years before leaving and joining the police force. Shep just shook his head and kept typing into his computer. She hadn't known that Gil was a former Marine, or was it "once a Marine always a Marine", until he had told her about Jack being a legend in the Marines. She'd have to ask him more about the time that he had spent there.



"How did you know that?" Moira asked Chetan.

Shep grinned over at her and said, "Chetan can always spot a soldier, Cat Eyes."

"Cat Eyes?" Griff questioned.

"Just take a look at them green cat eyes of hers. I swear to God they probably glow in the dark," Shep answered Griff, amusement ripe in his voice.

Moira stuck her tongue out at him before responding. "And why were you taunting Gil earlier, Shep? Was that really necessary?"

"Necessary no, but fun anyway. Your boyfriend seems pretty possessive, Moira. You okay with that?"

Moira's eyes twinkled. "He was only that way because you provoked him, Shep. It was funny though, wasn't it?"

"I've never seen Gil act jealous before. It was a new experience for me," Griff disclosed.

"He's never been that way with anyone else he's dated?" Moira asked.

"Gil's never been big on dating. A one-night stand here or there but never anything serious, at least not until you. I've never seen him act the way he does around you. Gil never loses his temper with a woman. He's always treated them with kid gloves like he was afraid they would fall apart. You, though, wow can he lose his temper with you." Griff shook his head in disbelief.

Moira just grinned. "I know! But boy does he make up for yelling at me later."

Chetan finally looked away from checking the monitors. "I don't want to hear this, Cat Eyes. I don't want to think about Midnight's daughter having a sex life. It's just not right."

"I hate to shock you, Chetan, but I think that my dad might have an idea since Gil has basically moved in with me. What? Why are you both looking at me like that?" Moira asked when both Chetan and Shep stopped what they were doing and just stared at her.

"You actually referred to Midnight as your dad, Cat Eyes. You've always called him Jack," Shep answered.

"Gil helped me work through a lot of things. I know that I haven't been fair to Jack in the past. So I spoke with him when you guys first got here this morning and we are going to start afresh and try to make a go of this father-daughter thing."

Chetan nodded at her and turned back to work on the monitors but Shep jumped up and pulled her into a bear hug. "I'm so happy to hear that. We all hoped that you might give Midnight a chance someday. I remember when he first found out about you. It was all we could do to keep him from just crashing in and stealing you away."

"Jack wanted to steal me away?"

Before Shep could answer Chetan spoke up. "Shouldn't you get back to programming, Shep?"

Shep looked at Chetan for a minute before he shrugged and went back to work at his computer.

"Why can't he answer me, Chetan?"

"Because it's not his story to tell. If you want answers, Cat Eyes, talk to your dad."

"You're like a rock, aren't you, Chetan? My dad must really have done something to gain a loyalty as strong as yours."

She thought she caught a glimpse of pain flash in his eyes before he turned once again to the monitors. "I owe Midnight more than I can ever repay."

Moira glanced at Shep to see his response but he was busy typing and gave nothing away. She realized that despite all the time she had known these men she really knew next to nothing about them except that they would do anything for Jack. Shep was the most talkative but rarely said anything about himself. The only real thing that she knew about him was that he had been an Army Ranger instead of a Marine like the others before going to work for Jack. Yet here they were working to keep her safe. She had taken so much that her father had done for her for granted and some things she probably hadn't even noticed.

"So do I get to call you Cat Eyes too?" Griff interrupted her thoughts. "It will really get to Gil, especially when I tell him that these two call you that as well."

Chetan looked over at Griff and actually grinned. "You really do love to torment your brother, don't you?"

"It's what I live for, Chetan. It's what I live for." With those words he looked at Moira and asked, "So how's about you take me home and feed me so that I can take advantage of you before big brother gets there?"

Moira laughed and shook her head at Griff. "I still have an entire afternoon of classes before I can leave. I have yogurt and water in my fridge over there or you can feel free to go get something on your own."

"And leave you at the mercy of these two while I'm gone? Why, they might talk you to death."

Moira saw Chetan and Shep shake their heads and looked back at Griff's boyish grin. She started laughing so hard that she had to lean on Griff's arm to keep from falling over. "I guess I can spare half an hour to go get something to eat."

"What can I tell you guys," Griff smiled at Chetan and Shep. "Even my own brother's girlfriend can't seem to keep her hands off me."

As Moira went off into new peals of laughter, Griff turned to ask if Shep or Chetan wanted them to bring back anything.

## Chapter Eleven

Gil had spent a long day chasing possible leads that led to nothing. He was frustrated and angry when he walked into the apartment building. He was waiting for the elevator when he heard the door open behind him. He glanced back and saw Jack loaded down with bags of Chinese food.

"Need some help with that?" Gil moved to relieve Jack of a few bags.

"Thanks. I'm glad I ran into you alone. I wanted a chance to talk to you with no one else around."

"I'm doing everything I can to find this guy. He's going to make a mistake soon and then we'll have him."

"I sent two of my best guys over to the gym today to update security. They installed cameras and updated lighting and some other things. They'll be there daily until this is over. One will stick with Moira and one will man the cameras. They should blend in well enough in a health club."

"I've seen them. They wouldn't blend in anywhere."

Jack laughed at Gil's sour expression. "Don't tell me you're jealous? Those two see her as more of a younger sister or daughter."

"She's too old to be a daughter to them. I know because they seem to be more my age than yours."

"They are trustworthy nonetheless."

"Plus my younger brother is here for a while. He'll stick close to her during the day as well."

"Yes, I've heard about your brother, Griff isn't it?"

"Yes."

"He seems to have a friendly affection for Moira."

"He has a 'friendly affection' for every woman he meets. He's harmless enough though."

"I assume he'll be here tonight." At Gil's nod of agreement Jack continued, "I've been looking forward to meeting him."

"I'm glad that you and Moira are working through things. She's not had an easy life."

"I know." Gil saw the raw pain in Jack's eyes. "I understand that I owe you a debt of gratitude."

"You don't owe me anything. What I did was for Moira. She deserves some happiness. Moira told me everything last night. I wanted to go back in time and chase all her demons away. I imagine that you must feel the same way."

"I would give anything to be able to go back and change things. I would have forced her mother to marry me and leave with me. I can't go back though. All I can do is try to be there for her now. I love her more than anything else in this world."

"I understand. I feel the same way myself."

"Somehow I think that you feel more than a fatherly affection," Jack replied, tongue in cheek.

Gil grinned at Jack as the elevator doors opened. Jack just shook his head and followed behind with a smile of his own.

Gil and Jack entered an apartment filled with people and no Moira in sight. Gil recognized the guy from the gym who was chatting with none other than Gil's baby sister Katie. Griff was sitting on the couch deep in conversation with another guy with long dark hair tied back in a ponytail. Then there was the man at the table looking at paperwork and nursing a beer. Where was Moira and who were these three guys?

"Gil!" Katie heard the door and looked up to see her big brother. She flew across the room and threw herself into Gil's arms. "I'm so glad that you're here!"

Gil swooped his sister up into his arms. She was small and petite like their mother at only five foot one. She had dark black hair styled into a cute pixie cut and the same blue eyes as all of the Daniels' kids. She looked like a faerie from Irish folklore. "What are you doing here? I wasn't expecting you until the weekend."

"I finished. I've been offered a full-time teaching position at the high school here in Legacy. I start in the fall. Looks like I'll be moving here."

"Katie, I'm really happy for you. I know that you were worried about finding a teaching position. Congratulations!"

"Thanks, Gil."

Gil gave her another fierce hug and a kiss on the cheek. Jack had moved over to the table and was now looking at the papers that the other man had. The guy with the ponytail had moved from the couch over to the table when Jack had entered. So had Moira's Viking bodyguard. Gil narrowed his eyes at the table just as Jack looked up.

Jack said something under his breath that made them all smile. The one who had been sitting at the table stood up and began gathering the papers back together. He was Jack's height with short sandy brown hair and gray eyes. He had a piercing stare that at this moment was fixed on Gil as if he was measuring him up. Gil stared straight back at him. These guys were really working at pissing him off.

Griff, still sitting on the couch, was the first to notice when Moira entered the room. She was wearing a pair of gray sweatpants and a white t-shirt with her hair pulled back in a ponytail. She noticed Gil glaring at the table and almost laughed.

"When you said that you were going to get more comfortable," Griff began, "I have to say that I pictured something a little different from what you have on."

Moira looked at Griff's cheeky grin and laughed before looking up and seeing all eyes on her. She headed straight for Gil. The others could feel the sparks in the air between them. Reaching Gil, Moira reached up and cupped his cheek with her palm. "I missed you today."

"I missed you too," Gil said just before he bent down and kissed her lightly on the lips.

Moira shook herself out of the spell that she always found herself under when he touched her. "Have you met everyone?"

She tugged his hand and led him over to the table. "You saw Shep earlier today at the gym," she indicated the Viking. "This is Chetan," she pointed to the ponytailed guy, "and Roman." The last was directed at the man who had been at the table with the papers. Roman fit him. He looked like a gladiator of old.

Gil nodded at the table in general as Moira continued introductions, this time to Jack. "Jack, this is Gil's brother Griff and his sister Katie." Katie moved closer to Gil's other side while Griff just stayed on the couch and grinned.

"Are you guys staying for dinner?" Moira asked Roman.

"No, Cat Eyes, we have things we need to take care of." Then nodding at Jack, he headed for the door with Shep and Chetan right behind. Moira moved away from Gil's side to follow them. Roman opened the door and spoke to Moira for a moment while the other two headed on down the hall. Moira smiled at whatever he said and reached up on tiptoe to kiss his cheek. Roman smiled and walked away. Gil wandered what that had all been about.

Dinner was a festive affair filled with laughter and smiles. Griff kept everyone entertained with stories of the Daniels clan's mischievous childhood antics. By the time they were done eating Moira knew a lot about Gil and his childhood. She envied him his siblings and the closeness they shared.

"So do I get to stay here since Griff has your apartment?" Katie asked Gil.

"There's plenty of room..." Moira began just as Gil said an emphatic, "No!"

Katie laughed, Griff grinned and Jack quirked an eyebrow.

"There's more than enough room in my apartment for them both," Gil said to Moira. "It has three bedrooms plus a pull-out sofa bed."

"I was just teasing, big brother," Katie grinned before turning to Moira. "My stuff is already at Gil's. Mom and Doug won't be here until Friday. We can all stay at Gil's. He'll just have to clean his bedroom up so one of us can use it."

"No problem," Gil stated, rising from the table. "I'll head over with you now and pack up a few more things to bring over here. Since you're going to be moving to Legacy anyway, you might as well park at my place for now."

Katie beamed at her brother. "I was hoping that you would say that. I've got a car full of stuff to unload. Since you don't mind I'll just use your place until I can find something of my own."

Moira made a spur-of-the-moment decision. "If you can't find anything else, I've got a spare room here. My roommate just moved out to head back home. She didn't know when she'd be back."

"Thanks!" Katie grinned at Gil before turning to Moira. "I may just take you up on that."

"No problem. Just let me know what you decide."

"Before any more plans can be made, I'm going to get these two out of here," Gil said while pulling Moira close. "I needed to pick up some more stuff anyway. I'll be back as soon as I get Katie settled in." He turned to Jack. "You mind staying 'til I get back?"

"Not at all."

"Then we'll get going." Gil tugged Moira behind him to the door. "I'll be back as soon as I can," he whispered in her ear. "I've wanted to get you alone since I left you at the gym this morning." He nipped her ear with his teeth, shooting sparks of heat all through her body. "I hope that you're not tired, babe, 'cause I've got plans for tonight."

"Ummm. I'll be waiting," Moira purred as Gil finally kissed her goodbye. She watched him push Griff out the door before putting his arm around Katie and exiting himself. She shut the door behind him. Yep, she was one lucky lady.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil was back in under forty-five minutes. Moira and Jack were deep in conversation on the couch with a younger guy. He had dark hair and eyes and as far as Gil was concerned he was entirely too close to Moira. He shut the door behind him with a little more force than was necessary and all three turned to look at him. Jack was trying hard not to laugh as he once again saw the jealousy in Gil's eyes. The other guy just looked curious. It was Moira's look that got to him. Her whole expression seemed to soften and her beautiful green eyes showed that sultry look that he had come to recognize. He could tell by looking at her that she was remembering what he had said before he left. She rose off the couch and crossed to where he was still standing. He couldn't resist bending to give her a lazy kiss on the lips. Moira tugged him after her to the couch where Jack and the stranger were now on their feet.

"Gil, I want you to meet our neighbor down the hall, John Dugan. John, this is my," Moira paused for a moment, unsure of what to say. Gil was her lover, her protector and slowly becoming her most trusted friend but things had moved so quickly that they hadn't really talked about what was between them. "friend Detective Gil Daniels."

Gil looked furious at that introduction and his black scowl made Jack laugh out loud. Moira looked unsure and John seemed quietly amused.

"Nice to meet you, Detective." John held his hand out for Gil to shake before turning his gaze back to Moira. "Thanks so much for the information. It will certainly make my studio hunt easier. Mr. Madigan, it was nice to see you again. I will look forward to seeing you in the morning, Moira." He took her hand and brought it to his lips.

Moira was totally charmed. "Are you sure that you can't stay a little longer? I was enjoying hearing about your home."

John smiled as he walked along beside Moira to the door. "No, I really must be going. I have plenty more to get done this evening if I am to keep our date in the morning."

"Well, then I will see you in the morning." Moira smiled at John as she opened the door.

Jack grabbed his jacket and headed to the still open door. Gil looked like he was about to explode and that amused Jack to no end. "I'll just be heading out myself. Take care of her, Gil. Make sure nothing happens to her." Jack knew that Gil understood what he was saying.

"Moira will be fine, Jack."

"Of course I will. I'll see you later," Moira took a deep breath and finished before she lost her nerve, "Dad."

Jack pulled Moira into his arms for a quick hug. Gil saw the naked emotion in the older man's eyes and understood. "I'll see you tomorrow, Moira. Sleep well." Then with another look aimed at Gil he turned and walked down the hall toward the elevator.

Moira closed the door and turned only to find herself trapped against the door by Gil.

"Your friend, Moira?" She could see the hurt behind the anger in Gil's eyes. "I am a hell of a lot more than just your friend and you damn well know it!"

"Well excuse me if I didn't know how to introduce you. I've never really been in this position before. What should I have said? This is my lover, my roommate? What?"

"How about the man you love? Even better how about the man whom you're going to marry and spend the rest of your life with?"

"You know that I love you but..." Moira's words trailed off as his sank in. "Marriage? Are you? Do you mean...? Well, I..."

Gil dropped to his knees before her and took her hand in his. "I was going to wait until this weekend when the rest of my family arrived but fuck that. I love you, Moira, and I want to spend every day for the rest of our lives showing you just how much. I want to wake up to you every morning and spend every night making love to you. I want to have children with you. I want to grow old secure in the knowledge that you'll be right there with me every step of the way. Marry me, Moira?"

Moira felt the tears coursing down her cheeks but didn't care. "Yes, I'll marry you! Yes! I love you! I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you!"

Gil pulled Moira down onto the floor with him and kissed her with exquisite tenderness. "I don't have the ring yet. I asked Mom to bring it down this weekend. It was my grandmother's. I hope that you'll like it."

"I'm sure that I'll love it! But you already asked your mother to bring it?"

"I asked her that morning that I left to run errands, the morning after the first time we made love. I knew then that I wanted to spend forever with you. I just had to convince you."

"Oh Gil, I love you so much."

"It's a good thing," Gil said as he stood and scooped Moira up in his arms before heading to the bedroom. "Because you already said yes and there is no backing out now!"

"That goes for you too, Gil. Don't you even try to get away from me!"

"Never, baby, never!" Gil stated as he lowered her to the bed and began to slowly undress her. "I'll love you always!"

"How about you just concentrate on loving me right now?" Moira said in a voice gone husky with need.

Gil grinned down at her and couldn't help but think how truly lucky he was. Before he was through undressing Moira bounced off the bed and went to the stereo in the corner and flipped it on. A slow, sultry tune was playing on the CD.

Moira pushed Gil onto the bed and he lounged back against the pillows while she put on the best strip show of his life. She was bumping and grinding and he wished she had a pole in her bedroom. Within minutes she was down to her bra and panties and Gil was close to coming. He squeezed his cock hard in his hand before finally pulling his hand away.

Moira turned her back and slithered out of her bra and panties, giving him a glorious view of her tight ass. When she turned back to him she shimmied and shook in all the right places on her way to the bed. She crawled up his body, stopping for a taste of him here and there along the way. She licked the length of his cock but didn't stop long enough to suck it. When she finally got to his mouth he took her under with a searing kiss that ignited flames in her body.

He flipped until she was on her back. He slid his hand down her flat belly until he reached the dripping folds of her pussy. "God, I love how wet you get for me," Gil moaned before plunging two fingers in deeply.

Moira bucked and cried out and Gil moved his mouth down to her turgid nipples. He latched on and sucked hard while she rode his fingers. He used his whole mouth to pleasure her breasts. Stroking with his tongue, biting and nibbling with his teeth and then sucking her strongly into his mouth while she shattered around his fingers.

He brought them up to her mouth and coated her lips with her own juices before he took them both deep into his own mouth to suck them just as thoroughly as he had her nipples. Moira flicked her tongue out to wet her lips without thinking about what he



had just done and Gil's eyes flared when he saw her taste herself. Just like that he was there, licking and sucking at her lips then thrusting his tongue deep so that they could both enjoy her flavor.

"I need more of you. You taste better than anything I've ever eaten." Gil kissed his way down her stomach until he, *oh God yes*, made it to her pussy. He licked her slowly from pussy to clit, flattening his tongue against her.

Moira thrust her hips up at him. "Please! I can't take much more, Gil."

Gil chuckled against her pussy and the vibrations teased her clit, making her moan louder. "If you don't get serious about this I just might have to rethink this friend business," Moira murmured.

Gil glanced up at her with eyes so smoky blue they were almost gray. He took her clit between his teeth and flicked it back and forth with his tongue. Then he used his teeth all along the lips of her wide-open sex until he reached what he wanted. He thrust his tongue inside her pussy, fucking her as deep as he could. "I'm the only 'friend' of this kind that you will ever have." He tongued her again before moving up to suck and bite at her clit until she was begging him to stop. "Who do you belong to, Moira?"

Moira shook her head back and forth on the bed, too close to orgasm to answer, but Gil refused to show mercy. He worked her higher and higher without allowing her to go over. "Answer me, baby. Who is the only man for you? Who do you belong to?"

"You! Only you! Always you!" Moira came with a scream, her hips pumping against his tongue, giving him everything she had, everything she was. "I love you, Gil. I love you."

Gil moved up her body, hooking her knees with his elbows and spreading her wide for his first thrust. He plunged in, taking her fast and hard. He was on fire with need. His cock was so full and hard that it was a close call to even make it inside her hungry little pussy. The feel of her tight wet heat pushed everything from his mind except the need to fuck her. He slammed his cock in and out of her pussy as fast and hard as he could, eager to find his own pleasure. But it wasn't until he felt Moira's fingers on his cheek and heard her whispered "*I'll always love you*" that he finally came. He cried out his pleasure as he felt his seed filling her pussy, her tight muscles taking all he had.

"I'll always love you too, baby. I'll always love you too."

\* \* \* \* \*

The phone rang as Moira and Gil were finishing breakfast the next morning.

"It has to be for you this early in the morning," Moira told Gil. "I'll just go get dressed while you're busy."

Gil followed her a few minutes later and found her dressed and making the bed. "I have to go. I've called Griff to come stay with you and take you to work. I'll call if I can, but it looks like it may be a long day."

"Was it him again?" When Gil just looked at her without replying she knew that she was right.

Gil pulled her into his arms and squeezed her tight. "You stay with Griff today. Don't go anywhere by yourself. I'd prefer you even went to the bathroom with someone else."

"You want me to take Griff to the bathroom with me?" Moira asked, trying to lighten the mood.

Gil looked down at her with a quiet intensity that took her breath away. "If there is no one else in there then yes. I love you and I refuse to let anything happen to you. I've just found the woman who I plan to make my wife very soon. Nothing will stop me from getting you down that aisle. Nothing and no one."

"I'll be very careful, Gil, I promise." Moira kissed Gil softly on the lips. "So do I get to tell everyone that we're getting married?"

"Either you do or I will! I'll be glad when Mom gets here with your ring. The sooner everyone knows that you're mine, the better."

"The same goes for you, buddy. I want every woman to know that you're taken."

"I like the sound of that."

"I love you, Gil."

"I love you too, baby. Now promise me that you'll stick with Griff today so I won't worry so much about you."

"I promise. I have an appointment this morning with John to give him a walk-through tour of the gym, but Griff can help me."

"John? Is that the guy from last night?" At Moira's nod of confirmation, Gil glared down at her. "Well, make sure that he knows that I'm more than just your damn friend."

"But, Gil, you are my friend."

"You know damn well what I mean, Moira. So don't act cute with me."

"But, Gil, I am cute."

"Moira!"

"Okay, okay, I'm just teasing you." Moira laughed up at Gil. "I will make sure that everyone knows that I'm all yours. I promise."

Gil shook his head as he grabbed his jacket and headed toward the door. "You're going to make me old, Moira."

Moira grabbed his tie and pulled him down for a kiss that aroused him all the way to his toes. "Oh no, Gil, I'm going to keep you young. Lots of love and affection and," she nipped his ear lobe and then soothed it with her tongue, "plenty of exercise."

Gil groaned and kissed Moira again before setting her away from him. "Behave, I have to go. I'll see you tonight." He pulled her close for one more kiss before turning and heading out the door. Moira heard him mumbling about walking around with a

hard-on all day and blushed while she laughed. She shut the door and headed back to the bedroom with a wicked grin on her face. She knew exactly how she would let everyone know about her and Gil. She couldn't wait to see his face when he saw her later.

## Chapter Twelve

Gil was furious. He and Ben had just returned to the station after spending the last two hours at the scene of the latest stalker victim. She had been caught in the Catholic Cemetery. She had been to the church to light a candle and say a prayer. Father Miguel said that she was there three times a week. She lived on the other side of the cemetery and often cut through on her way home. He hadn't thought anything off last night.

The caretaker had found her body this morning when he was checking the graves for wilted or dead flowers. He removed them once a week on Thursday mornings. He had seen the woman's naked legs sticking out from between some bushes and had immediately left to call the police and notify Father Miguel.

Gil had arrived at the same time as the coroner. Ben arrived a few minutes later. It was the same as before. The woman had been raped. She had bruises and bite marks on her body. Once again her face had been beaten beyond recognition. Her purse was placed neatly beside her on the grass. Her id identified her as Lacey Meadows. She was a five-foot-four, one-hundred-thirty-pound, blue-eyed blonde. She had also been the receptionist at Moira's gym Knowledge Is Power.

Moira would be devastated. They had found another one of Moira's business cards by the body, but this time the word *SOON* had been carved onto the victim's stomach. He refused to tell her that when he told her about Lacey. She was going to take this hard. She would blame herself for what had happened to Ms. Meadows.

"Are you going to the gym next?" Ben asked as he walked over to join Gil.

"We'll have to. We need to talk to all of the staff about who knew her routine. This is a little out of the way for our guy. He usually sticks closer to the center of town."

"You think that he came after her intentionally?"

"Yes. I do. I think that he did it to punish Moira for getting away the other night."

"You don't plan to tell her that, do you?"

"Of course not. I love her, Ben. I will protect her with everything that I am."

"So... The big L word, huh? I thought so."

"Pretty obvious, huh? Well, just so you know, I've asked her to marry me and she said yes. My mom's bringing the ring with her this weekend."

"Wow! You sure move fast."

"When it's right, it's right."

"I'm happy for you, buddy."

"Thanks. Let's talk to the captain before we head over to the gym."

"Lord, I don't look forward to either meeting. With the mayor breathing down our necks to get this guy it's not going to be pretty when we get in."

"I can handle that. I just hate to see Moira's face when we tell her about Ms. Meadows."

"Yeah, that won't be good either."

Moira had just finished up with her first spin class of the day. She made sure to put her t-shirt back over her spandex sports shirt before heading back down to her office. She had been met with a lot of laughter when she arrived this morning. It could have been her sunny disposition or her brilliant wit, but most likely it was her t-shirt. She had taken one of her old college shirts that said "Property of" and crossed out what followed and wrote Gil's name in with a laundry marker. So now her shirt read "Property of Gil Daniels". Griff had laughed so hard that she had been afraid he was going to hurt himself. Even Shep and Chetan had gotten quite a kick out of it.

Moira went straight to the fridge in her office for a bottle of water before settling in behind the desk. Shep was doing a walk-through camera check while Chetan watched the monitors. The cameras were checked daily. Shep would enter a room and move around trying to make sure that there were no hiding places where the camera couldn't see. They were taking no chances with Moira's safety.

Moira heard Griff's voice just outside the door to her office.

"I'm so glad that you trust me to watch over your property, Gil. I want you to know that I've been attentive the whole time. I may have played with your property a little, but what can you expect when you have something so sweet and juicy."

Gil heard Moira's laughter coming from her office and frowned at Griff. "I don't know what the hell you're talking about." He entered Moira's office with Ben close behind and Griff following after, still talking.

"I'm a good brother, Gil. I treated the property just like it was my very own. I promise."

By that point Moira had risen from the desk and Ben had seen her shirt. Gil was still shaking his head at Griff and didn't see. He turned to find Moira showing Ben her delectable backside encased in sweat pants with the word *JUICY* in hot pink across her tight ass. By this point Ben was laughing with her. Chetan was still watching the monitors but Gil could see the tug of a grin at the corners of his mouth. They were all mad.

Then Moira turned around again and he read the front of her shirt. Gil just shook his head in disbelief. Only Moira would let people know about them in this fashion. "Cute, Moira, not exactly what I meant when I said to let people know about us, but very cute."

"I think you said that you wanted everyone to know that I belonged to you. Really, Gil, this is the best that I could do on so short a time limit." She walked over to Gil and gave him a squeeze.

"Two more days, Moira, then Mom will be here with the ring." Gil bent to kiss Moira but jerked back at the last minute as Griff's words finally made sense in his brain. He glared over at Griff. "What the hell do you mean that you played with my property? So help me, Griff, I'll kick your ass if you touched her."

Moira slugged Gil in the arm, bringing his attention back to her while Ben and Griff started laughing again. "You should know better than that, Gil. I would hope that you would trust both your brother and me. I know that you have a very possessive streak, Gil, but there's no need. I love you. I would never hurt you that way."

Gil pulled Moira close against his chest and smoothed his hand up and down her back. "I know that, baby. I love you and trust you completely. I am possessive with you though and to be honest it's all new to me. I've never felt like this before. But with you, hell, I don't even like other men looking at you. Just bear with me, baby. I'll work on it." He kissed her deeply before turning his gaze to his brother. "As for you, I trust you to remember that all this sweet and juicy," Moira gasped as Gil palmed her ass and gave each cheek a firm squeeze right in front of Ben and Griff, "property is all mine. No touching, no squeezing and most definitely no playing."

Ben shook his head at his best friend and partner's antics. He was glad that Moira made his friend so happy. Now he just needed to bring things back to the reason that they were here in the middle of the day. "If you've got that all settled now, Gil, perhaps we should get back to business."

"You're right," Gil replied with a nod to the others in the room. "I'm afraid that our guy has struck again. This time a little closer to home."

Moira looked up at him with tears already streaming down her face. "It's Lacey, isn't it?" Gil's eyes gave her an answer before he nodded his head. "I knew something was wrong when she didn't show up this morning and didn't call. I just thought that she was having one of her depressions again. She goes to the church every week to continue her prayers for her missing daughter. This time of year is always hard. Chloe would have, no will, turn seventeen in just a few weeks."

"I would have never believed that Lacey could have a daughter that old. What happened?" Gil asked.

"Lacey was only sixteen when Chloe was born. She was raped and when her father found out she was pregnant, he forced her rapist to marry her. Lacey ran when Chloe turned four. I'm not sure what she went through with her ex, but I know that she had deep scars. She was friendly with everyone but I don't think she was really close to anyone."

"How did you get to know so much about her?" Griff questioned.

"Cass and I took her out drinking after work one night. She seemed really depressed and we were both worried about her. We drank a lot more than we intended to and we ended up taking a taxi to Lacey's and opening another bottle of wine. She had a picture of her daughter on the entry table. Chloe would have been about six in that picture. It was the last picture she had taken of Chloe. Lacey told us about being

forced to marry a man who had raped her and about having Chloe. She told us about running away with Chloe one night after her husband came home drunk and threatened to beat Chloe when the little girl tried to stop him from hitting Lacey. They ran for two years before he caught up with them. She said that she must have stayed in one place too long. She and Chloe came home and he was there waiting for them. He locked Chloe in a closet and I can only guess what he did to Lacey. She never did say. When she came to she was in the hospital and had been there for two weeks. She had two broken arms, her left leg had been broken in three places and she had broken ribs that had punctured both of her lungs. Both of her cheekbones had also been broken and one of her eye sockets was shattered. It was a miracle that she was even alive. She had to have complete reconstructive surgery and it was two years before she recovered physically."

"Damn! What happened to the little girl?" Chetan asked with a pinched look around his mouth.

"Nobody even realized that she was missing. Lacey had kept to herself so much that no one knew anything about her. No one knew to look for Chloe until Lacey woke up two weeks later. By then it was too late. Chloe was gone, taken by her father. It almost killed Lacey all over again to realize that he had her daughter. She never gave up hope though that Chloe would look her up one day. She went back to her married name of Meadows and settled in Legacy. She was one of the first patrons of the gym when I opened. She took every self-defense class we gave and learned kickboxing as well. She helped me with a computer problem one day and I offered her a job. I'm going to miss her. I need to call the staff together. We'll close down for the rest of this week. I'll need to take care of any arrangements for her."

Chetan moved over to her and gave her a gentle hug. "I'll see that Jack knows and he'll take care of everything for you. Why don't you let your man take you home and Shep and I will wrap things up here."

"Thanks, Chetan. I'll just go say a few words to Kip and Kat." Moira turned to look at Gil. "I know that you and Ben will have to get back to work. What do you say, Griff? Do you feel like babysitting me?"

Griff grinned his rakish grin at her, "I'd be happy to keep my eyes on you, babe. My eyes, my hands, my..."

Gil cut him off with a shove to the arm. "Yeah, yeah, lover boy, just watch over her, okay?" He took Moira back into his embrace and held her tight against the solid wall of his chest. "I'll be home to you as soon as I can. Call my cell if you need anything."

"I'll be okay. Just catch this bastard, Gil."

"I'll get him, baby. I'll get him."

\* \* \* \* \*

Moira stood under the hot spray of the shower and felt the tension start to melt from her body. She had spent the afternoon watching old movies and playing solitaire

with Griff and Katie. They had talked for hours about the Daniels family. She had laughed at all the childish antics they had shared. She was looking forward to meeting their brother Doug and their mother Catherine. She was also nervous as hell. She knew that everyone around her knew that she was sleeping with Gil and that didn't bother her because she knew that Gil loved her. Having his mother know was a totally different story though.

She leaned forward, allowing the water to cascade over her head and face. She shook her head in disbelief at all the changes in her life. She gasped when she heard the curtain pulled back. Trying desperately to blink the water from her eyes, Moira jerked back against the shower wall and pulled her fist back. Her eyes focused and she realized just in time that it was Gil standing before her in all his naked glory.

Gil leaned forward and used his hard body to pin her to the wall. "Not exactly the reception that I was expecting but you're still wet and naked so I'll take it." He leaned down to nuzzle against her neck and shoulder.

She could feel the hard length of his erection against her stomach as he rubbed his body against her. She started to relax against him and then remembered how he had scared her. She shoved him hard away from her, catching him by surprise. Gil was caught full in the face with the spray of the water, allowing Moira to jerk the curtain and step out.

"You scared me, you son of a bitch. Don't sneak up on me like that."

"I am sorry you were caught unaware, Moira, but that's not my fault. Now get your ass back in here!"

Moira couldn't believe her ears. He was ordering her back in the shower with him. No doubt he expected her to do something about his huge hard-on. As if! She snorted and jerked her robe off the stool behind her. "Fuck off, asshole."

"Moira, I'm warning you. Get your tight little ass back in this shower or you won't like my actions."

Moira took a deep breath and opened the curtain just enough to put her head and one hand inside the shower stall. "I'm sorry, baby. Let me help you with that big bad hard-on." She leaned forward and Gil closed his eyes, anticipating the feel of her hot wet mouth closing over his cock. Instead he got hit with a spray of ice water as Moira used her hand to turn off the hot water. "There, that should cool you off, asshole."

She took off out of the bathroom, pulling her robe on as she went. She slammed out of the door with her robe hanging open. She took a deep breath as she reached for the belt to pull her robe closed and tie it shut. She heard a startled gasp and looked up. Standing in her living room were Griff, Katie and people she could only assume to be Doug and Catherine. By the looks on their faces she knew that they had all heard part of her conversation with Gil in the bathroom. She stood for a moment like a deer caught in the headlights. She heard the door open behind her and Gil's muttered "Fuck" as he took in the scene before him.



He grabbed her robe and pulled it together. "Jesus, do you have to meet everyone in my family naked?"

Griff broke the stunned silence with his usual wit. "Ahhh shucks, baby, you gotta quit tormenting my brother by throwing yourself at me. We're just not meant to be."

Gil snorted and Moira turned and hit him in the shoulder, almost causing him to drop the towel held loosely around his waist.

"This is your fault, asshole," she hissed at him as quietly as she could. "I'll never forgive you for making me meet your mother like this. My God! What must she think of me?" Her eyes were filled with tears. He watched her blink them away as she turned from him to once again face their audience. "If you'll all excuse me, I'll just go make myself a little more presentable."

Griff grinned down at her. "I can't imagine you looking any lovelier than you did a few minutes ago all wet and..."

Gil glared and told him to shut the hell up while at the same time Doug slapped him upside the back of his head and told him to watch his mouth. Griff just grinned at her before turning to his mother with a woebegone look on his face. "Mom, Doug just hit me. I think he left a lump on my head." He shook his head gently for effect. "I think that I might need to lie down for a minute."

Doug rolled his eyes, Catherine sighed and Katie bit back a laugh. Moira didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Just then Gil jerked her to his side. "Moira and I will be a little while getting ready. Griff, why don't you and Katie take Mom and Doug and pick up some dinner."

Moira stiffened at his side and tried to pull away. She bared her teeth at him as he held her firmly to his side. "I'll only be a minute and then I can take them."

Catherine, sensing the tension between her son and his lover, decided to take over from there. "I'm starved myself. Doug, Griff, Katie, let's go." One look at their mother had them all heading toward the door of the apartment. She gave Gil a sharp look. "We'll be back in one hour. I expect to be greeted properly and introduced properly as well. Is that clear, Gil Daniels?"

She could feel Gil tense at the tone used by his mother. "Yes, ma'am."

"One hour, Gil," she stated again as she followed her other three children out the door, closing it sharply behind her.

Gil let out a sigh behind her as he moved to lock the door. She stood watching him until he turned back toward her. The towel was now wadded in his hands. His cock was still hard. It curved up toward his bellybutton, bobbing as he walked toward where she now stood transfixed. When he reached her he grabbed her robe and ripped it from her body. Moira gasped at the feel of the silk being torn from her. "You want to be naked, baby, then by all means be naked."

Moira glanced up at Gil in shock. He was really angry with her. She was the one who should be angry not him.

Gil glared down at her. "All I wanted was to come home and make love to my woman. Not a lot to ask for in my opinion. But no, I almost get hit and then doused with cold water. As if that isn't enough you flash that hot little body in front of a room full of my family. Now everyone in my immediate family has seen you naked. Do you have any idea how that makes me feel?"

"You. You. You. It's all about how you feel, how it makes you look! Well fuck you, Gil! What about how I feel? You scared me in the shower and then had the gall to yell at me for being scared. In trying to get away from you and your bad temper, I end up naked in front of your family. Oh yes, I really enjoyed meeting Griff in the buff so I decided to meet the rest of your family that way as well. Why at least this way when I kick your ass to the curb maybe one of your brothers will have liked what they saw enough to take me in."

"Neither of my brothers will ever touch you, Moira. You're mine. You belong to me. You'd best start remembering that."

"I don't belong to anyone, Gil. I'm not a possession of yours."

Gil pulled her to him and hugged her close. "No you are not a possession. What you are is the woman who I love, the woman who I can't imagine my life without." He let out a harsh sigh and squeezed her tighter before releasing her so that he could look into her big green eyes. "I know that you are scared baby. The truth is that so am I. Every time I dealt with Lacey's murder it was like a brutal reminder that it could have been you. I need you like I have never needed anyone in my life, Moira. I've seen what this animal does to these women and I couldn't handle it if he got to you. I just couldn't handle it."

"Oh, Gil, I never even thought about this scaring you," Moira cradled his face devastated by the look in his eyes.

"Some times I'm rougher than I mean to be. I spend most of my day around violence and sometimes it's hard to shut that out and remember that I'm with the woman I love. When I do that just tell me baby. I never want to make you afraid of me or make you feel like I see you as a possession."

"I'll tell you when it bothers me," Moira assured him before giving him a sinful grin. "But sometimes I really like it when you get a little possessive. As long as it's just you and me. As long as you never hurt me..."

"Jesus! I would never hurt you like that," Gil exclaimed. "Never, baby! Never!"

Moira eased around him and bent over the back of the couch giving him a gorgeous view of just how much she did want him. "Then why don't you get over here and show me what you've got. Show me how much you need me, Gil."

Gil stepped up between her thighs and nestled his cock between the cheeks of her ass. "I love you baby. When I say that you're mine it's mostly to remind myself just how lucky I am."

"I'm the lucky one," Moira replied. She reached back with one hand and took a firm grip of his cock, stroking up and down his shaft. Gil groaned at the pleasure that shot straight to his balls.

Gil took his cock out of her grasp and put it to the glistening entrance of her pussy. Grabbing her hips in his hands, he plunged hard and deep inside until he was buried balls-deep in her tight heat. "Oh God, baby. I love the feel of your hot little pussy so tight around my cock."

Moira threw her head back at the feel of his cock tunneling in and out. She pushed her hips back at him, matching his rhythm thrust for thrust. "Harder, Gil, faster. Fuck me harder and faster!"

She couldn't hold back her cries of pleasure as he rode her hard and fast. Her orgasm burst through her just as she felt him spurt hot jets of semen deep in her pussy. Stars burst before her eyes and she thought that she was going to pass out from the ecstasy coursing through her body. She felt Gil fall against her back as he fought to gain his own breath.

"Christ, baby, you're going to kill me."

Moira sighed as she felt Gil straighten behind her and then pull her up into his arms. "Umm, but what a way to go," she purred into his chest as he headed back to the shower.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil's family arrived back at the apartment exactly an hour later. She was just leaving her bedroom when Gil opened the apartment door. He was relaxed and laughing with his family now. She watched as he pulled his mother into a fierce hug and kissed her on the cheek. Moira shook her head at his abrupt mood change. He should be relaxed. After their episode bent over the back of the couch, they had made love in the shower and then again when they had moved into the bedroom. Gil was thoroughly relaxed while she was sore. Although he had been soft and gentle in the shower, he had turned rough again in the bedroom. He had pulled both of her ankles together and shoved them over the same shoulder. He had then fucked her harder and deeper than he ever had before. She had screamed so loud with the pleasure-pain combination that she was now hoarse as well as sore. That man certainly rocked her world. Taking a deep breath, she stepped into the living room and prepared as best she could to face his mother.

Griff lifted Moira into a bear hug when she entered the room. "Well, if it isn't my favorite girl. You didn't have to get dressed on my account. I much preferred what you had on earlier."

Moira shook her head and laughed even as she felt her face and neck flush a bright red.

"Put her down, Griff, so that she can meet Mom and Doug," Gil called from where he still held his mother close to his side.

Moira took a deep breath as Griff placed her back on her feet. She was nervous and was pretty sure that everyone knew it. She moved toward Gil, doing her best to calm her jumping nerves. She stopped next to him and almost sighed in relief when she felt his arm go around her shoulders, pulling her close to him. "Mom, I want you to meet Moira Madigan. Moira, my mother Catherine Daniels."

Moira looked down at the woman standing beside Gil. She was only about five foot one like her daughter Katie. She was petite in build, still slim and beautiful. She had dark brown hair that framed her face in short layers, emphasizing the shape of her brown eyes. Moira was amazed that this woman could be the mother of such huge sons.

Catherine Daniels' eyes twinkled in amusement as she stepped forward to pull Moira into a soft hug of welcome. "It's very nice to meet you, Moira. I always knew that it would take a hell of a woman to bring one of my sons to the altar. From what I saw earlier you are everything that he deserves, a beautiful body, a sharp wit and a won't-take-any-shit attitude. Welcome to the family, Moira."

"Mom!" All of her kids gasped in shock at her use of the word "shit".

"Oh don't 'Mom' me. You're all adults now. Now let's set dinner on the table and get some drinks so Gil and Moira can fill me in on this stalker."

Gil glared at Griff over his mother's head but before Griff could defend himself Catherine smacked Gil on the shoulder, capturing his attention again. "No, Griff didn't tell me, Katie did. However, I should have heard it from your own mouth, Gil. And I would quit snickering over there, Griff. You should have told me instead of leaving it to your baby sister to inform me of what's been happening here."

Moira couldn't help but laugh at the expressions on the faces of the Danielses. It was then that Doug stepped forward and pulled her into a hug. He was the same height as Gil with similar black hair that was collar length and lush and thick. He had the same Daniels blue eyes as the rest of the siblings. His muscles were thicker, his shoulders broader and his eyes had a hardness to them that even Gil couldn't match. "Welcome to the family, Moira," Doug said in a rough, gravelly voice that sent shivers down her spine. She couldn't imagine how hard and rough he would be in the bedroom. Doug pulled back and a grin tugged at his lips as if he could read her thoughts. He turned to join the others and Moira felt her face go up in flames again.

Griff stepped to her and put his arm around her shoulders, escorting her to the dining room table where Katie was already emptying the bags of burgers and fries onto the table. "I wouldn't let big brother see that expression on your face. Why I'm almost jealous myself." Moira flushed brighter as she swatted at Griff but when she glanced up Gil was looking at her with a strange gleam in his eyes.

It was late before Moira found herself alone with Gil again. She was just pulling her nightshirt on when he entered the bedroom behind her. He watched the shirt settle over her slim hips before pulling her back against his broad chest and nuzzling against her ear.

"What did you think of the rest of the family?"

"Your mother is an incredible woman. It's hard to believe that she is old enough to be your mother."

"I'm not that old, Moira."

That's not what I meant and you know it. She just looks so good. I can't believe that she gave birth to such huge sons either. Your mom is such a petite woman."

"We weren't quite this big at birth. I think Griff was her largest baby at nine pounds eight ounces."

"Still, it's just hard to imagine, that's all."

"What about Doug? What did you think of him?"

Moira couldn't help the shudder that went through her body at the thought of his brother. Gil felt it and before she realized his intentions, she found herself sprawled across the bed on her back with Gil's weight pinning her down where he lay intimately between her thighs. "Tell me what you're thinking! I saw the look in your eyes when he pulled you close and hugged you. What went through your mind at that moment?"

"That I was so glad that I was with you. Your brother seems hard and rough and there seems to be such anger in his eyes. Even when he smiles it doesn't quite reach his eyes. I don't think that he could ever be satisfied."

"You have no reason to fear him, baby. He would never touch you because you belong to me." He possessed her mouth then with such a demanding hunger that it took her breath away. "You're right though about there being a darkness to him. He hasn't been the same since our father died. His sexual appetites are pretty dark too. You'll meet his best friend one day, Damon. Damon is as light as Doug is dark. They're about the same height and build though as Damon works with Doug. In fact he bought into the construction business last year. Anyway Damon and Doug share a lot of things. They even live together in a house that they designed and built."

"Are you saying that Doug is gay?" Moira asked in shock.

Gil laughed so hard that he collapsed onto her chest. "Good God no! I meant that they share their women, Moira." At Moira's continued look of bafflement he added, "At the same time. They both enjoy having sex with a woman together. They've developed quite a reputation in our home town."

"Two men of your brother's size at the same time. Holy shit!" Moira replied. There was a second when she must have looked a little intrigued by the idea because Gil suddenly tensed above her.

"Does that thought excite you, Moira? Would you like to have two men at the same time?"

Moira was feeling decidedly naughty. "Oh yes, baby, I would love to have two men at the same time." Gil's mouth dropped open in shock and Moira used his disbelief to flip until she straddled him before leaning down to whisper in his ear. "But only if I

could get two of you, Gil. I never want to be with anyone but you. Only you, Gil, for the rest of my life."

With that Moira began following the pattern of hair down his muscular chest and flat abdomen to the top of his jeans. She made quick work of the button-fly jeans and nuzzled her face against where his rock-hard cock was still inside his underwear. She spent the next few seconds licking and sucking at his cock through the cloth barrier. Gil let out a loud groan and reached down to shove his clothes out of the way of her seeking mouth.

"Don't tease me, Moira, baby. Just wrap your lips around it and suck my cock."

Moira gave one more swipe with her tongue from base to tip before widening her lips enough to take the bulging head deep into her mouth. He was so thick that she could feel her mouth stretching to take him. She sucked at the head and was rewarded with a pearl of his sweet fluid on her tongue. She moaned at the taste of him and started eagerly sucking more of him into her mouth. She took him deep into the back of her throat and still held a few inches of his engorged cock in her hand. She worked him in and out of her mouth, sucking at the head while her hand worked his shaft.

Gil groaned and fisted his hands in her hair. "Look up at me, baby. I want to see your eyes while I fuck your beautiful mouth."

Moira looked up and felt his lust wash over her at the heated look in his eyes. She sucked his cock deep again and felt powerful when he gasped and pumped his hips. He couldn't seem to control himself and she reveled in this new power. She sucked hard on his cock and started a rhythm that was deep and slow. His fingers tightened in her hair as he held her where he wanted her and quickened her pace by fucking in and out of her mouth. She continued sucking hard on the head while forking her tongue in the deep vee on the underside.

"I'm going to come, baby. I'm going to fill that sexy mouth with my hot fluid. Drink it all up, baby! Drink it all up and don't spill a drop! Oh yes, baby, oh God yes!"

She felt the hot jets of his semen in her mouth and sucked harder at the head. He filled her mouth and still she wanted more. She couldn't get enough of the taste of him. She drank it all down and continued licking his cock, making sure that she hadn't missed a delicious drop.

Gil pulled her up and cuddled her against his chest. "Woman, I think that you just may kill me." Moira laughed as she cuddled closer against him. She'd meant what she had stated earlier. No matter what, she couldn't see ever finding another man who could make her feel as loved and satisfied as Gil.

## Chapter Thirteen

When Moira awoke the next morning she was alone. She vaguely remembered Gil leaving with a gentle reminder to her to sleep in and relax today. She had closed the gym until Monday in respect for Lacey.

At the thought of Lacey she felt tears well in her eyes. It was her fault that Lacey was dead. She knew that in her heart. She was convinced that the killer wouldn't have harmed Lacey if he hadn't been watching her. How many more would die because he couldn't get to her? How could she stop him?

Moira rose from the bed with her mind filled with questions. She grabbed one of her sports bras and a pair of bicycle shorts. Sitting down to put on her socks and shoes, Moira let her mind explore all of the possibilities. There had to be a way for them to plan some sort of trap using her for bait. She grabbed a t-shirt and a scrunchie off the dresser as she headed out of the bedroom to the kitchen. In the process of pulling her shirt over her head Moira stopped and stared at the four people who sat at her table. Griff, Doug, Katie and Mrs. Daniels sat at her dining room table sipping coffee and talking. It appeared that Gil had sent his family to watch over her *en masse*.

Catherine noticed Moira and rose to cross to her and give her a quick motherly hug. Gil had told her all about what Moira had been through in her short life. This girl was a survivor and a fighter as well. She would be great for Gil. She would challenge him at every turn but love him with everything that she was. Catherine could ask for no more for her first born.

"I thought that you had closed the gym for the day, Moira," Katie called from her seat at the table. "You look like you're ready for a workout."

"I'm going for a run. Just because the gym's closed doesn't mean that I'm going to sit around here all day. No offense."

"None taken," Katie smiled at the same time that Doug stated, "You're not going anywhere right now, Moira."

"Excuse me!?" Moira sputtered at Doug's no-nonsense tone.

"What he means, dear, is that Gil asked us to spend the day getting to know you," Catherine cut in with a reprimanding look at Doug.

"You mean that he told you to babysit me. Well, that's all well and good, but I am going for a run this morning." She cut a speaking glare at Doug. "So deal with it any way that you want to."

It was only then that they heard Griff speaking into his cell phone. "Hey, Gil! How's it going this morning? We're fine. Moira seems to need to speak with you this morning. She doesn't seem to be in too good a mood, bro."

"Oh give me the damn phone, Griff." Moira stomped over to him and jerked it out of his hand. "You need to call off your brother the watchdog, Gil. He's pissing me off this morning."

Gil sighed, "What's the matter, baby?"

"I'm going for a run and your brother thinks that he can tell me that I'm not leaving without your permission."

"You're not going out of that apartment today, Moira. Doug is right."

"I don't think that I heard you right, Gil. You see, I don't recall that I need your permission to leave my apartment."

"You're not going anywhere until this guy is caught. Just stay home until I get there later. I'll take you for a run then."

"I will not let this asshole make me stay holed up in my apartment. You listen to me and you listen well, Gil. I'm going for a run this morning. I need the outlet. Now if you feel the need to be with me, you can join me now."

"I'm working right now."

"Then you can either tell one of your brothers to go with me or you can tell them to back the fuck off. I'm walking out that door in five minutes. I'm going for a run to clear my head and work through some things and then I will be back. I will not be a prisoner in my own home. Not for him, not for you, not for anyone." With that Moira flipped Gil's cell phone closed and tossed it back to him before heading around the table toward the kitchen.

Doug stood up from the table and blocked her way. "You can say whatever you want to, Moira, but you're not leaving this apartment without Gil's okay."

Moira shoved at his chest without any success in moving him out of her way. "Just back off, Doug. I'm walking through that door to get a drink of juice. I'll give Gil five minutes and then I'm gone. Now get out of my way."

Doug moved over to allow her by as he felt the vibration of his own phone in his pocket. He wasn't surprised to hear Gil's voice on the line.

"Are either you or Griff suited up for a run?"

Doug took in both his and Griff's apparel of choice for the day, jeans and t-shirts. "No."

"Then go into the bedroom and get a pair of my shorts and a shirt and go for a run with her please. I don't know what bee is in her bonnet this morning but try not to piss her off anymore. I'm up to my eyebrows in this case and I can't shake free until later tonight."

"Sure thing, Gil."

"And Doug? Remember that Moira is mine."

Doug's only response was a husky chuckle as he clicked off and headed toward the bedroom to change into Gil's clothes. "Don't let her leave until I'm ready." He called to Griff over his shoulder. His brother was lucky that he had found Moira first. She



certainly whetted his appetite. Damn. It had been too long since he and Damon had found a woman that really did it for them. He shook his head in disgust at his lack of a sex life as he headed to his brother's bedroom to change.

Moira's feet pounded the road as she ran the ten-mile route that she usually only ran once in a blue moon. She needed it this morning. She needed to lose herself in her thoughts while her body went through the routine of a long run. She was so absorbed in her own thoughts that she paid little attention to Gil's brother Doug as he ran next to her. She cared little whether he could keep up with her ten-mile endurance run or not.

Her thoughts were chaotic at first. Everything tumbled in her mind. She couldn't seem to focus on any one thing. There was Gil and their relationship, Lacey's murder, the murders of all the women, the attack at her club, meeting Gil's family in the nude no less and her newfound closeness with her father. Her life had changed so much in so short a time. She wanted to call Cass who had always been like a sister to her but was leery of disturbing her with all that was going on with Cass' mother. She missed her best friend and longed for the time when Cass would return. Then she suffered the guilt of knowing that Cass would only return when her mother had passed on. Life was indeed a roller coaster filled with loops and twists and then long straight lines. You could take twists and turns that you felt for sure you would never survive and then when you were just starting to enjoy the ride, you jerked to a stop and had to decide whether to ride again or look for the next amazing adventure.

Thinking of what Cass was facing helped her to focus more. She and Gil would never be free to marry and really start their life together until the killer was caught and stopped. She knew that the killer wanted her. She had overheard Gil and Ben talking one night and knew that the killer left her stolen business cards at the scene with each victim with the word *SOON* written on the back. She knew that he wouldn't give up until he had her and more women would be killed until he could get to her.

She couldn't live with that. There had to be some way to set up a trap for him using her as the bait. Gil would never go for it but she knew that it was the only way to stop this guy. As she continued to run she sifted through all the possibilities of how to lay the trap. She would have to fine-tune it all on her own. There was no one who would willingly help her without telling Gil and once he knew she would be joined at the hip with either him or one of his brothers, effectively preventing her from doing anything.

As the plan started taking shape in her mind, she finally began to release the tension in her body. Set on what she had to do, Moira grinned over at Doug and laughed up into his face.

"I'll race you the last mile!"

Doug was so stunned by her gorgeous smile and the sound of her laughter that he didn't focus on what she said until she sprinted away from him. With a grin of his own he took off after her, thinking once again how lucky his brother was.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil had spent the day chasing a phantom. They had so much on their perp and yet most of it was useless until they had a suspect. Teeth prints only worked when they were able to find a match for them. It was the same with every tiny bit of evidence collected at the crime scenes. He needed a suspect and he needed one yesterday. He couldn't relax until he was sure that the threat to Moira was gone.

Just the thought of Moira made him smile. He couldn't wait to get home to her, to feel her in his arms. She had become everything to him in so short a time. She was a part of him now that he would die without.

"You sure that you don't mind me tagging along for dinner with the family tonight?" Ben interrupted Gil's thoughts.

"No problem. You know that my mom would have my head if she didn't get to see you while she was in town. You're like another son to her."

"Got to say that I do love your mom. She's my only chance for a home-cooked meal."

Gil nodded and felt sympathy for his partner. Ben came from money, but his family was anything but loving. They had pretty much written Ben off when he had joined the police department instead of following the plan that they had for him. He would never begrudge his friend time with his own family.

Gil opened the door to the apartment and he and Ben were greeted with laughter, music and dancing. Doug was twirling their mother around the floor while Griff was spinning Moira. Katie stood to the side, laughing at the antics on the makeshift dance floor.

Katie hurried over when she noticed them. Seeing the way her brother only had eyes for Moira, she quickly grabbed Ben's hand and pulled him over to dance. "Come on, Ben, give me a quick twirl before the song ends."

Ben smiled down at Katie as he let her lead him into the dance. "Be glad to, squirt."

Katie wrinkled her nose in disgust at the name her brothers and then Ben and Damon had called her since she was a kid. "I'm not a kid anymore, Ben. I start teaching full time in the fall. I'm an adult now. If you see me around town with friends, or God willing a boyfriend, please refrain from calling me by that disgusting nickname. Now hush and spin me around."

Ben danced Katie around the room. He was stunned to realize that little Katie had grown up while he wasn't looking. She was indeed a beautiful woman and he couldn't quite understand how the thought of seeing her out with another man was so unsettling to him.

Gil watched as Griff continued to twirl a laughing Moira around the room. She was beautiful. Her beauty lit up the entire room. He was drawn to her like a moth to the flame. When Griff went to spin her out this time Gil caught her around the waist and swung her up against his own body. He felt all the tension leave his body when she

smiled up at him and relaxed completely against him. The feel of her full breasts against his chest, her hips snug below his was enough to set his blood on fire. He knew that she had to feel the rigid length of his cock against her flat stomach. Her green cat's eyes darkened with awakening hunger as she pulled his head down for a scorching kiss. Even knowing that they were surrounded by his family he couldn't stop himself from scooping her up into his arms and heading toward the bedroom. He didn't see the grins on Griff's and Ben's faces, the knowing look in his brother Doug's eyes, the shock on Katie's face or the nod of understanding from his mother. He saw only the woman in his arms, felt only her desire and his own.

He closed the bedroom door behind him with his foot as he continued across the room to the bed. Standing her beside it, he took her mouth again with soft passion as he began to remove her clothes. When she was naked he pushed her to her back on the bed and began loving her body with his mouth and hands. She seemed to understand his need for her to be submissive to him. He needed to know that for this one moment she was his to do whatever he desired. He kissed his way down her neck and over her shoulders. He continued down her arm, stopping to nibble at her elbow and then taking the time to lave each of her fingers with his devilish tongue. He continued to her other arm and then skimmed over her breasts to kiss across her abdomen, only stopping to torment her bellybutton before skimming across her hips and down her legs to her knees and toes, treating them to the same lavish treatment as her elbows and fingers.

As he started back up her body she couldn't hold back the moans and thrashing of her limbs. She was on fire everywhere. Her nipples were hardened pebbles just begging to be sucked and pinched. Her pussy was wet and eager for any part of him, tongue, finger or that gloriously hard cock. She couldn't prevent herself from begging him. "Please...Gil... Please...I ache..."

He spread her legs with his broad shoulders and gave her delicious pussy a slow swipe with his tongue. She groaned above him and grabbed his hair with both fists. With a husky chuckle Gil asked her, "Is this what you want, baby? Is this what you need?" He kept his licks slow and torturous, not giving in to the need to plunge and devour.

"Oh God, yes. Please, Gil! More! Please!"

Gil grinned up at her lust-glazed eyes. He loosened her grip on his hair and moved her hands to her own breasts. "Show me how much you want me. Play with your nipples, baby. Show me how badly you need relief."

Moirra took her nipples between her thumbs and fingers and pinched and tugged at them. She moaned in ecstasy as the fire moved from her nipples down her abdomen to her weeping pussy. She felt Gil's hot breath against her core and pushed closer to his face. At the feel of his tongue on her engorged clit she broke into orgasm.

Gil's control broke with her orgasm. Grabbing her hips with his hands, he held her down on the bed while he fucked her pussy with his tongue. He fed on her sweet juice, taking her through the first orgasm and leading her quickly toward another. He moved his mouth to her engorged clit and sucked ruthlessly at it while he plunged two fingers

deep into her weeping cunt. Moira moaned and thrashed under him as he worked her into orgasm after orgasm. He used his juice-soaked fingers to work the small pink pucker of her sweet back door. He heard her gasp as he worked the first finger into her tight ass and then began fucking her slowly with it before adding another finger. He continued to suck her clit and tongue her pussy while he readied her ass for his cock. He had rarely taken a woman in the ass but he had an overwhelming need to dominate Moira in this way, to prove that she was his in every way. When he felt another orgasm take her he moved her feet to his shoulders and used his hands to spread the cheeks of her ass wide enough to accommodate the girth of his cock. He pushed the head of his cock against her tight bud until he felt the give of the tight ring of muscles there. He could feel Moira fighting to relax, heard her sweet whimpers as she struggled to give him what he needed.

Finally his cock was where he wanted it. He began gentle shallow thrusts while he worked his cock deeper into her tight ass. He used his hand to pinch at her clit increasing the pleasure-pain she was experiencing. At last he had his entire length in her hot tight little ass. He took a deep breath at the sensations encompassing his cock. She felt so good around him. He pulled back until only the head remained before thrusting back into her. Her groan joined his and he almost lost it. He slid his finger from her clit and reached up to pull and tug at her nipples. She groaned again as he fucked slowly in and out of her ass.

“Harder, Gil. Fuck my ass hard. Fuck it like you do my pussy.”

Her words broke his control and he began to slam his cock into that hot little hole, fucking her hard and deep and fast. He felt the pulse in his balls and knew that he was about to explode. As much as he wanted to bring her with him he couldn't hold back. He came with a loud yell just as she screamed out her own release.

He slowly pulled from her ass and collapsed beside her on the bed. She snuggled close and murmured her love for him before she fell asleep beside him. He smiled and kissed the top of her head. He had fucked his sweet love into unconsciousness. Life couldn't be better than this.

Moira groaned at the feel of someone shaking her awake. She was tired and wanted to burrow deeper into the covers. She yelped and sat up quickly at the stinging smack to her ass. She groaned again as her body protested the sudden movement. She was sore from head to toe.

“Time to rise and shine, sleepyhead,” Gil grinned down at her. “You’ve slept the entire evening away. I thought that you might want to go check things out at the club this morning. Check the mail and answering machine before Lacey’s funeral this afternoon.”

“Ummm. Did I really sleep through dinner?”

“You really did. You missed one hell of an interesting dinner. It seems that we can be rather loud in our passion.”

"Oh shit! You mean everyone heard us last night?"

"Well, you were rather loud with your demands that I fuck your ass as I recall."

Moira flushed a delightful shade of red and Gil laughed out loud at her telling signs of embarrassment.

"Your mother must think that I'm a slut. I mean your whole family has seen me naked and now they've heard me during sex. I'll never be able to face your family again." She groaned and tried to cover her face with the pillow.

Gil tugged it from her hands and laughed again. "Don't worry about it. It will all pass in a few days. Mom got everyone out of the house as quickly as she could. Besides, I think that I took most of the ribbing from my brothers and Ben at dinner last night."

"Ben was here too?!"

Gil laughed and hugged her close at the realization that she had been so absorbed in him last night that she hadn't even noticed Ben's arrival with him. She had been so lost in him and the moment that she had even forgotten that they had left people in the other room. "You delight me in ways that no one else ever has. You amaze me with all that you are willing to give to me, to share with me. With every comment that the guys snuck in last night, which wasn't that many with my mother and sister in the room, all I could remember was the look in your eyes, the lust, the passion, the love. It didn't matter what anyone else had to say. I knew that they were just jealous because you are mine. I love you, Moira. I want to spend the rest of my life hearing your cries of pleasure while we make love."

Moira curled into him and tugged his chin down for a kiss. "I love you too, Gil. I love you so much."

Gil noticed the tears in her eyes and tugged her onto his lap. Grabbing her chin, he forced her to look him in the eye. "What's wrong, baby? Why the tears? Was last night too much for you? Did I hurt you?"

"Last night was amazing. I didn't know that what we did could be so pleasurable." She blushed at his grin. "It felt so good. I'm a little sore but I'll be fine by tonight. I can't wait to make love to you again, any way that you want us to. I just wish that we could go away. No more death, no more serial killer, no more family intruding on our time together. Just you and me and a big bed for maybe a week or two."

"Soon, baby, soon we will do just that. We'll take a honeymoon wherever you want to go. Ben has a private beach house in Florida. We could go there for a few weeks when this is all over. But we have to finish this first. I have to stop this guy before we can plan anything else."

"I know, Gil. I don't want another woman hurt by this guy. If only we could trap him some way."

Gil gripped her shoulders hard and gave her a hard shake. "Don't even think about doing anything stupid. I will not let you put yourself in danger to catch this guy. Do you hear me, Moira? You will stay safe. I'll lock you up in a cell if I have to. I'll cuff you to one of my brothers. I'll do whatever it takes to keep you safe. I will not lose you."

"I won't do anything stupid, Gil, I promise." She cradled his face in her hands and pressed a tender kiss to his lips. "I love you too much for that."

He pulled her close to his chest and hugged her hard, trying to pull her flesh into his. She didn't struggle or fight. She seemed to melt into him as she smoothed her hands up and down his back.

Gil gave her another kiss that lingered before setting her away from him. "Get dressed, baby, then we'll head out for a little bit."

"Okay, Gil." She watched him leave the room before burying her head in her hands with a groan. She had a plan to use herself as bait. She had only promised Gil that she wouldn't do anything stupid, but would he remember that after it was all said and done?

## Chapter Fourteen

She was just looking through the mail when they heard the commotion at the front door. Leaving the office, Moira and Gil headed to the front door. Kip was standing at the door trying to get his key in the lock while a gentleman stood beside him holding his arm. The sleeve of his shirt was torn and bloodied. Moira quickly opened the door for Kip.

"Moira! I'm so glad that you're here. You remember Eric Morris. He joined the gym recently. A stray dog jumped him just down the street," Kip explained as he hurried through the door and headed to the reception area where they kept a big first-aid kit.

Eric glanced up with an apologetic smile. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but when I saw Kip I realized how close I was to the gym and hoped to come here to take a quick look at it."

"Shouldn't we call an ambulance or something?" Moira looked at the vicious scratches on Eric's arm. "I'm no doctor but that looks pretty bad."

"No, they're just a few superficial lacerations. I just need to clean them and put a little antibiotic ointment on them, a few bandages and I'll be fine."

"Are you sure?" Kip asked as he carried the first-aid kit around the reception desk to where they were gathered in the lobby.

"Yes, I'm sure. I'm an intern over at the hospital. I'll have someone take a look at it when I go to work later. I promise it will be okay. I'll just have Kip carry this into the bathroom for me while I clean it really well with some soap and water."

"Sure, no problem, Eric." Kip turned to look at Gil and Moira while Eric headed across the lobby to the men's room. "We'll only be a few minutes, guys. I hope that we didn't interrupt anything."

Moira smiled. "No, just checking up on a few things. Are you going to be at the funeral today?"

"You know that I wouldn't miss it, kiddo. Kat and I will both be there. Did you call and let Cass know what happened?"

"No, I didn't want to burden her with this right now, not while she's dealing with her mother. Lacey would agree with me, I'm sure. She was always telling Cass how important it was to spend time with her mother before she passed on."

"I know. I just worry about Cass, that's all."

"She'll be fine, Kip. You know Cass." She reached out her hand and gave him an affectionate pat on the shoulder.

"Yeah, she's definitely a one-of-a-kind lady. Tough as nails, soft as silk, a true woman of substance." Kip grabbed Moira's hand and brought it up to his face. "Well,

well, well. Take a look at this beauty. I take it that congratulations are in order." He grinned over at Gil.

Moira got a dreamy look in her eye as she looked again at the diamond that Gil had placed on her finger officially that morning. It was a beautiful and unique ring and it had belonged to his grandmother. Now it was hers. She was the luckiest woman in the world. She flashed a grin at Kip as she snuggled closer to Gil.

Gil smiled down at her and bent his head to give her a kiss when his cell phone started ringing. "Hold that thought, baby."

"Daniels. What? When? Where is she? I'm on my way. I'll meet you there ASAP." Gil closed his phone with a snap and looked at Moira. "We've got a lead on the case. A woman was attacked just a little bit ago. She's at the hospital right now. No one but you has ever survived meeting this guy. I hope that this is just what I've been waiting for."

"Oh God, I hope so, Gil. He attacked a woman in broad daylight. He must be getting desperate. Hurry, go see this woman before he gets a chance to attack someone else."

"I can't leave you here. You'll have to grab your stuff and I'll drop you back off at the apartment on the way."

"You don't have time for that, Gil. Besides Kip will stay with me until you get back. Won't you, Kip?"

"Sure, no problem. Go on, Gil. God willing you'll find out something to help catch this guy."

"Make sure that you don't leave this building without her. If you go anywhere, you call me and leave a message on my cell. I'll call Griff on my way to the hospital and have him head over here when he gets a chance."

Moira knew better than to try to argue with him. "Okay, Gil."

"I'll try to make the funeral, baby, but if I don't Griff will be there with you." He pulled her close for a quick kiss before striding through the door.

She watched him cross the lot to his car, already speaking into his cell phone, and she knew that he was yelling at Griff to get his butt over to the gym. She couldn't help the smile that touched her lips. It was so good to be loved so completely.

"I'll be in my office checking through the mail and messages. Come on in when you get done with Eric. I'll put some coffee on for us."

"Thanks. I'll only be a few. I'll get the good intern bandaged and out of here and we'll sit down and have a chat about everything."

"Sure, Kip. Where's Kat at? You two sure seem to be spending a lot of time together lately. Anything you feel like sharing?" Moira almost laughed at the flush creeping up Kip's neck and face.

"We've been seeing each other for a while now. Hell, we've known each other for quite a while now. In fact that's who I was waiting to meet when Eric saw me. We were



meeting for breakfast this morning. I'll have to give her a call and let her know that I'm here instead. I hope that she hasn't been waiting long or I'm in deep shit."

Moira grinned and let out a genuine laugh as Kip headed toward the restroom where Eric was waiting. She was so happy for Kip and Kat. They were truly made for each other. Entering her office, she looked at the mail she had left piled on the desk and let out a soft groan. She would be here for a while sorting through it. Lacey had always taken care of the mail and messages, only bringing to Moira certain things that she felt Moira needed to handle personally. She felt the tears on her cheeks and smiled. Lacey would appreciate the laughter and the tears. She would miss her.

The killer looked in the mirror and licked his lips. Soon he would worship at the altar of his goddess. He thought of his angel's lush breasts, her flat belly and her smooth thighs. He could remember the way that she smelled like honeysuckle and melon. He had dreamed of her every night. He couldn't wait to ram his cock in her tight cunt. He would fuck her many times before he felt any relief. He would make her beg. He could picture her already naked on her knees, sucking his cock deep into the back of her throat while he pinched and twisted the nipples on her big tits. When he had made her swallow his first load of cum he would push her to her back and plunge into her pussy. He knew that he could fuck her as hard as he wanted to. She would take whatever he gave her. When he had enjoyed that cunt as much as he wanted to he would flip her over and shove his cock up her tight ass. She might fight him then, but that was okay. That would only make it all the sweeter when he was buried deep in her hot depths. He would take that hole as many times as he wanted to as well. Then he would fuck her sweet pussy one more time, keeping her on her hands and knees in front of him, taking her like the bitch she was. He'd wrap his hands around her throat then and choke the breath out of her while he rode her one more time to completion. Then he'd finish with her. And when he was finished with her no one would ever recognize her again.

Now he just had to take care of the men who stood in his way.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gil met Ben just outside the emergency room doors and they entered together. They were both eager to meet the only woman to have ever survived an attack by their guy. Well, the only woman other than Moira to survive.

Gil stopped a passing nurse and flashed his badge. "We're here to speak with the woman who was attacked this morning. She would have come in just a little while ago."

"Sure, Detective, she's in cubicle one just around the corner, first door on the left."

Gil and Ben hurried around the corner and knocked softly on the wall beside the pulled curtain. "Detectives Daniels and Marcum to speak to you when you're ready."

"Come in please," a familiar voice called from the other side of the curtain.

Gil was startled to pull the curtain back and see Kat sitting on the examination table. She looked a little shaken up, a little battered, a little bruised but alive and in one piece.

"Kat, what the hell happened to you?" Gil stepped forward and took the hand that Kat held out to him. He had come to know Kat and Kip both pretty well since he and Moira had been together and he really liked her.

"I'm so glad that you're the one who came to talk to me, Gil. I've never been so scared in my entire life."

"What happened to you, Kat?" He felt the shudders going through her body and, glancing at Ben, he pulled her into his arms and hugged her to him. She was a part of Moira's unique family and he couldn't just let her sit there without offering comfort. He felt her shudder against his chest and knew that she was trying to hold herself together. She was just like Moira in some ways. He smoothed his hands on her back and held her tighter. "It's okay, Kat, just let it all out. Just let it all out and you'll feel better."

His words seemed to release a dam. Kat began to sob in his arms. He knew that it was partly relief that she had survived an attack that he could only guess about for now and partly the release of the terror and fears that she had probably held in since she escaped. He held her and let her cry it out. When she seemed to be back in control of herself she pulled away and accepted the box of tissues that Ben held out to her.

"Do you feel like telling us what happened now?" Ben asked as she sat back on the hospital bed.

Kat looked down at her hands in her lap where she was slowly shredding a tissue between her fingers. "I was meeting Kip for breakfast at the Denny's just down from the club. I was early so I was strolling around window shopping. Nothing was open yet. I wasn't really paying attention to anything around me. There I was just meandering down the sidewalk totally unaware of everything around me. God, I was just begging for something like this to happen." She hit the bed with her fist in frustration at her own stupidity.

Ben grabbed her fist and smoothed her hand out. "No woman asks to be attacked. You know that, Kat. I've heard you speak to the women at the club. So you were lost in thought," he smiled at her, "that happens when you're in love."

Kat gasped softly. "Is it that obvious?"

Ben grinned. "Only because I've paid such close attention to my partner here and his lady love. It doesn't mean that you asked for what happened."

Gil smiled at Kat. "No it doesn't. Where were you when the attack occurred? Do you remember where you were?"

"Not really. I'm sorry. I was so lost in thought trying to figure out if I should tell Kip that I love him that I just wasn't paying attention. One minute I was on the sidewalk and the next there was something pressed against my throat and I was being pulled into the back of an alley."

Kat shivered as she forced herself to relive those next few moments. "There was this voice in my ear telling me that I had to pay for the goddess."

Gil and Ben both exchanged charged looks. This was most definitely their guy. That was one of the few things that they had managed to keep out of the papers. Each of the victims had the symbol for goddess carved onto their breasts. Although the paper referred to him as the night stalker, those working the case referred to him as the goddess killer. There was no doubt that this had to be their killer.

"Just take your time, Kat. Take a deep breath and give us as detailed an account as you can." Ben squeezed her fingers in offer of support.

"The next thing that I knew I was being thrown to my belly on the alley floor. He was behind me." She let out a deep breath and then another one before continuing. "I could feel him behind me. His breath was on my neck. The knife was still at my throat. He...He was trying to force me to my knees. He had his free hand on my hip and was trying to pull my leggings down." She shuddered and took a few more deep breaths.

"It's okay, Kat. You're okay now." Gil's voice was firm as he sought to comfort her.

"I know. I just... I felt the knife at my throat and I knew that he would kill me if I didn't do what he wanted, but part of me knew that he would kill me anyway. I couldn't let him do that to me. So I fought instead. I knew that I was dead no matter what. As far as I was concerned the only way he was going to rape me was if he killed me first. I grabbed the hand holding the knife at my throat with both of mine and tried to get it away from him. He punched me with his other hand in my side and back until he had me flat beneath him. I hit my head pretty hard and it dazed me for a minute. The next thing that I knew I was flat on my back and he was over me laughing." She shuddered again and wrapped her arms around herself. "He told me to go ahead and fight. That it would only make it all the sweeter when he...when he..."

Gil interceded gently, "We know what he planned to do, Kat. You don't have to say it if you don't want to."

"But how did you manage to get away from him?" Ben asked softly.

"I didn't think that I would be able to when suddenly something flew at him. One minute he was on top of me and the next he was lying on his back with a dog on his arm. I remember hearing a low growl and glancing over to see him trying to shake the dog off. It suddenly dawned on me that this was my chance to get away. So I ran as fast as I could. I made it back to my car and drove straight to the hospital and told them what had happened."

Things were slowly clicking in Gil's mind and he didn't like what he was coming up with. He grabbed Kat's shoulders harder than he meant to, making her look up at him in surprise. "How far were you from the club, Kat? Do you know how far away from the club you were?"

"No, I..." Kat startled when Gil shook her. "I'm sorry, Gil, I just don't know. Please, you're scaring me. Did I do something wrong?"

Ben pulled Gil away from Kat. "What is the matter with you? Now you're scaring me, buddy. What's going on?"

"Just before I got the call to meet you here Moira and I were at the club. I took her there so that she could look through the mail and check messages and stuff. Mostly I just knew that she needed to get out of the house. We had just got there when Kip showed up with a recent member of the gym. This guy had been attacked by a dog just down from the gym. Kip brought him in to bandage him up. He works for the hospital."

"Our victim from the park, the only one other than Lacey who was killed somewhere other than in an alley, she was a nurse at the hospital," Ben said.

They both headed out of the ER at a dead run. "Oh shit!" Gil yelled. "I left Moira at the gym with this guy. I left Moira and Kip both there with a killer."

"You didn't know, Gil. You didn't know!" Ben yelled as he kept pace with Gil. "I'll call for backup on the way."

"If anything happens to her before we get there I'll never forgive myself."

"We'll be in time, buddy. We have to be."

Moira looked up from the mail in her hands as someone entered the office behind her. Eric stood in the doorway. His arm had been cleaned but there was no bandage on it. She could see the scratches on his arm. They didn't look very good. Actually now that they were cleaned up they looked more like bite marks or at least scrapes made by a dog's tooth instead of its claws.

"Were there no bandages in the first-aid kit? I'm sure I can find something for you to use until you get home or to work at the hospital." Moira felt her smile chill on her lips as Eric stepped into the office and closed the door behind him. "Where's Kip? Please leave the office door open."

"Kip won't be bothering us. I made sure of that, my goddess. And it seems that your faithful watchdog has disappeared as well. Now it's only you and me. Just like we've wanted, like it was always destined to be." Eric edged around the desk toward her.

Moira felt her breath catch in her throat at Eric's words. All her plans flew through her mind in a blur. She had wanted to use herself as bait to catch the killer and now here she was. But none of her plan was in place. All the security measures put into place by her father and his men were offline since the gym was supposed to be closed. She had insisted that there was no need for them while there was no one in the gym. She tried to come up with some sort of plan in her head. First things first, she had to get out of this office. Eric kept creeping around the desk toward her, talking about the goddess this and the goddess that. This guy was totally bonkers. Why hadn't she noticed it when she had first met him and gave the tour of the gym? She remembered that she had been interrupted by a very irate Gil during the tour and Kip had taken over. That had been the morning after she lost her virginity. She had just placed her back to the office door

and was slowly turning the knob behind her back when his whole expression changed and his voice turned cold and hard.

"Let go of the doorknob, whore of Babel. I treasured you. Yet you've proved yourself just as unworthy as all the others. Spreading your thighs and dropping to your knees at the drop of a hat. I expected more from you, my angel. I expected so much better from you."

Moirira paused for only a moment before jerking the door open and flying out of the office. She could feel his footsteps pounding after her. He caught her with a flying tackle around her ankles a few feet from the front doors in the main lobby and they slammed to the floor. She kicked and fought, trying to get away from him. He was strong and quick. It didn't help that she was losing focus. She could feel the fear and terror taking over her mind and body. Her adrenaline was pumping through her muscles but her terror was putting her coordination off. She couldn't seem to shake loose. She could feel him slowly clawing his way up her body while she bucked and fought with all that she had.

She truly thought that she might be in serious trouble. She had to get control of herself. She trained other women for this. She could do this. Her aim improved as she fought for control over her emotions. She caught him a glancing blow on his temple and his hold loosened. She struggled to loosen his hold on her and managed to crawl about a foot before he was on her again. This time he grabbed the back of her head, fisting his hands in her hair, and began slamming her head against the floor. She was blacking out when she thought she heard someone yelling her name and beating on the front door.

Griff and Katie were in his car heading over to the gym. He had always shared a closer relationship with Katie than with either of his brothers. His little squirt was all grown up now. She was going to begin teaching full time in a few months. It scared him to death to think of her out on her own. He was seriously thinking of moving his dojo to Legacy just so he could keep an eye on her. Katie had a temper and seemed to thrive on conflict. At only five foot one it should be a given that she wouldn't be confrontational, but Katie didn't care how big someone was. The girl had no common sense at all. Yep, he was definitely going to have to move to Legacy to keep an eye on her.

"What's got you so quiet, Griff?" Katie glanced over at her brother as they cruised around the streets of Legacy on their way to Knowledge Is Power. She loved everything about Legacy. It was really a beautiful town. She was so excited to be teaching here in the fall.

"I was just thinking about moving my dojo to Legacy. With you moving here and Gil already living here and now getting ready to marry Moirira, it just seems like something I might be interested in doing." Katie's squeal of pleasure was jolting but when she jerked across the seat to give him a hug Griff almost took out a car parked at the curb. "Hey, easy there, squirt. I'm glad that you're happy with the idea, but let's not wreck the car, okay?"

Katie laughed with pure delight. "Oh it makes me so happy! Now if we could just get Mom and Doug to head this way. Everything would be so perfect then."

Griff pulled up to the curb a block down from Moira's gym. "I don't think it would be hard to convince Doug to move as long as Damon moved too. You know that Damon has wanted to move the business for a few months now anyway." Doug thought of the problems his brother and Damon had faced when their sexual habits had been made fodder for the public after the end of their last encounter. The woman hadn't wanted it to end, had actually become a little obsessed. She hadn't accepted that she was just a one-night stand. Griff shook his head and brought his mind back to his current conversation with Katie. "Plus that new house they built is only about twenty miles out of Legacy. But those pretty baby blues at Damon and I bet that he would be able to talk Doug into making Legacy their home base. Then Mom would move here in a heartbeat. There is no way that she would let us all leave her behind. Besides now with Gil getting married, I'm sure that she'll want to be closer for when grandkids start arriving."

"Grandkids! Do you know something that I don't, Griff? If so spit it out right now." Katie turned back from the door she just opened to look at him.

Griff laughed and threw his arms in the air before opening his own door and stepping out to face Katie across the hood. "No, squirt, I don't know anything. I'm just trying to give you some arguments to use to convince Mom to move here." Griff moved around to Katie's side, shutting and locking her door before slinging his arm across her shoulders and heading down the sidewalk to the gym.

"I think that it would do her good to get away from that town." Katie's sudden seriousness melted Griff's grin. "She hasn't been the same since Dad died. She needs to get out more." She peeked up at Griff. "She needs to date."

"What!? You don't know what you're talking about. Mom is just fine. She has her children."

Katie laughed hard. "She has her children? Get a clue, Griff. Men are not the only ones who need sex."

"Jesus, Katie! Mom doesn't have a sex life. I don't want to talk about this."

"Women are allowed to have sex, Griff. Moira seems to really enjoy it."

"That's neither here nor there. Moira is engaged to be married. Mom doesn't need that stuff anymore. And you're too damn young for me to even take this conversation seriously."

"Mom may be older but she's not dead. A woman has needs just the same as a man. I'm twenty-two years old. Surely you're not so naïve as to believe that I'm still some chaste little virgin." Okay, so that was not quite a lie. A virgin she was, but not chaste. She had all kinds of neat little toys that kept her very, very happy. And she knew that her mother did as well. She had found an Eager Beaver in her mother's bedside drawer when she was looking for something else. She had never mentioned it to her mother. There were some things that even she didn't want to discuss with her mother.

"You had better be a chaste little virgin, Katie. You will be from now on anyway. We'll be finding an apartment together. I'm keeping my eye on you."

"Ummm. I hope that you don't plan on bringing any women over then. I'll just have to do my best to make sure that their chastity is intact as well."

Griff gave Katie a sharp glare as they crossed the parking lot to the front door of the gym. His comment died on his lips when he spotted the view behind the doors. Some man was straddling Moira's back and slamming her head into the floor. Griff tossed his phone to a stunned Katie and yelled at her to dial nine-one-one. He rushed toward the door and started slamming his fist against it and screaming Moira's name. The door was locked and the glass was too thick for him to bust through it. He couldn't get to Moira. He couldn't help her and he had never felt more powerless in his life.

Eric looked up at the door where the tall guy stood on the other side of the glass. His mouth curved into a sinister grin. He smacked the goddess's head hard to the floor one more time just because he could. The slut was already motionless beneath him but he was in charge so he would do what he wanted. He flipped the still figure over to her back and straddled her waist. Her forehead was starting to bruise and there was blood dripping from her nose. He must have smashed it when he was pounding her head into the floor. He slapped her a couple of times just because he enjoyed it. He couldn't hold in the laughter. He was truly a god. He was in control of everything. If only his mother could see him now. Then she would know that he was not the stupid useless waste of space that she had always accused him of being. She couldn't see him though or say anything to him anymore. He had silenced her for good.

He stared again at the woman beneath him. He grabbed her shirt and ripped it open, displaying her perfect lush breasts in a peach-colored bra. It was lacy and sheer and he could see her beautiful nipples. He bent his head to smell her skin. She didn't smell like she had before. The honeysuckle and melon scent had been replaced by something else. He inhaled deeply. She smelled like jasmine or lavender. It was a scent he knew all too well. It was like he was hiding again in his mother's garden. It was the scent of safety. She truly was his angel of mercy. She was his everything.

He began playing with her breasts, stroking and pinching her nipples. He could feel his cock straining against his zipper. He would mount her soon. When he was done playing he would shove her pants down and plunge into her tight little cunt. He would do this because he wanted to and no one could stop him, not his mother, not the tall guy at the door. He was an all-powerful god and it was wonderful. He threw his head back to laugh. The maniacal sound filled the air until the first gun shot abruptly cut it off.

Katie threw down the phone, disconnecting with nine-one-one after screaming the information needed to them. Help was already on the way. She knew that meant that Gil and Ben were on their way. She couldn't think. The guy over Moira looked so

deranged that she feared that help wouldn't be in time. Griff continued to beat against the glass and scream. He had grabbed anything he could find and beat it against the glass, trying to shatter it and get inside. The glass was shatterproof. With Moira's clientele she had made that a priority when refitting the warehouse as a gym. Oh God, how would they get to her?

She suddenly remembered Moira giving her a key to the back employee entrance to the gym when she had said that she wanted to use the women's center. Moira had given her the key the next day and told her to help herself. She could use the women's center anytime she wanted to as long as the gym was open, even if the women's center wasn't.

Katie took off around the building, digging through her purse for her key ring. Her bag was huge and she couldn't remember which pocket her keys were in. She found them at the bottom of her bag next to the gun that Gil had bought her for her twenty-first birthday. He had taught her to use it and helped her get a permit. She had only started carrying it with her when she had arrived in Legacy and realized all that was going on with Moira. She pulled both from her bag and dropped it by the back entrance. Slipping the key in the lock, she entered the building, leaving the back entrance unlocked. She flipped the safety off and, holding the gun just the way that Gil had taught her, began to silently creep down the hall toward where she knew the doors to the main lobby would be.

"Please, God," she whispered. "Let me be in time to save her. Please let me be in time."



## **Chapter Fifteen**

Everything seemed to happen at once. Gil and Ben pulled up and jumped out of the car. Griff was pounding on the door yelling for Katie.

"Katie?" Gil and Ben looked at each other and ran harder toward Griff. Gil was looking for the key to the gym on Moira's keychain in his hand. Somehow when he left her this morning he had still been in possession of her keys. What he saw when he got to the door was enough to stop him in his tracks for a moment.

Moira lay still on the floor with her shirt ripped open. Eric lay a few feet from her, blood pooling beneath him on the tile. Standing a few feet on the other side of Moira was his baby sister Katie. She was holding a gun in her hand. The gun he had given her just a year ago if he wasn't mistaken. She appeared to be in shock. Her face was white and she was beginning to shake.

He finally got the door open and they all three rushed inside just as the rest of the cavalry pulled up in front of the building. Sirens were screaming in the air but all he could see was Moira lying so still on the tile. As he got closer he could see the bruising on her forehead and the blood on her face.

"Oh God no!" Gil cried out as he fell to his knees beside Moira. "Please, baby, you have to be all right." He felt for a pulse and found it. "Don't you give up on me, baby. You hang in there."

Ambulance personnel tried to push him aside but he wouldn't leave her. This had all happened because he had left her. He would never leave her side again.

"Detective, we have to get her to the hospital. Please, sir, we need to go now."

The EMT held his ground even when Gil turned his fiercest look on him and let out a growl. "I'm going with her. I won't leave her again."

"That's fine, Detective, but we have to go now."

Gil didn't release her hand at all as she was loaded onto a stretcher and hurried to the waiting ambulance. He was still holding her hand when they arrived at the hospital less than ten minutes later.

Griff planned to head to Katie but was almost shoved aside by Ben in the good detective's hurry to get to her as well. He watched as Ben spoke softly to Katie and slipped the gun from her hands. Even as Ben flipped the safety on, he was pulling Katie tightly into his arms. Katie seemed to collapse against him, burying her face in his chest and sobbing. He watched as Ben smoothed his hands up and down his baby sister's back and placed soft soothing kisses on the top of her head.

Griff felt useless and in the way. He hadn't helped Moira. He couldn't help Katie now. He felt like a failure. With a deep shuddering sigh he headed through the confusion going on around him and slipped back to his car in the lot. With one last look at the building in front of him Griff started his car and slowly drove out of Legacy.

Ben held Katie firmly against his chest. He couldn't believe the fear that he had felt when he had realized that Katie was in the building with the killer as well. He hadn't been able to get to her fast enough to soothe his soul. He couldn't let her go now. He was aware of Gil leaving with Moira, of Griff walking out the front door but he couldn't leave Katie. He would see them all later. For now he held Katie close in his arms and let her cry herself out on his chest. He was deeply afraid that he had done the unthinkable and fallen in love with his partner's and best friend's baby sister. He was in some seriously deep shit and at the moment he couldn't care less.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a week since all the excitement at the club. Moira had awoken in the hospital, feeling like her head was going to split open. She had a concussion and a broken nose. They had kept her in the hospital for two days before letting her go home. Gil had stayed with her the entire time. He refused to leave her side.

She had gradually learned all that had happened that morning. Katie had saved her life. In the process she had taken a life. Although as far as everyone was concerned she didn't have a choice and it wasn't much of a loss anyway. Katie had taken it hard though. She had lost some of her sparkle and Moira would catch her sometimes drawing into herself. She was worried about her.

Ben was always around now. He seemed to stick a little closer to Katie. No one else seemed to realize it but Moira was pretty sure that something was brewing there. She hoped so. They would make a great couple. She would have to keep an eye on Gil though. She wasn't sure how well he would take to the idea of Ben and Katie together.

Griff was gone. He had driven away that day and no one had heard from him personally although he had dropped them a postcard in the mail to say that he hoped all was well. He said that he had decided to take a little impromptu vacation. Moira was worried about him. She knew that he had stood on the other side of the glass watching and yelling while Eric had beaten her head into the floor. And it must have been a dent to his pride when Katie was the one to get in and rescue her. She hoped that he was okay.

Kip and Kat had stopped by earlier. It still shocked her that Kat was the woman who had been attacked and gotten away. Kip had been discovered on the men's room floor at the club. Eric had surprised him with a fist to the face when Kip entered the room with the first-aid kit. While he was trying to get his bearings Eric had grabbed his head and slammed it into the porcelain sink, knocking him out. That had been about the

extent of Kip's injuries, a concussion, some bruising and chafed wrists and ankles where Eric had used the medical tape to tie him up.

They had found the stray dog that had saved Kat in the alley that morning and she and Kip adopted him and took him home. They had named him Warrior, which everyone thought was appropriate. They were getting married today at the courthouse. Moira was happy for them.

Her black eyes were clearing up nicely and she was planning to open the gym back up on Monday with or without Gil's consent. He had taken a week's vacation and spent every minute of it driving her crazy with his hovering. They had just left Doug, Katie and his mom Catherine at his old apartment. She was tired of the babying. Gil hadn't even made love to her since she had been home and she was tired of it. That was all going to change very soon.

As soon as they were in the apartment she caught Gil by surprise and pushed him against the door he had just locked tight for the night. She slammed herself against him and pulled him down for a steamy kiss while she rubbed herself wantonly against him. She could feel the burgeoning hard-on forming beneath his jeans and groaned with anticipation.

Gil tried to push her gently away from him. "Moira, baby, it's too soon. You've been through so much, baby. Let's just take it easy until you're okay."

Moira walked away shaking her head in frustration. "What are you waiting for, Gil? I'm okay. I've been okay for days now. What is really holding you back? Are you turned off by me? Do you not want me anymore because of what that cretin tried to do?"

"Of course I want you!" Gil grabbed his swollen cock through his jeans and gave it a firm squeeze. "Does this look like I don't want you?" He groaned with his own frustration. "God, baby, it's killing me not to touch you, to not throw you down on the first flat surface and fuck you until neither of us can walk. I just... I don't want to hurt you, baby. I couldn't live with myself if I hurt you."

"You're not going to hurt me, Gil. I need you too!"

"I keep seeing you lying on the floor so pale and still. I left you in that building with the very man that I swore to protect you from." He skimmed his fingers across the fading bruises under her eyes. "I did this to you. I wasn't there for you. I failed you when you needed me most."

Moira gave him a sharp thump to the chest with her fist. "Oh get over yourself. Grow up, Gil. Shit happens all the time. You won't always be there when things go bad. The important thing is that you love me and will always try to be there for me. I love you, Gil, but right now you are driving me crazy. You're only guilty of leaving me with Kip. You had every reason to think that I would be okay while you were at the hospital. And you headed back to me as soon as Kat filled you in and you realized I was in trouble. You are the one who sent Griff and Katie over to the gym. In a way you did save my life. You sent them to me. You bought Katie the gun and taught her how to

shoot it. If you hadn't done that, Gil, I don't want to think of what might have happened."

Gil stared at her, taking in all that she said. He had bought Katie the gun and taught her to use it. He had insisted that Griff go to the gym while he went to the hospital. He pulled her close to him and hugged her tight. "I love you so much, Moira. I would have died if you hadn't made it."

"Don't tell me, Gil. Show me." Moira pulled him down to the floor in the entryway. "I believe this is the first flat surface that we can find."

Gil meant to be gentle with her, to love her softly and slowly, but as clothes were removed and flesh was revealed gentle hands turned rough in their eagerness. He kissed Moira with a desperate passion that he had withheld for the past week. He explored her body with his hands, finding her turgid nipples and giving them a pinch before sliding his fingers down to the wet folds of her sex. It wasn't enough though. He had to taste her everywhere.

His fingers brought her to her first orgasm while his mouth worshipped her breasts. He suckled her nipples deeply into his mouth, pressing them against the roof of his mouth with his tongue before giving them a soft love bite with his teeth. Moira moaned and thrashed beneath him, begging him to stop torturing her then in the next breath telling him to do it harder. He moved down her stomach, leaving a moist trail of love bites all the way.

When he finally got to the glistening folds of her pussy he couldn't take his time at all. He dove straight in, licking and sucking her clit hungrily while beginning to fuck her harder with his fingers. Moira exploded with a loud cry as her orgasm shot through her but Gil couldn't stop. He kept sucking and when she reached the next crest he replaced his fingers with his tongue and fucked deep inside her pussy, reveling in the feel of her vagina clenching around it. He lapped at her until she was a boneless heap beneath him.

Finally Gil pulled his mouth from her hot little pussy and scooped her up in his arms. He carried her to the bedroom and laid her gently on the bed. He came over her and entered her with a slow but deep thrust. He rocked his cock in and out of her, finally able to make use of the slow, gentle rhythm that he had wanted to use from the beginning. Moira looked at him with a dazed dreamy expression of love in her eyes and he knew that everything would be okay. They would be fine. Oh they would have plenty of fights, he was sure, about anything and everything. But they would be together. As he felt the beginning of his own orgasm approaching he leaned down to kiss her.

"I love you, Moira. I love you, baby."

"I love you too, Gil. I love you too."

## **About the Author**

Lacey Thorn spends her days in small-town Indiana, the proud mother of three. When she is not busy with one of them she can be found typing away on her computer keyboard or burying her nose in a good book. Like every woman, she knows just how chaotic life can be and how appealing that great escape can look. So toss aside the stress and tension of the never ending “to do” list. For now sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride with Lacey as she helps you to unlace and unleash the woman inside.

Lacey welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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