



**Plain Jane**

Tiffany Aaron and Paige Burns

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## **Dedication**

### **Paige**

A special thanks to the ladies of CMRT for putting up with Tiffany and I while we worked out the kinks in this book, and for helping us rescue all the cover models we could find.

I couldn't have written a better book with a better friend. And Tiffany, just to make you laugh I'm going all junior high on you ... "Best Friends Forever".

\* \* \* \*

### **Tiffany**

Thanks to all the cover models that let us rescue them. Especially the one who inspired this story. Ladies of CMRT, we really couldn't have done it without you.

Paige, you managed to find my funny side when I didn't believe I had one. Thanks a lot and this book wouldn't have happened if you hadn't written that first scene. "Forever and Forever, Girl."

## Friday

### Jane

I glanced at the clock on my desk, 8:58. It was Friday and even the people with no life had to have gone home by now. I'd finished the graphic design project I was working on an hour ago and ended up surfing the 'Net while the last stragglers finally left the building. I stood and stretched, then peered over the wall of my cubbie. No desk lights on, no computers left running. Free and clear.

I scrambled to shut down my computer and gathered the gym bag I'd stashed in the bottom drawer of my file cabinet. For the last month I'd been staying late at work under the guise that I was working my tail end off. In a way I was, just not on work. Centurion Graphics, the company I worked for, had a small gym on the top floor but only the owner, the VP and the two plastic chicks used it. The rest of us were either too geeky to attempt or too fat to try. I fell under both categories. Geeky and Fat. Okay, so I wasn't gargantuan, but I was tired of carrying around that extra forty pounds I'd gained after my freshman year of college and just kept adding to.

I stepped into the elevator and hit the buttons for the next three floors. I wanted to be really sure I was alone. I guess I shouldn't complain about my size fourteen waist and thighs, I know there are people out there worse off than I am, but we all have a right to bitch about something, right?

The door dinged and I peeked out onto the drafting floor. The coast was clear. On to the next floor, the executive offices.

I pretty much lived in black, anything to hide the cellulite and bulges. My hair was almost black too, so most of the time I got teased about being Goth. Some people are so stupid. Goth...please. Just because I wore black didn't mean I wanted to be moody and sullen, wear way too much black eyeliner and laugh at creepy stuff. I've been scared shitless of horror flicks since the tender age of sixteen when I'd had to drive home late on a foggy night after having the pants scared off me from watching Halloween V. Even now when people whistled it gave me chills.

The elevator door opened and this time I stepped out into the dimly lit hallway. You couldn't see all the offices here as they were their own rooms, no cubicles for the high and mighty of Centurion. And as every other night for the last month, all the offices were locked and the lights off. I don't know why I was so obsessed with making sure no one was around, I just knew I would die if someone saw me working out. I'd managed to lose five pounds since starting my clandestine workouts, but that just made my pants a little loose. I wasn't ready to show off to another living soul.

With renewed determination I got back on the elevator, ready to give my fat cells a run for their money. I was so into visualizing the new me and how many guys I would have falling over each other to ask me out that I failed to notice the sounds coming from the locker room until I walked in and found myself looking at the sexiest backside I'd ever seen.

Quiet as a church mouse, but feeling more like the devil herself, I watched as the man pulled faded jeans up over his naked ass. Oh My God. He was going commando. My

nipples responded, peaking into hard nubs and my panties became damp. I followed the line of his ass crack, which I wanted to lick desperately, to find a heart tattoo, right at the small of his back. I took him in as a whole and found another tattoo. LOVE across his shoulders in gangster letters. I wondered who the lucky woman was. Shit. If he had a heart and LOVE tattooed on his body, then for sure there was a woman attached to this hottie.

I stepped back, walking backwards to leave the locker room and away from someone else's man, when my gym bag caught on the door handle. The door banged against the wall and Hottie spun around. My eyes had still been on his tight ass and thoughts of him naked under his jeans still being foremost in my mind, my gaze ended up on his crotch when he turned around. He hadn't had a chance to button the jeans yet and they hung open, almost in invitation. The dark thatch of hair a resting place for something that I knew had to be huge and ... hard. I saw the jeans move. My, um, well, you know, it clenched, and I wanted nothing more than to dive to my knees and pull his jeans down.

Not that I'd ever done it before, but I'd seen movies. That's pretty much what happened when the girl came upon the naked guy. But this wasn't a movie, this was real life. My life.

Fear washed over me. He still hadn't said anything, and my voice had ceased working the minute I saw his ass. I couldn't work up the courage to actually look up to see who I'd been ogling. I felt my face flush and just decided to go with the flow. No one noticed me, after all. Most of the guys at work either thought of me as a good buddy or non-existent. I was turning over a new leaf right? New body? Why not new attitude?

"So," I said, my gaze traveling the enticing line of hair up his washboard belly to where it sprinkled on his chest. I saw his Adam's apple bob as he swallowed. "Is that a statement or an offer?" Deliberately leaving the "that" up in the air. Maybe I meant not wearing underwear, or maybe I meant his tattoo. Hell, I don't even think I knew.

"Well, Jane, it depends on what you're talking about."

Panic set in then and I looked up in horror as my boss, Josh Anderson, looked back at me with a sly grin on his face and heat in his gaze.

Aw, FUCK. I'm so fired.

\*

## **Josh**

"Well. Jane, it depends on what you're talking about."

Her eyes shot to mine and I saw the 'oh fuck' look in them. She obviously wasn't expecting to see my face.

"Mr. Anderson," she stammered.

I hated hearing that. 'Mr. Anderson' always reminded me of those Matrix movies.

"Ms..."

Oh hell, what was her last name? I'd stared at her ass for months now and I couldn't even think of her last name. It started with a 'V' ... Van Poppel.

"Ms. Van Poppel." I congratulated myself on not looking like a complete idiot.

"What are you talking about?" It was the flirt and the jerk in me that had to tease her. I never would have thought she'd hit on me like that.

She seemed to be struggling with her natural shyness. Subtle wasn't a trait I could claim having any knowledge of, but I figured I'd let her off the hook before she turned and ran. This was the first chance I had to say anything more than 'hi' to her.

“Here to work out?”

Well, it hadn't taken long for me to ask a stupid question. She's not here to look at your naked ass, I thought. What else would she be doing up in the gym after hours?

Jane's green eyes dropped back to where my jeans barely covered my cock. I hadn't gotten around to zipping up. Seeing the flare of lust burst in her gaze, the imp in me decided to tease her a little more. Yeah, it made me a prick, but like I said, I'd been ogling her ass for quite a while now.

I tucked my thumbs in my front pockets, framing my growing hard-on with my hands.

“Um, yes. I didn't think anyone was still around,” she murmured, the pink tip of her tongue peeking out to wet her lips.

My dick jumped at the thought of that tongue tracing a pattern over the length of it. *Down boy*, I ordered. Jane wasn't the type of woman I could pick up for a night of fun. She was the best graphic designer the company had. I couldn't risk fucking her, because if the relationship went sour, I didn't want her to quit. Which was the only reason I hadn't approached her before this.

“Have you been working out more? Your clothes seem baggier.”

Her eyes widened and I realized I'd just admitted I'd been checking her out. Winking at her, I decided it might not hurt to give a hint or two of being interested. Who knew? Maybe she could be the one it would work out with. God knew I was tired of the one-night stands and the shallow women who dated me just for my money.

I moved closer to her. I wasn't in any hurry to leave now. Flirting with Jane was more fun than heading home for cold leftovers and the baseball game. Her breathing sped up when she realized she was trapped between the door and me.

“Why don't you work out during the day? It's safer than walking out to the garage after dark.” Reaching out, I braced one hand on the door and leaned in even closer.

“I don't like people watching. Since it's just you, Mr. Cooper and those two Barbie dolls using it, I figured I'd be okay after hours.” She couldn't seem to lift her eyes above my chest.

Having a woman staring at my chest was a new experience for me and I found it was turning me on even more than her staring at my crotch. “Barbie dolls? Oh, you mean Brandy and Jessica.” I laughed. “That's a good description of them. If Brandy has any more work done, her breasts could be used for life preservers.”

Her breathless giggle made my chest hurt. The devil in me caused me to lean forward and whisper in her ear, “Your breasts are beautiful the way they are. I'd love to feel them against me.”

The pulse at the base of her neck sped up as I ran my tongue along the edge of her ear. I knew I was setting myself up for a sexual harassment suit, but the scent of her arousal was driving me crazy and I wanted a taste of her. I relaxed my arm until my chest pressed tight against her.

“Mr. Anderson,” she said softly, with a hesitant touch to her voice.

“Yes, Ms. Van Poppel?” I trailed my lips down to the sensitive spot behind her ear.

“This isn't a good idea.”

She didn't sound convinced, so I took that as a message she wanted me to continue. Hell, if she told me no I would stop. I'm not into forcing women for anything. I didn't want to neglect her other ear, so I switched sides.

“You’re right. It probably isn’t a good idea, but why not take a chance? Who knows? It might be the greatest idea either of us ever had.”

She flushed and her hand came up to my chest with a tentative touch. My own breath caught when the tips of her fingers barely ran over my nipple. She tilted her head to allow me better access and that was it. My cock was alert and eager for a piece of her. I kept my hips back. I didn’t want to shock her into realizing what she was letting me do.

I slipped my other hand into her hair and cradled the back of her head. I angled her so I could lick the fluttering skin at the base of her neck. Her skin was smooth and salty. The heat our bodies produced caused her to glow with desire. I put a little more of my weight on her and felt her hard nipples poke my pecs.

Grazing her neck with my teeth, I felt a shudder work its way over her body. I never could fight temptation. Placing my mouth over the small piece of skin, I sucked on it. She gasped and both her hands came up to grasp my shoulders. I wanted to leave my mark on her. A bolt of lust ripped through me at the thought of other men seeing a sign that she was mine. It almost got the best of me. I never wanted to do that before. Possessiveness wasn’t in my make-up. I guess you could say I had always been a love-‘em and leave-‘em kind of guy, but there was something in the feel of her against my body that called to my most primal side and I didn’t want another man to kiss her.

“Mr. Anderson, kiss me,” she pleaded.

That was what I had been listening for all along. I released her skin with a soft pop and moved up to her mouth. As our lips touched for the first time, the only thought that raced through my head was *I’m so screwed*.

\*

## Jane

His lips touched mine. My neck stung a little from his love bite. Love bite?

I must be dreaming. I must be dreaming.

Josh swept his tongue through the crease of my lips, grazing my teeth.

Shocking the hell out of me. I wasn’t dreaming.

He pressed his barely jean-clad penis against the softness of my belly.

And that, more than anything, brought me out of the sexual haze Josh had wrapped me in. I retracted my hand from where it had wrapped around his neck and delved into his hair. *I swear I don’t know how that happened*. With as much dignity as I could muster I pushed against his bare chest. Every ounce of me wanted to run my fingers through the light speckling of hair, but I couldn’t do it. I shouldn’t.

“Mr. An...”

He moved his hands from my waist and placed them over mine on his chest. “Don’t you think after a kiss like that Josh is more appropriate, Jane?” He rested his forehead against mine, his breathing ragged and his body still pressed into me.

“I ... um...”

“Did you like my kiss, Jane?”

God, why did he have to keep growling my name? I’d used him as my fantasy lover since I’d started working for him but never, in my dreams, had my name from his lips sounded so ... erotic.

“Well, truth be told ... yes.” I closed my eyes. Truth be told? The truth was I wanted him to rip my clothes off and fuck me until I passed out, but no man had seen my body since my senior year of college. If it had been dark I might have been tempted to keep

this little charade going, but the locker room lights were blazing and I just couldn't.

"But..."

"But what? I can feel your heart beating fast. I can smell your scent, what my kisses, what my body is doing to you. There are no "buts" here." He smoothed his hands down my arms and then back up again to encircle my neck.

Not menacing, just there.

His thumbs moved up and down, tickling my throat with his gentle touch. He lifted off my forehead and tipped my chin up, his hands still around my neck. "I know I shouldn't be doing this, touching you..." His eyes strayed to my mouth. "Kissing you." He leaned in and placed a gentle kiss on my lips but his tongue flicked out just as he pulled away, making his chaste kiss that much more enticing. "And here's the only 'but' that should be said tonight. But ... I needed to. I wanted to, and I want to do it again."

I harrumphed at that, rolling my eyes. Here was where the shoe dropped. I'd started something that I'd be fired for. My big mouth just had to disconnect from my logical mind and speak words at some guy's ass who just happened to be my boss. Now, in retribution for my totally un-PC transgression, said boss was putting me in my place by driving me to the brink of ecstasy just by his kiss alone, only to tell me to pack up my stuff and leave, before he filed a lawsuit.

"Jane..."

"Don't." I said, interrupting him and really pushing him away this time. I bent down to retrieve my duffle bag and stepped toward the door. "My stuff will be gone tonight. You won't see me after this."

I ran. Yep, got my fat ass out of there and ran through the gym to the elevator, but realized by the time the elevator door opened, Josh would be able to quote Donald Trump and I just didn't want to hear the words from his mouth. I changed course at the treadmills and wove my way to the stair exit.

"Wait! Jane..."

This time it was the bang of the exit door that cut him off.

They say when you're about to die, your life flashes before your eyes. Something similar must happen when you've been fired, because as I ran down the flights of stairs, flashes of my job assaulted me.

My interview with Josh. I'd been so nervous. I'd really needed the job and he was so hot.

The time he'd said "Hi" to me at the Christmas party. One of the twins had come up and demanded his attention right after that, but it had seemed as if he'd sought me out that night.

His naked ass under his faded jeans. His hands on my body. His lips. His smell.

God. I'm so stupid. I was that stupid romance novel heroine who was half in love with her boss. Only instead of fucking like animals on his office desk, I'd lost my job, my dignity, and probably that five pounds I'd shed was going to come back with a vengeance and bring his best friend, another five pounds, back from vacation with him.

I slammed through the door on my floor, noting with a small satisfaction that I wasn't breathing too hard. Those late night workouts had helped. Shit, I was gonna miss those.

The light on my desk was on, illuminating the cubicle-filled room with its soft glow. The cleaning lady must have left it on, because I remembered turning it off. I turned



down my row and slowed down, dreading the task of cleaning out my desk. I loved my job. Finding another one wouldn't be difficult, unless Josh, er, Mr. Anderson decided to blacklist me, but I didn't want another one.

"Damnit Jane! Why couldn't you just keep your mouth shut?" I berated myself.

"I'm glad you didn't." Jo—Mr. Anderson glided into view in my desk chair. He had a blue dress shirt on now that matched his eyes.

"What are you ... how did you?"

"Doing here? Make it here before you?" He smiled and winked.

My heart flipped while my stomach flopped. I couldn't do more than nod.

"First question. I think you got the impression that I'm going to fire you. I'm not. Second," he paused, lifting his finger at me to halt the protest I'd started. "The elevator really is faster than running down the stairs. I've timed it before."

I was still stuck on the "I'm not going to fire you bit." I stood there, my mouth still doing its best attempt at a Big-Mouth Bass impersonation.

Mr. Anderson. Josh. Hell, the hot guy who wasn't going to fire me, stood and took a deep breath. "Look, obviously I'm going about this the wrong way. I'm sorry for what happened upstairs."

My heart sank. I'd heard this speech before too. I don't know what came over me ... Or ... You were there and available ... Or ... If I need to release some stress again can I call you? For some reason I'd thought the boys in college had honestly been interested in me, no matter what I looked like. They'd just wanted one thing. The one thing I'd almost done with Mr. Anderson in the locker room.

"I'd like to see you, out of the office, that is." His confession cut through my pity party.

"I'm sorry," I said, my voice dripping with sarcasm and mistrust. "Did you say you'd like to see me? Is this so I don't try to press charges or something? Because I won't, I started the whole thing and I'm sorry. I'll take full responsibility."

"Jane."

"So don't worry about trying to avoid a lawsuit, it's the furthest thing from my mind."

"Jane."

"If you'll just kindly leave, I can clear out my things..."

"Jane!" He grabbed my arms and pulled me to him, his lips meeting mine as my body melted into his. I'd like to avoid the cliché but seriously, fire spread through my limbs and met at the juncture of my thighs, instantly wetting my undies. I did the only thing I could do at that point.

I kissed him back.

\*

## Josh

I did the only thing I could do to shut Jane up. I kissed her. I figured the only way she'd quit talking and let me get a word in edgewise was if I kissed her silly. Now I didn't want to brag, but all of my ex-girlfriends always said I was a great kisser and Jane proved they were right.

She wrapped her arms around me and dove into the kiss. I took her mouth with my tongue, giving her a preview of what having sex with me would be like. My tongue stroked the sensitive roof of her mouth and she shivered. I took her bottom lip and

nibbled on it. Taking my time, I learned her. I trailed kisses over her face, tracing her nose and the shape of her eyebrows. Her tiny whimpers encouraged me.

I had been thinking that my jeans were baggier this morning, but I was wrong because at the moment, they were so tight, my cock wanted out. It was trying to burst my zipper.

Right before my mind shut off and I forgot my own name, I thought, *this is so not the way to show her you want a real relationship and not just sex*. The moment her hips ground into mine and she sucked on my tongue, all the blood raced from my head to my cock and my nice guy side shut down.

Making sure I didn't lose contact with Jane's lips, I reached around her to clear space on her desk. I lifted her up and set her ass on the edge of the desk. Jane was wearing a skirt and I thanked God she didn't dress in jeans for casual Friday. Kneeling before her, I pushed the material up so it unveiled black lace panties.

I smiled to myself. I had thought there was a sex kitten hiding under all those baggy clothes. Her sexy side didn't run to thongs and teddies yet, but I'd work on that with her. I couldn't imagine anything more fun than taking Jane shopping for lingerie.

She stared down at me and I gave her a wink. My kiss seemed to have struck her speechless.

"Lift your hips," I ordered her.

She did it without saying a word. I stripped her panties from her and tucked them into my pocket. It guaranteed I'd have to see her again, if for no reason than to return them to her. Even with the need to taste her foremost in my mind, I still plotted her seduction.

Pressing my hands to the inside of her thighs, I silently asked her to spread her legs. For a moment, I felt resistance in her muscles and I thought she'd refuse, but then she relaxed and allowed me to part her. Her arousal was evident in the scent-filled breath I took and the way the curls covering her pussy glistened with moisture.

"Relax, love. You'll enjoy this."

A snort came from above me and I looked up in time to see her roll her eyes. Quirking an eyebrow, I asked, "You don't believe me?"

"You certainly don't lack confidence, do you?"

Shrugging, I reached out and ran a finger through her curls, just lightly grazing her clit. She jumped.

"There are a few things I'm not sure about at all, but I've had enough practice at this to know I can make it good for you." I wanted to smack myself in the forehead. Nothing like reminding her about my playboy reputation.

"Lucky for you, I'm willing to take you up on the offer." Jane's voice held resolve.

I don't know what changed her mind about being intimate with me, but I wasn't going to lose the chance. My fingers spread her plump lips wide to reveal her clit and I bent down. Her muscles tensed and she tried to close her legs when I blew a puff of air over the hard piece of flesh.

I thought I heard a squeak when I flicked it with the tip of my tongue. I stroked her from the top of her pussy to the bottom. She was so wet and the salty taste of her juices was something I could become addicted to. My tongue slid down to tease at her opening, dipping in just an inch or so. One of her hands petted my head and I shot a glance up at her. She leaned back on the other hand with her head thrown back and her eyes closed.

She seemed to be absorbing everything I was doing to her.

I had to love a woman who could throw her inhibitions away and really enjoy the experience. I drew her clit into my mouth and started sucking. Her hips came off the desk and pressed her pussy tighter to my face. Her juices coated my chin and the smell of her sex filled my nose.

Some of my friends hated going down on their girlfriends or the women they were dating. Since it did nothing for the guys physically, they didn't see the point in it, but I'd always been taught to make sure the lady was enjoying herself. One of the quickest ways for me to get off was by doing a woman orally.

I nipped her bud and she jerked. Keeping it trapped between my teeth, I tapped and soothed it with my tongue. Jane's thighs clamped around my head, but not before I managed to work my hand between them.

Without warning her, I thrust my middle finger as deep into her as I could go.

"Josh," she cried out.

Satisfaction crept in. I was doing something right if I got her to call me by my first name. As I was pulling out, I scraped the tip of my finger over her inner walls. Moaning, she clenched those muscles and I knew I'd hit her sweet spot. Her hips rode my finger and my mouth for a few minutes. Then I worked two fingers into her and I thought she was going to come off the desk.

Pulling away from her, I took in the sight she made, sprawled across her desk with my fingers buried last-knuckle-deep in her. Her black hair was spread over the papers on her desk and I knew I'd never be able to look at any of the office furniture without seeing Jane like this.

Her pussy was tight and I had the feeling that it'd been a while since she'd gotten any kind of sex unless she was into self-pleasure. I could feel the pre-cum leaking from my cock at the thought of watching Jane pleasure herself. Oh man, that was something I'd have beg her to do for me.

I rubbed her clit hard with my thumb as I fucked her with my fingers. When she was wet enough, I slid a third finger in and felt her entire body tense. I knew it would only take a few more thrusts to make her come and I wanted to see what she looked like in the midst of an orgasm. I moved my fingers faster, driving her closer to the edge.

Her back bowed and her inner muscles clamped down on my fingers.

"Come for me, baby."

\*

## **Jane**

The slick sound of Josh's fingers pumping into my sex, his hot breath on my clit, and last but not least, his words, all of those things brought me to the best orgasm I'd experienced yet. My muscles wouldn't stop clenching his fingers that, even as I felt the orgasm begin to fade, continued their assault.

"Again," he breathed over my clit just before he took it into his mouth and sucked.

"Fuck," I yelled as another, more intense orgasm rocked through me. This time he let me come down, but I was grateful when he stood and pulled me close to him. I was so limp I probably would have melted off the desk.

Josh held me tight as the last of the tremors died down. I could tell, though, that even though I was certainly spent, Josh wasn't. His erection pressed against me, his jeans making a decidedly different yet satisfying sensation on my sensitive lips. I wished it had

been his manhood that had me in such a state of liquefied bliss.

“That was...”

Oh, God. He was going to say ‘mistake’.

“...amazing. God, Jane, I knew there was a hellcat under your prim and proper façade, but shit, I’m fucking blown away.” He pulled back to look at me, then leaned in, pressing his lips to mine.

I tasted wet and salt, me. I was hot and desperate for him all over again. “Josh.” I laughed to cover up my extreme embarrassment. “I don’t know what to say.”

He quirked a grin at me that said he knew he’d been good, but his eyes held a note of promise of things yet to come.

“I do.” He pulled me off the desk and smoothed my skirt down. He brushed my hair off my face, his hands lingering in the tangled mess. “Can I take you to dinner?”

“Tonight?” I said incredulously. It was already past ten, there weren’t many places but greasy spoons open this late.

He chuckled and kissed me lightly on the lips. “No, and I have to go out of town this weekend, but Monday.” He bent for another kiss. “Monday and we’ll go from there. Does that sound good?”

*We’ll go from there.* I wasn’t sure what that meant. The scared fat girl in me was screaming, ‘NO’ while the curvy, sex kitten was purring, ‘Fuck yes.’

“Monday sounds great,” I said instead.

Fat girl slammed her door. Sex kitten went to shine the whips.

## Monday

### Jane

The entire weekend a feeling of dread curled in my stomach. I woke Monday morning and wanted to throw up. We'd agreed that Josh would pick me up at eight, leaving me plenty of time to go home from work and be ready. Leaving me plenty of time to stew about how this was a bad idea. I so didn't want to go to work. I so didn't want to sit at my desk reliving my own personal porn movie in my head.

Everyone would know. I was sure I would walk through the doors to find everyone laughing and pointing. The alarm radio, done with snoozing, clicked on again. Alanis was wailing about her *Jagged Little Pill*. Mine was already gone and swallowed.

I showered and ate mechanically. Visions of Josh's head between my legs and my co-workers laughing at me danced through my head so often that when I finally did step out of the car in the parking lot at work, I felt like Josh's face was permanently imprinted on my skirt, and that people no longer spoke English, just a language that sounded strangely like laughter. Like a freak out of Arnold's *Total Recall*.

I paused before the double glass doors of the building to catch my breath and still my racing heart.

"Hi Jane." The girl three computers down from me breezed passed me with a little wave.

"Hey Marie." I pushed through the doors and checked in at the security desk. I always had a smile for the security officer, Tyson, but he never did more than grunt at me and hand me back my badge.

"You look nice today, Jane."

I turned around, checking to see if there was another "Jane" Tyson was talking to.

"Me? Uh, thanks." I grabbed my badge and decided to take the stairs instead of the elevator. Weird weekend was blending into weird morning. No one said hi to me. I was invisible. I had one friend, Dean, the designer who sat across from me and the only reason I'd even started talking to him was because he was gay and I didn't have to worry about him checking me out.

Crap. Everyone did know. When I made it to my floor, I pushed open the door to the normal buzz of a busy day. No laughing, no pointing. I let out a pent-up breath and relaxed a little. I could make it through this day.

My heels were silent on the carpeted floor, but Dean rolled out from his cubicle the minute I stepped around the corner. Oh God...I'd been right. There was a security camera or something...they'd been laughing at me over coffee and donuts. "How did you know?"

"I just do, Janie. Hurry up girl! You've got a present." His eyes bugged a bit and his voice was breathy and high pitched.

There it was again, that dread welling up inside.

Dean jumped up and down like a little schoolboy. "Hurry! It's wrapped so simple and sexy. Why didn't you tell me you had a man?" He said the last with a little pout.

"I don't." But there, big as life, waiting expectantly on my desk, was a plain silver

shirt box with a black ribbon around it and tied in a bow. A small card fluttered to the desk when I picked up the box. Dean lunged for it, but I was faster.

Wear this tonight, it matches the gift you gave me ~ J

I blushed furiously, wondering what was in the box and what gift Josh was talking about.

Dean tried to snatch the card from my hand.

“Oh, no you don’t,” I said, tucking the card away in my bra, where I knew he would never venture.

“Can I at least see what’s in the box?” Gay or not, Dean was as tenacious as a pit bull.

“Maybe,” I teased. It would depend on what it was. “But, it will have to be later. Right now we’ve got to finish the Blackman account.”

Dean stomped his foot and stuck his tongue out in a perfect rendition of a five-year-old boy. “Spoil sport.”

I laughed, Dean did that to me, made me laugh, but I didn’t relax. If anything, the silver box I hid under my desk only increased my stress level throughout the day.

Dean and I spent most of the morning tweaking the layout of the Blackman account. It wasn’t until I’d typed Blackbird rather than Blackman that Dean brought up the box again.

“It’s killing me, and obviously you too.” He pointed to my computer screen. “Blackbird?”

I shoved his finger away. “I read Poe before I went to bed last night, okay?”

Dean snorted in laughter. “Yeah right, *quoth the Raven*. Just change it so we can ship this off to Mr. Anderson for the final approval.”

My heart thudded into my throat. I’d been so focused on the box and its contents, I’d nearly forgotten who’d given it to me.

Josh. Mr. Anderson.

Heat spread through me as I remembered the taste of me on his lips.

“Move over, Edgar Allen,” Dean said, pushing me aside and fixing my typo. He cued up my email, attached the file, and hit send with a flourish only a gay man could perfect. “Now,” he said, grabbing the box from its hiding place under my desk. “The Box.”

With a sigh of resignation, I took the box from his hands. I admit, I can have a bit of a mean streak—so with deliberate slowness I undid the ribbon, put on my best ‘come hither’ look and wrapped the ribbon around Dean’s neck, pulling him into me.

“Ugh,” he groaned dramatically. “God, Janie, I wish that did it for me.” He planted a platonic kiss on my cheek. “But quit stalling!”

I snickered, then tossed the ribbon around my own neck and tipped up the edge of the lid for a peek.

Dean yanked the lid from out of my hand and off the box, pulling its contents out at the same time.

“Oh my,” I gasped.

Dean whistled as he held up a gorgeous black silk and lace camisole with delicate straps and a dangerously plunging neckline.

My fingers itched to snatch it away from him, but I didn’t want to risk ripping it.

Dean raised an eyebrow at me then gently folded the cami and placed it back in the

box. "Must have been some gift you gave," he said, handing me the box and scooting his chair back to his cubicle, leaving me alone with the box and my thoughts.

I knew now what the 'gift' was Josh had been talking about in the note.

My black lace panties.

\*

## Josh

I stood where Jane couldn't see me. I wanted to know what she thought of the lingerie I sent her, but I knew seeing me at any time before our date would make her nervous. I wasn't about to do anything that would cause her to cancel our date.

*Then you shouldn't have sent her underwear, jackass.* The voice in my head sounded remarkably like my best friend Michael. Growing up together, he had been my voice of reason and even though we didn't see each other often nowadays, I could still hear his voice in my head, chewing me out when I did something stupid.

Damn. The voice was right as usual. Lingerie wasn't something a guy sent to a woman before they even went on their first date. It didn't matter if said guy had intimate knowledge of certain private parts of said lady.

I saw Dean pop out of her design area. He caught my eye and winked. Good, she had opened it and since I didn't hear any screaming, I wouldn't be slapped with a harassment suit. Nodding back, I turned away, heading to my office. I could find my way there blindfolded so my mind occupied itself with conjuring images of Jane wearing the black camisole and nothing else.

"Mr. Anderson." My assistant intercepted me as I started to open my office door.

I cringed. No matter how many times I asked her to, Marsha wouldn't call me by my first name. "Yes?"

"Sir, your..."

Marsha was interrupted by a chilly voice. "Where have you been, Joshua?" My older sister glared at me from behind my desk.

"I work for a living, Sybil. I had business to attend to. Now move your ass the hell out of my chair." Ice coated my heart and voice.

"I'm sorry, sir," Marsha apologized.

"It's okay. Why don't you take a break?" I didn't want her to hear whatever argument my sister and I were going to have.

"Not before she brings me a cup of coffee," Sybil ordered.

"Marsha is my assistant, not your servant. Get your own damn coffee." I nodded at Marsha and shut the door.

Leaning against the wood, I stared at Sybil. She had already searched my desk. I could tell by the rearranged piles of paper. She would have been looking for money or information she could use to blackmail me. I used to play the game with her, but decided to stop using her rules and live my own life. Now I lock everything away even if I'm just going to take a piss. Nothing is left where any of my family might be able to find it.

"What do you want?"

She managed to pout without messing her makeup or causing wrinkles. "Can't your older sister come and make sure her little brother is okay? We haven't heard from you in a while."

"Bullshit. None of you really care what I do as long as it doesn't embarrass you. So spill it. I don't have all day to mess around." I had a date to plan and software launches to

coordinate.

"All right, fine." She sat back with a sigh. She would have flounced if she'd been standing. "I need you to escort me to Alissa's party tonight."

"No." I pushed off the door and headed for my desk.

"No? I ask for one small favor and you're refusing me?" Her voice went shrill.

"Yes, I'm refusing to do you one little favor because I know there are a whole lot of strings attached to that favor. Tell me the truth. Why are you asking me instead of one of the zillion boy-toys you have?" I braced my hands on my desk and leaned into her face. "Out!"

She finally took my glare as a gauge of how unhappy I was to see her. Shooting to her feet, Sybil stalked away to stand by the window. "I promised Alissa you would come. We're trading dates tonight. She's bringing her yummy brother and I'm bringing you."

I knew for a fact that Alissa's brother was gay and if he wasn't, after two hours with my sister, he would turn gay. She had that effect on people, men mostly. "I wouldn't date Alissa for all the money in the entire universe. She's a fashionable barracuda who's only interested in where the next party is or where her next shot of coke is coming from. If her father isn't careful, she'll snort his entire fortune up her nose."

"How can you say that?" Sybil didn't play indignant well.

"I say it because it's true and stop acting you don't know what's going on, Sybil. I've seen you chop out lines for her, so stop with the innocent act. I won't be going with you tonight. Now you can show yourself out, I don't have any more time to waste on you." I sat down and pretended to look through the papers on my desk.

"But I promised," she whined.

I cringed inside. Her whine was sharp enough to cut glass. I hated when she did it and she knew it. Of course, she believed that my annoyance would get her what she wanted, but all it did was make me more determined never to give in to her. Being screwed by your sister once was damaging enough. I wasn't going to allow it to happen again.

"I don't care. We both know your promises don't mean shit anyway, Sybil." I pressed the intercom button.

"Sir?"

"I need a security guard up here, Tyson. I have someone I want escorted off the premises." I smiled at the shock racing over my sister's face.

"Yes, sir. I'll send one up right away." Tyson's voice was brisk.

"You're not going to have me thrown out like an unwanted bag of trash." Her statement sounded more like a question.

"I'm going to treat you the way you act, Sybil. You're annoying me and you won't leave after I've asked you to." I turned my computer on and typed in my password.

I didn't look at her again until there was a firm knock on my door.

"Come in," I called.

One of the company's security guards stood in the doorway. He kept his eyes trained on me. He didn't look at Sybil, who was now trying to look innocent and sweet.

"I need you to escort Ms. Anderson out of the building. Also, could you let Tyson know that she's been banned from the premises? I don't want anyone allowing her anywhere, not even on the grounds." I made sure the man understood I was serious about the orders.



“Yes, sir. I’ll let Tyson know.” The guard turned to Sybil. “Ms. Anderson, if you would be so kind as to come with me?” His question was definitely an order.

“I’ll get even with you for humiliating me like this, Joshua,” she warned as she stalked through the door.

I waited until the door was closed before I leaned back in my chair and sighed. I was going to have to be on guard now. Sybil’s revenge wouldn’t be pretty. Reaching out for the phone book, I knew there was one more thing I had to take care of before I could finally do some work.

Finding the number, I dialed and waited for the man to answer.

“Hello?”

“Hey, Roger?”

“Yeah.” Suspicion held court in the man’s voice.

“It’s Josh Anderson, Sybil’s younger brother.” I swiveled in my chair to stare out the windows.

“Really? Why would you be calling me?” There was a little less suspicion and a little more curiosity in his voice now.

“Just doing a guy a favor. You’re supposed to be escorting your sister Alissa to a party tonight?” I closed my eyes. I loathed my sister at times.

“Yeah. She said something about you being there.”

“Oh hell no. I don’t run in those circles. Never have. I wanted to warn you, your sister and mine were planning on trading escorts. I shot it down by refusing to go, but I thought you might like to know that Sybil is still planning on having you tonight.”

“Honestly, those two bitches think they can get away with anything they want.” Roger sounded furious. “I’m gay, for fuck’s sake.”

“I guess it doesn’t matter to them. I thought I’d give you a friendly warning.”

“Thanks, man. I appreciate it.” Roger hung up.

Smiling, I put the receiver back in the cradle. It felt good to screw up Sybil’s plans. Now that that was done, I had a date to plan. Roses, wine and candlelight. All at my favorite Italian restaurant with a moonlit carriage ride. I wanted everything to go perfectly for our first date together because I was planning on there being many more to come.

\*

## **Jane**

I sat in front of my vanity mirror staring at my reflection. I had a date. Not the greasy Chinese-buffet-and-lame-movie sort of date with a guy that loved himself more than life, either.

I had a date with Josh.

A wave of woozy swept over me at the thought. The butterflies flitting around in my stomach all day had transformed into rhinos and the nervous energy was killing me. I wanted to touch myself, to watch myself peel away the lacy camisole and imagine it was Josh’s lips grazing my breasts. That it was his fingers diving into my wet sex, tweaking my clit.

But I didn’t.

I focused back on my reflection. One spaghetti strap was pushed down so that only my erect nipple held the camisole up. My eyes were wide and cheeks flushed. After experiencing the real thing, I couldn’t seem to continue with the fantasy anymore.

Damn him. Damn him and his sexy tattoos. Damn him and his bedroom eyes, his excellent taste in lingerie and his fucking amazing mouth.

I should call and cancel. This was a mistake. I was going to wake up any moment and find myself tucked in bed and hugging Mr. Happy, the stuffed hippo my grandfather had given me when I was fifteen. I blinked hard and pinched my arm.

“Ouch, crap!” Okay, so not dreaming, but I should still cancel. I glanced at the clock, seven thirty. Josh was going to be here in half an hour. Was that in the okay-to-cancel time-frame, or would that fall under the I’m-a-scared-bitch category? I got up from the vanity table and walked to the nightstand where the phone was, to make official scared-bitch status.

The phone rang as I picked it up.

“Hello?” It came out in a croaked sort of nervous whisper.

“You cannot cancel.”

“Dean?” The rhinos sped up at his accuracy.

“I know you, Jane. You’re sitting there, probably half dressed, trying to figure out the best way to cancel.”

I sat on the edge of the bed. “I am not,” I protested lamely, not for the first time wondering if Dean wasn’t my Jiminy Cricket. How else would he have known?

Dean laughed. “You’re such a horrible liar.”

He was right, I was worse than Pinocchio.

“Now,” Dean said in his best “mother” voice. “You’re going to hang up this phone, put on that sultry black wrap dress and your silver Jimmy Choo’s and go have fun.”

“Ugh, I don’t know how you were able to coerce out of me that I had a date tonight.” I stood up and walked over to my bathroom door, on which the black wrap dress was already hanging, waiting for me to wear it. “You should work for the CIA or something.”

“You never know. Now put it on and give Josh a kiss for me. His buns are to die for.”

“Dean!”

“This message will self destruct in fifteen seconds.” The sound of Dean smooching the air filled my ear and then he was gone.

\* \* \* \*

Eight-twenty. The clock on the kitchen wall mocked me. I cat-walked from the kitchen down the hallway to the front door and checked the peephole. Yes, cat-walked. How else do you walk in three-inch Choo’s?

He wasn’t coming.

I turned and headed back to the kitchen to check my cell phone on the tiled counter. No missed calls. No messages. The rhinos screeched to a halt.

I knew it. I had been dreaming. He’d gotten what he wanted, bought me a parting gift, and left me standing alone in the empty game show theater. I let the shame roll over me, savoring its bitterness.

I turned to look at the silver-framed mirror hanging on the wall. This time my reflection showed a sensual, curvy woman I didn’t know, but I knew the hurt, scared girl on the inside.

No way. Fuck him. I looked good, no, I looked amazing. The plunging neckline of the asshole’s camisole matched the V of the wrap dress as if they’d been made for each

other. The dress hugged my curves and swung loose from my hips to just above the knees. The silver Choo's showed off my newly found calves and fire engine red toenail polish like a gilded frame.

I was going out, Josh or not. I grabbed my clutch and car keys off the counter. I didn't know where I was going, but I'd know it when I saw it.

This time the cat-walk was more of a stomp. I flung the front door open and got smacked in the eye by Josh's knocking fist.

"Fuck!"

"Oh, my God, Jane."

"What are you trying to do, kill me?" I stumbled back from him, but he caught me and ushered me inside the doorway. My eye was watering so much I could barely see out of it.

"I'm so sorry." He tucked me into him and led me down the hallway to sit on the couch in the living room. "God, Jane, I didn't even see you open the door." His hands caressed my hair as he sat down facing me and cupped my head in his hands, tilting it up for his inspection. "Let me see," he cooed.

I looked up, blinking and melting into his half-blurry face. He looked mortified, as he should. Not only had he stood me up—okay, so he was here now—but he'd given me a black eye.

"Oh, baby." He leaned forward and planted a kiss on my eyebrow. "I'm so sorry, but I think it's gonna be a good shiner."

His utterly cute face twitched into a teasing grin.

My fury came roaring back.

"I can't believe..." I hauled back my right arm and punched him in the shoulder. "...you have the audacity..." Left arm connected with left shoulder. "...to be sweet to me." I reared back my right arm to hit him again, but he grabbed both my wrists and wrestled me back onto the couch. I was lying half propped up by the arm of the couch, feet dangling to the floor and had hard, yummy smelling man pressed into me.

"I'm sorry." He kissed my forehead. "That I was late." My left cheek. "I had an unexpected phone call I had to take." My other cheek. "And then the battery on my phone died so I couldn't call you." He moved his lips to my ear and flicked my earlobe with his tongue. "I'll show you to prove it." His mouth descended on mine.

Heat arced from his lips through me to my aching core. I opened my lips, welcoming his exploring tongue. We dueled for a moment, each trying to see who would control the kiss.

But I gave in. Into his embrace, his warmth, his touch.

I felt a little like Renee Zellweger, only it hadn't been a sweet tentative "Hello" he'd had me at, but his fist in my eye.

\*

## Josh

Holy shit. I punched Jane in the eye. *Great way to make a good impression, asshole*, Michael's voice played in my head even while I kissed her. Her lips trembled under mine, making me feel like a total cad. I'd never hit a girl. Well, I'd hit my sister, but she didn't count.

Pulling away from Jane, I cupped her cheek and whispered, "I'm sorry."

"You should be. What kind of jerk makes a girl wait for thirty minutes? What kind of

jerk hits the girl when she innocently opens the door?" She sat up and straightened her dress.

As much as my mind worried about her, my cock became interested in other things. My eyes trailed down her neck. A great deal of cleavage peeked out from the vee in the dress. That little black camisole I picked out could have been made for this dress.

"Are you wearing my gift?" I traced a finger over her collarbone.

I saw the shivers shake her, but she glared at me. Maybe that wasn't the right thing to say, but my mind had relinquished control of my tongue.

"It'd serve you right if I wasn't wearing it," she mumbled, crossing her arms and settling back on the couch.

She was right. Sliding off the couch, I went to my knees in front of her. I put my hands together, palms facing each other and gave her my best puppy dog look. "I'm sorry, baby. Please say you forgive me. This is going to be a wonderful night and I don't want you to miss out because you're mad at me."

Jane shook her head and smiled at me. "You must have gotten away with murder when you were little."

"Not really. The nannies were pretty tough, so I got spanked a lot." I sat back down next to her and tugged out my cell phone. Flipping it open, I showed her the dead battery icon. "See, my battery really did die on my way here. I wouldn't have stood you up for the world."

The way she stood and headed down the hallway told me she wasn't over being mad at me, but I knew she was softening. While she was gone, I wandered around her apartment, trying to figure out what made the lady tick. If I kept screwing things up, I'd need to know what kind of presents to buy her. I spied an XBOX setting out in front of the TV and the cable connecting the controller to the console stretched across the floor leading to the couch. I pushed the open button to see what game she'd been playing. The disc tray popped open and HALO rested in there. So she liked first-person shooting games. I'd keep that in mind.

I walked back to the entryway and peeked into the room opposite the living room. A maple desk took up one corner with a computer and three flat screens. Jane's workspace reminded me of her, simple and elegant. I heard a door close upstairs and high-tailed it back to the living room before I was caught snooping.

"I'm ready to go." She came down the stairs, her makeup fixed, but I could still see the redness around her eye.

"How are you going to explain the black eye tomorrow at work?" I asked as I escorted her from the apartment to where the limo was waiting.

"Going all out to impress the poor working girl, huh?" She winked at me to take the sting from her words.

"Gotta impress you so you'll want to go out with me again." I didn't take the limo out on most dates. My chauffeur was one of the most under-worked men in the city. He took care of my collection of sports cars though, so he didn't complain too much. "Is it working?"

We sank into the leather seats of the limo and I set about seducing Jane. My entire plan wasn't just to fall into my bed, though I admitted to myself that's where I wanted the night to end. I grabbed the champagne that had been chilling in an ice bucket. Crystal wine glasses were resting in the cup holders. Pouring out the bubbly liquid, I thought

about the last time I had champagne in my limo. Jane's fingers caressed mine when I handed her the glass. *Don't go there*, my mind said. *Jane doesn't deserve her first date with you filled with baggage from the past.*

There was a picnic basket at our feet. Opening it, I pulled out a bowl full of strawberries. I offered them to her. Before she could bite into the fruit, I took it from her and dipped it in her champagne. Her brilliant green eyes glittered in the dim light filtering through the tinted windows. My cock hardened when she leaned forward to take the berry from my fingers and her teeth nipped at them. I wanted to feel that mouth around my cock.

She sat back with a smug smile on her face as if she knew exactly what I was thinking. Taking a quick glance down at my crotch, I laughed. The bulge under my zipper told her every thought that went through my mind.

I took a bite out of the next strawberry and ran it over her neck. Dropping it back into the glass, I wrapped my arms around her and pulled her close. My lips found the juice and sucked. It wasn't hard enough to leave a mark, but hard enough for her to feel it.

A puff of warm air hit my cheek when she sighed. Without taking my mouth off her silky skin, I grabbed another strawberry. Crushing it in my fingers, I smeared it down into the valley between her breasts. I bent her over my other arm and feasted on skin and berries. My tongue traced patterns over her, enjoying the taste of the fruit mixed with her own unique flavor. I widened the vee in her dress with my chin, trying to find every piece of berry. Her hands entwined in my hair and pressed my face tighter to her chest.

I took a hold of her hands and cupped her breasts with them. "Squeeze your breasts together," I told her, showing her what I wanted her to do.

Jane's slight frown told me she was unsure about the whole thing, but I gave her my best 'trust me' smile and dug through the berries until I found the biggest one in the pile. Her mouth dropped open with a shocked gasp as I stuffed the fruit in the deep cleavage her hands had created.

I was about to dive in and snack on the strawberry when the car came to a stop and I heard the driver climb out. *Damn, I wish I could keep my hands off her.* I meant to feed them to her, showing how romantic and gentlemanly I could be. Instead I was all over her like an octopus. I cleaned her cleavage off before the door opened.

I gave her a hard quick kiss and promised, "We'll come back to that."

\*

## Jane

Sticky, scared, confused, angry, horny... I was running out of adjectives to describe what was going through my head as I followed Josh out of the limo. I didn't know what to expect of the rest of the evening, my perception of Josh already twisted by the events so far. I mean, who rents a limo for a first date? Add a corsage and a dance and I'd feel like I was going to the prom.

Which I'd missed because I'd had a broken arm from falling from some scaffolding during the opening performance of *West Side Story* at my high school. Not something I ever want to relive, even in the telling. Technically, I was in just as much pain tonight as I had been then. I reached up and lightly felt around my swelling eye. "Shit," I hissed.

Josh turned from where he'd been talking with the driver. "Still hurts, huh?"

"Of course it still hurts." Despite his kisses, the strawberries, the sweep-me-off-my-feet limo, deep down I was still a little mad and a lot scared about where ... where we

were going with this thing between us.

"I know I've said I'm sorry a million times, but I really am sorry." He pressed a light kiss on my lips and placed his hand at the small of my back, leading me away from the limo.

For the first time I looked around at our surroundings. We were at Haggler Park, a small intimate botanical garden in the center of the old downtown. "This is one of my favorite places."

Josh looked at me and smiled. "I know."

"You know?"

"Yeah, um, I asked Dean a little bit about you and he told me." He made an attempt at looking sheepish but failed miserably.

"Did he tell you why?"

"No, I like the park too, so I didn't question why."

We walked in silence for a few minutes taking in the dark, lush grounds and the sounds of the night.

I wondered if I should tell him why I liked the park so much; so far our conversation had been surface stuff, and the story behind the park was digging a little deep into who I was. "This park was almost a high-rise."

Josh steered me toward a bench on the side of the path and we sat down. He tucked me into his side, his right arm draped around my shoulders. He drew lazy circles on my arm with his fingers, making me shiver with desire.

"That would have been a shame."

"Yeah, some big shot company tried to buy up most of the old downtown. I headed up the committee against them and we almost lost. If it hadn't been for an anonymous buyer that wanted to restore downtown instead of demolish it, we'd be sitting in an office lobby of a big ugly corporate building."

"Not very romantic." His fingers traveled from my arm up to trace my collarbone. He shifted, turning toward me, his fingers leaving a trail of fire as he moved his right arm to rest on the back of the bench. "I wouldn't have been able to touch you like this." He brought his left hand to the spot on my collarbone his right had left empty when he'd moved. His fingers were a whisper of a touch as he followed the line of my dress down my chest then back up.

I sucked in my breath, the fire he'd built in the limo flaring back up with a passion.

"Or do this." He leaned in toward my cleavage and inhaled deeply. "Mmmm, strawberries."

My face heated at the reminder of him licking the juices from the strawberries off my breasts.

"Are you ready?"

I nodded, not knowing what the heck he was talking about but ready to do anything he asked of me at this point. Anything to have his hands and mouth back on me.

"Okay." He stood up and held out his hand. "Let's go eat. I'm hungry."

"Why you..." I leapt off the bench at him, brandishing my fists.

He laughed and sidestepped my swing, grabbing me from behind and pulling me against him. His hard cock pressed into the crease of my bottom. "I'm gonna have to watch those fists of yours, babe." He thrust against me.

I moaned, couldn't help it. He was mixing me up inside. One minute I wanted to beat

him to bloody pulp; the next I wanted to ride him to oblivion.

He chuckled and let me go, taking my hand and leading me down the path to the other side of the park. "There'll be time enough for that later, Jane. You'll need sustenance for what I have in mind tonight."

The thought of what he had on his mind caused me to stumble, my hand yanking out of his, but I caught myself before I could add broken leg to my list of injuries for the night.

Josh helped me right myself and tipped up my chin to look into my eyes. "Only if you agree, of course. I'd never force you to do anything you don't want to." He questioning eyes held mine for a moment, showing a little insecurity that soon vanished, replaced by a mischievous glint. "Although I'm not above bribery."

I smiled and shook my head at him. My mouth was too dry to attempt any sort of verbal response, so I took his hand again and kept walking, thoughts of my reward at the end of the night propelling my urgency to finish dinner as soon as possible.

\* \* \* \*

We ended up at Rosatti's, a quaint Italian restaurant across the street from where we emerged from Haggler Park. Josh must have connections, because not only were we the only couple in the restaurant, I noticed it was actually after closing hours. When I questioned him he just winked and fed me a bite of his lasagna.

He wined and dined me like a pro, laughing at my jokes. Light touches, candlelight, insinuations, promises of more to come. When I protested desert he said he loved my curves and thought the cheesecake would make a wonderful addition to them. Like I said, professional. So why was I staring at my flushed reflection in the dimly lit bathroom?

One word. Cinderella. Or maybe Goldilocks. Everything had been just right. But just right scared the shit out of me. What happened when the clock struck midnight? What happened when the bears came home? I don't know why I kept questioning Josh and his intentions. He'd told me he wanted more than one night. Since I was a more-than-one-night sort of gal, there shouldn't be a problem. Maybe it was Cinderella. I was scullery maid to his Prince Charming. No matter how badly I wanted his body. No matter how badly I wanted to feel his mouth on mine, on my breasts, between my thighs. I would still have to go back to scrubbing floors. No matter how many times Disney brainwashed little girls into thinking "Wishes come true", it wasn't real life.

I couldn't stay in here forever. Besides, the staff probably wanted to go home and here I was dissecting my insecurities in the bathroom. Very scientific of me. I opened the door and once again was greeted by Josh with a raised fist. "You aren't going to hit me in the other eye are you?"

"Uh, no," he laughed. "I was just making sure you were okay." He reached out with his raised hand and caressed my cheek. "The night's not over yet."

I sighed, closing my eyes for a moment, enjoying the sensation of his touch. "I'm okay."

"Good, because I've got a surprise for you."

I followed him down the small hallway, though the empty dining room and out the front door.

He turned and kissed me hard, grabbing my upper arms and pulling me into him.

I opened up to him, letting his tongue invade my mouth, then doing the same to him.

This man was churning up my insides and I was on the brink of falling, I only hoped he would catch me.

He released my lips with a smack, gave me a smile that reached to his eyes and pierced my heart. “Ta da,” he sang, moving aside so I could see the surprise. A gleaming white horse and carriage stood at the curb. The tuxedoed driver waited with the small half door opened for us.

Fuck, Cinderella.

\*

## Josh

I screwed up. I could tell by the look on her face.

“You don’t like horses,” I asked, afraid of triggering horrifying childhood memories.

“Cinderella,” she muttered.

I glanced over my shoulder at the carriage and then down at her feet. “I don’t see any glass slippers and I can guarantee you that horse isn’t going to turn in to a mouse.”

Jane rolled her eyes at me and headed for the carriage. I still had the strangest feeling I’d done something wrong. The driver handed her up into the back and I jumped in beside her. As warm as the weather had been during the day, the night air had a bit of a nip to it. I settled beside her and put my arm around her shoulders. I pulled a carriage blanket over our laps.

The driver knew where I wanted to go, so there wasn’t any talking. The silence began to feel like a sword hanging over my head. At any minute, it was going to fall and chop me in half. I knew thoughts were burning in Jane’s mind. I could tell by the darkness of her green eyes. Finally, I broke.

“What did I do wrong?” I knew I was opening a can of worms. Here was the opportunity for her to list all the terrible things I’d done since we met. And that didn’t include punching her in the eye.

“Nothing.” She sighed and turned to look at me. “I was just wondering what fairy tale we were starring in.”

“Fairy tale? You mean like Snow White or Sleeping Beauty?” There were times when I just didn’t understand women.

“Yeah. I figured it out. You’re Prince Charming and I’m Cinderella.” She shrugged.

“Oh hell. Talk to any of my family and they’ll tell you I’m definitely not a prince or particularly charming. If I remember my fairy tales correctly, wasn’t Cinderella treated like a scullery maid by her ugly step-mother and step-sisters?” I was willing to admit that I never read the story, but enjoyed the cartoon version of it. Reading wasn’t my strong suit.

“Right. She dresses up and goes to the ball where she falls in love with the Prince. Then she has to return to the real world where she’s just a nobody.”

Okay. There was something going on in her head that I didn’t understand, but I didn’t want to discuss princes or fairy tales. That wasn’t the point of the date. Reaching out, I cupped her chin in my hand. I lowered my lips to hers. A soft burst of her breath bathed my mouth as I kissed her. This was the point of the date.

I kept the kiss shallow at first. I wasn’t sure how she’d react to it and I didn’t want to give her an excuse to punch me in the face. I cringed inside when her hand rose, sure she was going to sock me. My shoulders relaxed as her hand buried itself in my hair and her mouth opened to me.



My tongue slid inside her moist warmth, tasting the garlic and marinara sauce she'd had for dinner. I teased her tongue and drew it into my mouth to suck on. Her other hand came to rest on my chest. There was no way I could hide the pounding of my heart.

Our teeth nibbled on bottom lips. I trailed kisses over her cheekbones and her forehead, down to the sensitive spot behind her ear. My hands began to wander from her chin over her shoulders and down her back. I urged her to climb on to my lap with gentle tugs. Soon Jane was sprawled over my thighs. I tilted her head back to allow my lips access to her neck. Licking a trail over her skin, I pulled a few inches away to blow the wetness dry.

"Josh," she whispered in a harsh voice.

There was the sound I wanted to hear. Desire and lust filled her voice because of what I was doing to her. My free hand slid under her dress and cradled her full breast.

"Oh." She stiffened, but didn't pull away.

"Okay?" I squeezed the mound and rubbed the palm of my hand over her hardened nipple.

"Hmm..." She hummed and arched her back, pushing her breast tighter into my grip.

I took that sound to mean yes, so I kneaded the plump flesh. My fingertips pinched her nipple and plucked at it as if it were a ripe grape.

"Please," she moaned.

She must have been having a hard time staying still. Her lush ass kept rubbing against my cock and I was close to losing control. Lifting her up a little more, I pushed her dress and camisole out of the way. Her dark brown nipple rose as if begging me to taste it. I leaned over and sucked that tempting bit of flesh into my mouth. Her hands clenched my hair hard and she shifted again.

While my mouth kept her distracted, my hand crept up her thigh and slid under the hem of her dress. I pressed the tips to the junction of her thighs and groaned. She wasn't wearing any underwear.

"Spread your legs a little, Jane," I asked her in a low voice.

With a whimper, she allowed me room to play with her. She was wet and my fingers moved over her hot center with ease. My thumb found her hard clit. Two of my fingers circled her opening. Tapping that throbbing button, I thrust as deep into her as I could.

Taking her nipple back into my mouth, I set the rhythm hard and fast. Sucking and thrusting at the same tempo. Her hips began to move as a counterpoint to my thrusts and it was driving me crazy. I'd done my research about the quickest and less traveled way to my house. I didn't want a lot of traffic buzzing by, honking or making noise while I seduced her in the carriage. I wanted Jane to lose control again and to have her do it out in the open where anyone could see us was about to make me come in my pants.

"Josh," she cried. I could tell she was going to come. Her body began to tense and her own pace became rough as if she was distracted by the passion.

"Come for me, baby. It's okay," I encouraged her.

A particularly deep thrust and a scrape against the sensitive inner skin. Her muscles gripped my fingers tight. She threw her head back and came, her juices drenching my hand. I stroked her clit until her breathing eased.

Orgasm-glazed green eyes blinked at me. I straightened her dress and set her down on the seat next to me. Yanking off the blanket, I stepped out of the carriage. I wasn't sure how long we had been stopped in front of my house, but I knew I needed to be inside

her as soon as possible. I needed her in the house, not out here, in front of the carriage driver.

Reaching in, I picked her up and carried her up the front steps and into the entrance hall. I ignored everything and everyone who might have been standing in there. My control wouldn't last long enough for me to make it to my bedroom. I had to take her now.

I kicked open the study door and stalked inside, determined to find some piece of furniture to set her down on before I came in my pants like a teenager. The couch was the closest. She hadn't said a word and I was grateful for that. At the moment, I didn't want to discuss anything. My cock ached. I pulled my wallet out of my back pocket. Fumbling, I managed to find the condom I'd put in there earlier. *Wishful thinking*. Well for the first time in a long time, it looked like something I wished for would come true.

I tore open my pants and my dick sprang out like a Jack-in-the-box. Her eyes widened with admiration, I hoped.

"Please say this is okay," I begged. Pride meant nothing when I could feel my climax at the base of my spine, just waiting to explode.

She pushed herself up and reached for the condom. "Let me put this on you."

"Next time, baby. I don't think I'd last long enough to fuck you if you touch me now." I smiled at her to ease the crudeness of my words. I rolled the rubber over my shaft.

Nodding, Jane pulled her skirt up to reveal her dark wet curls. "Next time."

I placed one knee on the cushions, bracing myself with my other foot on the floor and a hand on the back of the couch. Her hand took my cock in a soft grip, guiding it to her. A loud groan tore from my throat as I sank deep into her. Every atom in my body cried for me to start moving, but I wanted to make sure she was all right.

Her hand stroked over my cheek and she leaned forward to give me a quick kiss. "Move."

That word ripped my control from me. Pulling almost all the way out, I slammed back in. She bit her lip to keep from crying out and I hoped I hadn't hurt her, but there wasn't any way I could stop. Her long legs wrapped around my waist and her hips tilted to let me go farther in. Her inner muscles began to milk my cock with each stroke. My balls tightened.

"Gonna come," I grunted, wanting to warn her.

"Do it."

Her crisp command drove me over the edge. Yelling, I filled the condom in several spurts. My mind blanked and I collapsed on top of her, my chest heaving. I could feel her hands smoothing over my back as I slowly gained control over myself.

Brushing a kiss over her mouth, I pushed my chest off hers. I smiled down at her and started to ask, "Jane, will you...?"

The Grandfather clock on the landing of my stairs chimed midnight just as my phone rang.

## Tuesday

### Jane

*Will I? Will I what?* I sat up a bit, the shock and awe of what I'd just done with Josh was still hovering just outside of my reach, but the ring of the phone was getting through just fine.

"Your phone." That was lame.

"Ignore it. Jane, I'm sorry, I'm not usually so ... abrupt."

Abrupt? My eyeballs had almost popped out from the orgasm in the carriage, and the feel of Josh inside me had sent me right back up...

Oh. My. God. I'd had almost sex in an open carriage. Disney would kill me if they found out.

"Josh, seriously, we can bask in a minute. Go answer the phone, what if it's important?"

He sighed and stood from his kneeling position on the floor, wrapped the used condom in a tissue and pulled up his pants.

I sighed at the sight of his cock disappearing behind his zipper.

"I'll make this fast." He moved to his desk and snatched the phone up.

I held back a giggle hoping that the next time "fast" wouldn't be in the equation. Next time. I so wanted there to be a next time, but my insecurities reared their ugly head. I suddenly wished I had worn underwear because despite the fact I'd smoothed my skirt down over my nakedness, I still felt exposed.

"Michael ... Mike," Josh hushed into the phone. "Now is not a good time, man." He looked at me, held up his finger and mouthed 'one minute'.

I nodded. I was the one who told him to answer the phone anyway. Okay, I can do this. I'm a big girl. He was probably going to ask me if I could take a cab home or something since he was so tired. Or maybe he was going to ask me not to mention this to anyone. Ha, like anyone would believe me.

"Mike." Josh turned away from me but I could still hear him mumble. "I have a woman waiting for me." He paused, then raised his hand in a "ah ha" gesture as if what he was saying had finally gotten through to this guy Mike. "Okay, man, I'll call you in the morning. Yes, we're still on for the end of the month." He hung up the phone and leaned with both his hands onto the desk and looked down.

"Jane."

Gulp. "Yes?" My heart skipped a beat. I wanted the wanton woman back, the one who'd reenacted an erotic fairy tale, but she'd gone AWOL. It was just plain ol' me.

"I'm sorry."

Shit. Poof. Horse turned to mouse. Poof. Carriage turned to pumpkin. I had to stop myself from looking down at my outfit.

"Come here, please." He looked up and held his hand to me as he walked around the desk.

I stood up on wobbly knees and walked to him. The look in his eyes drew me to him. It wasn't one of horror over what we'd just done. It wasn't one of "oh God, how do I get

rid of this woman?" It was smoldering, wanting, and all for me.

I reached out and touched his outstretched hand, rekindling the wanton woman who'd disappeared. I melted into his embrace, laying my head on his chest and reveling in his soft caresses on my back.

His heart was pounding.

So was mine.

He took a breath.

I knew he was going to ask me his interrupted question. I lifted my head off his chest, reached up and wound my arms around his neck and brought his lips to mine, silencing any words.

He groaned and pressed me to him.

Encouraged, I opened my mouth to him, licking into his mouth, dancing his tongue with mine. I stood on my tiptoes for a better angle and leaned into him, pushing him back to the desk. I kissed my way along his jaw and down his neck, taking my time, savoring his taste, his smell.

I untangled my arms from his neck and began to unbutton his shirt.

"Jane," Josh whispered.

"Shh."

Pushing his shirt open, I continued the kisses down his chest. I flicked his hard nipple with my tongue then sucked hard, releasing him with a bite.

"Oh, God, Jane."

"That's goddess to you." I shifted and gave equal attention to his other nipple, pushing the dress shirt off his muscled shoulders. "This," I purred, sliding my hands down his naked chest to the button of his pants. "Needs to be undone." With a flick of my fingers the button released and I knelt in front of him. Grabbing the zipper pull with my teeth, I tugged it down.

I slowly pulled his slacks down, my hands trailing down his hips, over his ass and lightly down the back of his legs.

He inhaled sharply when my hands slid past the back of his knees.

I leaned forward; the scent of sex still clung to his naked cock. "Are you ticklish?" My lips were a hair's breath away from his salty smooth skin.

"Yes."

I grabbed the base of his cock and aimed its flared head at my mouth, licking off the seeping pre-cum with my tongue then swirling around the tip of his cock.

"Say Uncle when you can't take it anymore." I purred as I sucked him in, all the way until the thick tip bumped my soft palate. I relaxed my throat muscles and felt him lengthen and harden even more in my mouth, willing myself not to gag at the intrusion.

He tangled his fingers into my hair and moaned.

This was it, my wanton moment. I gathered the base of his penis in my hand again as I pulled off him. Keeping a steady rhythm I worked his cock, in and out of my mouth, squeezing gently with my hand with each thrust down onto him. I moved my other hand up his leg, making sure to hit the ticklish spot behind his knee.

"Ah," he moaned and thrust forward into my mouth when I hit the sweet spot behind his knee.

I raked my nails over that spot repeatedly, keeping time with his surging hips, until he thrust one last time and came into my mouth with a shout. I swallowed him down,

taking his warm juice into me and milking him with the hand around the base of his cock.

He slumped to the floor and gathered me to him. "Jane?" he croaked out.

"Hmm?"

"Will you stay with me?"

I pulled back and looked into his sleepy yet satisfied gaze. "Since you didn't say Uncle..." I kissed him, sharing the taste of him. "Yes."

\*

## Josh

I lay in bed, watching the early morning sunshine bathe Jane's face with a golden glow. *What the hell have I done?* I admit it, panic was starting to set in. Panicking now wasn't good. I should have thought things through before I asked her to spend the night, but my cock had done the talking for me.

I brushed my fingertips over her cheek. She sighed and snuggled closer. I thought about the last time I'd shared a bed with someone. I couldn't remember. Should I kiss her awake? God, she'd look right at me and know every guy warning about commitment I had was going off. Yet there was something in the way she moved and talked that made my heart think she might be the one for me. For the first time in my adult life, I was thinking about a long-term commitment. Maybe even the 'M' word. She looked perfect sharing my bed.

The door opened and Stevenson walked in. Stevenson was my personal assistant and basic caretaker. He kept me organized, but now wasn't the time for him to kick me in to shape.

"What the hell?" I tucked the covers closer around Jane's body, making sure nothing showed.

"It's Tuesday and you have a breakfast meeting with Mr. Cooper, then appointments across town all day. I'm sure you were about to get up." Stevenson picked up our clothes, tossing Jane's dress over a chair with the familiar condescending smirk he always gave me when he found me in compromising positions with a woman.

"Shit." I jumped out of bed. I had forgotten the meeting. It wasn't one I could skip, as much as I wanted to right this second. "Jane."

Her nose wrinkled and she murmured something. I wished I had time to wake her up properly, but Cooper didn't like waiting.

"Jane." I shook her shoulder.

"What?" Her eyelids lifted a little.

"You have to wake up." I turned to Stevenson. "Call Paul. Tell him to drive Jane to home and then to work."

Shock filled her face. "You're kicking me out?"

"I'm sorry. I have a meeting. Paul will take care of you." I pressed a kiss to her lips and headed towards the bathroom.

"Stop right there." She sat up, keeping the sheet tucked around her chest. "Who the fuck do you think you are?"

I was being an asshole. I knew that, but at the moment there wasn't a thing I could do about it. "I know who I am. Come on, babe. Work with me here. I really don't have time for this."

I raced into the bathroom. I shut the door just in time. A heavy thud sounded against the wood. She must have thrown something at me.

\* \* \* \*

Stepping out of the bathroom, I glanced around the room. I half thought Jane would be lying in wait for me, holding a butter knife and threatening to cut my balls off.

"She left. I think you have a lot of making up to do." Stevenson finished laying out my suit. He glared at me.

"What's your problem? I didn't toss *you* out of my bed." I dropped the towel and stalked over to grab my shirt. There were times when Stevenson's friendship annoyed me, but that's what I got for hiring a man I'd known most of my life.

"I wouldn't have the bad taste to pick you up. I know your father's an ass and your mother's a complete bitch, but someone must have taught you how to treat women, given you're tripping over women who want to sleep with you." Stevenson held out my pants.

"I know how to treat them. I got Jane in my bed in the first place right?" I jerked the slacks from him and slid them on. Buttoning them, I slipped on my shirt, and knotted my tie.

"Well bully for you, jackass. I'm sure she'll be thrilled to know she was just another fuck on your list." He shook his head.

"Jane's not just another fuck, Stevenson. I like her." I pulled on my suit coat as we made our way down the hall to the front foyer.

"You treated her like a two-dollar hooker you were embarrassed to be seen with. Not smart if you want to see or fuck her again."

"Don't use that word about Jane. She was more than a 'fuck'. There was something more between us." I ran my hands through my hair in frustration. "I panicked. That's what you want me to say, isn't it? I took one look at her lying in my bed and my flight or fight instinct kicked in. I punched her in the eye last night so that took care of that part of the equation. In reality, I ran like the coward I am. The meeting was just a convenient excuse." I scrubbed my hand over my face and sighed. "I think I'm ready to settle down, Stevie, but if I can't even share a bed with a woman without acting like a total spaz in the morning, how am I going to handle marriage?"

"Marriage? Didn't you just meet this woman? How could you want to settle down with her already?" He reached over and twisted my head around as if he were searching for something.

"I didn't just meet her. Jane works for me at Centurion. Ow. Stop that. What the fuck are you doing?" I yanked my head away from him and glared.

"I was checking to see the bump on your head because you must have hit it at some point. Did you hear yourself, Josh? You said the 'M' word."

"I know I did. The only 'M' word most women make me think of is murder or maddening. Imagine my sheer terror when I realized I liked waking up next to her." Grabbing my briefcase, I opened the door.

"If that's true, you have some major groveling to do if you want to even talk to her again." Stevenson followed behind me.

My Shelby Mustang was parked out in front of the house. I caught the keys he threw to me. Opening the door, I threw my briefcase in the backseat and slid behind the wheel. I turned the key. We grinned at each other as the engine purred to life. God, I loved the dull roar a finely tuned machine made. I bet Jane would love this, I thought.

Shit. I needed to put my mind back on track. I needed to plot how to make Jane give me another chance.

“Do you have any ideas of what I can do to make her forgive me?” I shot a glance at my friend.

He shook his head. “Nope. At the moment, I’m sure she’d rather you just fucked off and died.”

I was afraid he might be right.

\*

## **Jane**

“Of all the... stupidest woman alive... ohh, I’m gonna kill him.” I stomped up the concrete stairs to the front door of my house and made my way inside. “I’m so ... ugh.” I’d already used every swear word known to man and made some up on the drive home and was beyond even using words. Asshole’s driver had swerved at a few of the ones that rolled off my tongue, but he at least was smart enough to keep his mouth shut.

I’d barely had time to shower and change to make it to work on time. I didn’t see Josh all day, but then again, I’d made a point to avoid being anywhere he could have been. Plus, Dean, my shoulder to whine on, was offsite, so I had all day to whine and stew by myself.

I dropped my keys and purse on the kitchen counter, finally home from a hellish day. Josh hadn’t been in the office all day and I hadn’t been able to concentrate, I should have worked from home. I was pissed now, and kept that boiling at the surface, because I knew the minute I started to cool, I was going to cry. I didn’t cry over boys. At least not anymore. I’d thought I’d learned my lesson in college. I’d hoped that Josh was different, but he just proved me right and made his way to the top of the Asshole list, along with his stuffy butler, or manservant, or whatever rich assholes had to kick out their discarded women. Seriously, who had a thirtyish blond-haired, blue-eyed butler with a James Bond accent?

“Fuck, I need some chocolate.” I headed for the fridge. Dammit. Nothing remotely bad for me. I’d forgotten that I’d tossed out anything that was on the ‘no-no’ list. I didn’t want to leave to go buy some though; I was afraid I’d go postal on some unsuspecting checkout girl and make the front pages. I could see the headline now—Dumped Cinderella Wounds Cashier in Frantic Fight for Chocolate—not really something my mother would approve of at all.

My phone on the counter rang and I almost jumped through the ceiling. I glanced at the caller ID—Dean, not Asshole.

“Dean,” I yelled into the receiver. “You have to bring me chocolate, preferably dark and a lot, at least a pound, and if you bring some wine I’d love you forever so bring your butt over here now.” I hung up with a sigh of relief; Dean would make me feel better.

The phone rang again and I picked it up without looking at the caller ID. “Okay, so you don’t have to bring a pound of chocolate, in fact, chocolate ice cream would be good, and make sure it’s red wine, I need to get tanked.”

“Jane?” Shit, Asshole.

“I’m sorry, you have the wrong number.” Click.

It rang again, but I let the machine pick it up this time.

“Hey, it’s Jane’s answering machine, she’s muy busy right now, so leave it.”

“Jane, I know you’re there. Pick up the phone ... Jane?”

Damn, every time he said my name it sent shivers down my spine. Fuck him. Actually, that had been the problem.

“Listen, Jane. I realize I was an A-hole this morning, but I’d forgotten about a very important meeting and...”

I reached to silence the volume; I didn’t want to hear any more.

“Fuck,” he yelled at the machine. “It wasn’t the meeting, I panicked, okay? I fucked up this morning and ... shit. Jane, please just pick up.”

My hand hovered over the volume button. Yeah, he’d fucked up all right.

“I’m sorry.” He whispered before I heard the soft click of him hanging up.

“No, I’m sorry.”

I turned and headed for the bedroom, shedding my clothes as I went. I grabbed my robe from the hook on the bedroom door on my way to the bathroom. I turned on the water, letting it run to heat up, and looked at myself in the mirror. Naked. Dark circles under my eyes. My hair was a mess, and I had a hickie on my neck. “Oooh, that man.” I was going to have to wear scarves for a week to cover that up. It felt good to be pissed again.

\* \* \* \*

“He asked you to stay the night?” Dean sat across from me at the dining room table and poured both of us another glass of Shiraz; his second, my third.

“Yes, and that’s the second time I’ve answered the same question.” I tipped the glass back to my mouth and let the cool tang of the wine sit on my tongue before I swallowed.

“I’ve known Josh a long time, Jane. No one ever stays the night.”

“What do you mean no one? Like it’s against the rules or something?” I plucked a dark chocolate truffle from its gold box. When Dean bought chocolate, Dean bought *chocolate*.

“Yes, something like that. I’m not gonna lie to you, Jane, he’s had quite a few women in his life. He’s young, he’s smokin’ hot, and he’s rich. I even roomed with him for a stint...”

“You what? You didn’t tell me that.” I crossed my arms against my chest and pushed out my bottom lip in a pout. Oh, yeah, I was feeling the wine. “How come you didn’t tell me that?”

“It never came up, and anyway, it doesn’t matter. What I’m telling you is that no woman ever spent the night. Ever.” He leaned forward to emphasize his statement.

“Ever?”

“Never, Jane.”

I grabbed the glass of wine again, this time finishing off the rest of the Shiraz. He’d panicked. Hell. I’m surprised I hadn’t panicked, but I was more than enough making up for that now. “Shit.”

“Now, I’m not saying what he did was right. If I could take him, I’d go beat him to a bloody pulp, but I don’t think a bitch slap from me right now would knock him to his senses.”

I snorted, almost choking on the wine still going down my throat. “Thanks,” I coughed. “But I wouldn’t want you to strain anything, babe.” I hiccupped and giggled. I didn’t want to giggle. I still wanted to be pissed. “So, what do you think I should do?”

“I think we should go out, order up a pedi and a mani, do a little shopping for a hot little number for you, and then go paint the town tonight. We’re both two hot divas, so I don’t see why we should let one jackass ruin a perfectly good Tuesday evening.” He



reached across the table and offered me a truffle. “It’s two dollar Mai-Tai night at The Rainbow Room.”

I took a nibble of the chocolate and chewed thoughtfully. “You’re right. A night on the town is just what I need to put this horrible incident behind me.”

“That’s the ticket. You go girl!”

I scooted the chair back and set my empty wineglass down. “You call for a taxi since we’re a bit...” I used the universal sign for quotes with my fingers “...inebriated, and I’ll go change.” I headed back to my room for some jeans and a tee shirt, my false bravado cracking when I saw my scattered clothes from this morning’s rush to the shower.

I’d been the only one to spend the night. Bloody hell.

## Friday

### Josh

"I'm a total ass." I ran my hand through my hair, holding the phone with the other. I stared out my office window.

"You let her stay the night." Michael pointed out to me.

"Stop saying that. It's like talking to a parrot, man. It doesn't make a whole hell of a lot of difference if she doesn't ever talk to me again." I'd been wracking my brain all week to try and figure out the best way to grovel and make Jane talk to me again. She'd been successfully avoiding me since Tuesday, not an easy thing to do in a company our size. And I couldn't exactly summon her to my office, not unless I wanted a sexual harassment suit slapped on me. Hell, I'd already long-jumped over that little boundary, and I wasn't about to make it even worse by adding business to the mix.

It was Friday now and I couldn't think of anything.

"Turn on that Anderson charm and I'm sure she'll be back eating out of your hand. What do you usually send a woman you've ticked off?" His voice held laughter.

"Since she's trying to lose weight, I don't think a box of chocolates is the way to go. That's the thing though. Before, when I've ticked a woman off, I've never cared enough to try and get back into her good graces." I wanted to bang my head against my desk.

"Call her and apologize."

"I did. She hung up on me and didn't answer when I called back." I sat down at my desk and looked at the pile of papers I needed to go through.

"Why are you making such a big deal about this? It's not like you can't find another chick to fuck."

"That's the problem. Jane's not like the others. There's something about her." I couldn't explain why I wanted her.

"Okay. So she's not just a casual fuck." Michael seemed to be thinking. "No candy. Do you think she likes flowers?"

I shook my head, even though he couldn't see me. "I don't think so. She seems to like video games."

"Doesn't Coop know someone at one of the game design companies?"

I slapped my forehead. "That's perfect."

"That's what I'm here for. How did the meeting go?"

"Great. A few more papers to file and we'll be ready to take the company public."

Michael and I discussed our meeting at the end of the week and I hung up a few minutes later. Buzzing Marsha, I asked her to call Coop for me.

\* \* \* \*

When I got back from my lunch meeting, a box rested on my desk. I glanced at it and smiled. It was the *piece de resistance* in my campaign to achieve forgiveness from Jane.

I wandered down to the designer's floor in search of Dean. I managed to keep from looking over at Jane's cubicle. If she was there, I didn't want to see her ignore me.

“She’s not here. Went home sick.” Dean stood, arms crossed and glaring at me.

“Figures. Hey, what’s Jane’s favorite wine?”

“Why? Going to see if getting her drunk will make her forget you kicking her out of your bed? Even drunk, there’s no way Jane’s that desperate.”

God, there was nothing worse than a righteous friend. It was even more a pain in the ass when that friend happened to be gay. Because for all that Dean loved men, he knew most men—gay or straight—thought with their cocks. I wanted to protest, but there was that small voice in the back of my head screaming that Jane had been the best fuck I’d had in forever. I didn’t want anyone to hear our discussion. Bragging about my conquests had never been my thing.

“I don’t want to discuss it here. Just tell me her favorite wine.”

“It’s going to take more than wine to win her forgiveness.” Dean shot that comment over his shoulder as he led me to a private conference room.

“I’m not stupid, Dean. I know it’ll take more than that.” I ground my teeth.

“You could have fooled me.” He held up a hand when I would have cursed him.

“Now I think I managed to do a little damage control Tuesday night. I explained that you didn’t ask women to stay the night. I mentioned she was the first one I’d heard of doing that.”

“Great. Who knew you’d be my PR guy?”

“Consider yourself lucky. I’ve known you since high school and I can be honest with Jane about you.” Dean smirked and I swallowed loudly.

Oh hell, he was right. Dean and I had been friends almost as long as Mike and I. He’d seen me through those horrible high school years. Next to Mike, Dean was my closest friend. He was also close friends with Jane. I was so screwed.

“Look, I panicked, and I had an important meeting I absolutely had to attend. I’ve already gone over the whole thing with Stevenson. Now I need to figure out a way to make her stay in the same room with me.”

Dean studied me for a long time. I started to squirm. It was as if I were a rare bug he needed to figure out. Finally he took pity on me.

“I’ll go out and grab the wine, along with a book I know she’s been dying to read. Do you have something else for her?”

“Yeah, but I’m not telling you. Just send the rest of the stuff to my office and I’ll have a package ready to go over to her. Thanks a lot, Dean. I appreciate this.” I clapped him on the shoulder and headed out of the room.

“Just remember me if you run into any cute, rich gay men, love...” Dean’s voice followed me.

I laughed as I returned to my office. Pulling out my personal stationery, I started to compose a note to send with the basket. I wrestled with finding just the right words to tell her how I felt about her and how sorry I was for the stupid way I’d acted. After crumpling up the third piece of paper, I was ready to stab myself in the eye and claim a head injury made me act so stupid.

“Marsha, can you come in here for a moment?” I hoped she could help, because I didn’t think “I fucked up” would be quite the romantic apology needed.

## Saturday

### Jane

My week had been more than miserable, despite the drunken night at The Rainbow Room on Tuesday. Now all I wanted to do was spend my entire Saturday in bed. I heard the front door open and close.

"Jane?" Dean called through my closed bedroom door. I should have never given him a key to my house. I peeked from under my covers at the clock, two in the afternoon.

"Go away, Dean." I slumped down further into my bed.

"Come on honey, open the door."

"Don't honey me, Dean Fredricks. No man ever gets to 'honey' me again." I tossed a throw pillow at the bedroom door, envisioning it was a broken beer bottle aimed at Josh's dick.

"Fine. Pout, but you need to quit acting like a spoiled princess." Dean's footsteps retreated away from the door.

"I'm not a spoiled princess." How could I be? I hadn't made it past the first night, let alone the happily ever after. I rolled over to my side, tucking the remaining throw pillow between my legs.

Dean was right, the fucker. I needed to let go of my insecurities. That was the old Jane. The new Jane had let Josh finger fuck her on her desk. The new Jane hadn't worn panties under her skirt on a date. The rewards of the new Jane were pretty obvious, but greater consequences came with that.

It was much easier being the old Jane.

I sat up, shifting the throw pillow into my arms, clutching it to my chest. I'm not one to take the easy way out, and here I was, locked in my bedroom, sobbing my little heart out, and for what? A man?

Josh hadn't made any promises he hadn't kept. He hadn't told me lies in order to convince me to sleep with him. No confessions of love, only to kick me to the curb. So why was I acting like I'd just been blindsided with divorce papers? Why couldn't I just take the situation for what it was? A hot, secretive, torrid affair.

I'd get my orgasms, he'd get his rocks off and when the time came to dissolve the "relationship", we'd both be on our way.

The doorbell rang and I heard Dean talking with someone. The smell of Spinatto's Pizza filtered through my door. "Oh, you're evil, Dean, pure evil."

I got up from the bed and padded to the bathroom to splash my face and put up my hair. If anything was going to bludgeon me out of my self-imposed locked sulking, it was going to be Spinatto's Pizza.

I found Dean sitting on a barstool at the kitchen island waiting for me with a smirk on his face, the pizza sitting on the counter still in its closed box next to another unmarked box.

"I've got two deliveries for you." Dean gestured flamboyantly enough to give Vanna a run for her money. "Oh, so delicious..." He cracked open the pizza box and waves of pepperoni, sausage, mushrooms, olives, and peppers hit me. "Supreme. Or..." He closed

the box and tapped the larger one sitting next to him. "Door number two." He settled back into his chair, crossed his arms and eyed me with that fucking smirk of his.

"Do I have to choose one?" Curiosity about box number two was killing me but I'd deprived myself of pizza to shed some pounds and it had been months since I tasted melted cheese and tangy pizza sauce.

"Alas, no, my pretty." Dean drawled in a pretty good impression of the Wicked Witch of the West. "But you must choose wisely."

I rolled my eyes. When Dean got on his movie quote kick he was beyond annoying. I didn't know who the second box was from, but I had a pretty good idea. "Well." I opened the pizza box and grabbed a piece of pizza. "If the second box is from who I think it is, then I'm going to eat my fill of pizza, crack open some wine and make sure I have a little buzz on before I open the second box."

Dean laughed and reached for his own piece. "I knew you'd say that, which is why I ordered the pizza."

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"You could have stopped me at the third piece, you know." I sat next to Dean on the couch; the second box still unopened sat on the coffee table.

"I didn't want my hand chopped off, besides, it was sooo good." He giggled.

"Yeah, it was."

"Open the box, Jane."

"No, you open the box."

"Ugh, fine." He lunged for the box.

"No!" I dove after him, my haste pushing us both into the coffee table, tipping it over. The box fell to the floor with a thud. "Shit." I giggled, trying to untangle myself from Dean and the coffee table. Okay, so maybe I'd had too much pizza *and* too much wine. "I hope there wasn't anything breakable in there."

I managed to crawl out from the tangle and sat next to the box. It hadn't been taped closed so it was partially open and I could see the neck of a bottle of wine peeking out. Great, just what I needed, more fuel for my already raging buzz. I set the box upright, and saw a small envelope underneath the open flap. "What's this?" I settled back against the coffee table still on its side. "Jane." I read the front aloud.

"Blimey, it's for you."

I smacked Dean upside the head. "I know you're a part of this, stupid, don't try to act innocent."

Dean looked at me, aghast. "Moi?"

I ignored him and opened the envelope, pulled out the card and read the words Josh had scrawled inside.

"I fucked up. J." Succinct. I liked that. Flowery Hallmark words would have pissed me off.

"Well, at least he's not stupid."

Dean reached over and grabbed the box. "Why do I always get to open your presents?" He pulled out a bottle of Kilikanoon Shiraz. "Wow."

"Are you serious?" Kilikanoon was not only my favorite wine, but not cheap either. "Anything else in there?" I reached for the box and shoved my hand in feeling around in the packing peanuts until my hand hit something smooth and flat. "What the...?" I'd been

expecting silk or lace; that seemed more Josh's style.

"Oh. My. God." My hands shook as I stared at what I'd pulled out of the box.

"Is that what I think it is?" Dean reached out, his face etched in awe.

"Yes." I snatched it away from him, the words *my precious* echoing through my head. "An advanced copy of the most highly anticipated first-person shooter video game for the XBOX 360 in the 21st century." I held up *my* copy. "Halo Evolution."

"Halo Evolution." Dean repeated in a whisper. Yes, we're gamer freaks.

"Can I ... that is to say ... can we?"

"Yes, Dean. Yes, we can." I gently unwrapped the plastic film from around the game case. "And the next time I see Mr. Josh Anderson, he's going to have the fuck of his life."

## Monday

### Josh

Shit. Cooper was going to drive me crazy with all these damn papers. I scrawled my signature on another one and tossed it to Marsha.

"How many of these damn things is Coop going to make me sign?" I shoved my hand through my hair in frustration. My name was a smear of ink. I used the excuse of skipping second grade to make up for my horrific handwriting.

"This is the last one." Marsha shoved the final paper under my hand and I signed it with a flourish.

"Take these away, Marsha. Then you can go home. It's been a long day." I smiled at her in apology for my rotten mood.

"Thanks, Mr. Anderson. I'll see you tomorrow." She shut the door behind her and I turned in my chair to stare out my window.

Not one word. No message left over the weekend thanking me for the package. Jane had worked from home today and didn't return any of my calls. I had to check with Dean when he'd come into the office this morning to make sure Jane received it. It had been a bit awkward when Dean threw himself in my arms and kissed me. He babbled about staying up to ungodly hours playing HALO or something like that. So she *had* gotten it. Or Dean could have opened it on his own and was unable to resist the temptation of the holy grail of video games.

I was going to have to dredge up the courage to call her and grovel some more. As I reached for the phone, Cooper strolled through the door. I glared at my friend and CFO.

"No more damn papers, Coop. I've got writer's cramp here." I gave him my best snarl.

Cooper's blue eyes laughed at me. "In a hurry to see if she'll give you some fantastic make-up sex?"

I groaned and threw a pen at him. "Why do all my friends think I just want back in bed with her? I mean, even Dean, for fuck's sake, thinks I'm going through all this just to screw her."

"Dean? Since when do you take advice from him?" Cooper sat in the chair across from my desk in a manner that would have made my mom proud.

I always thought Cooper should have been my parents' child except for the fact that Coop did have a heart and wasn't a stuck-up asshole like my entire family. He observed all the social graces. He enjoyed fundraisers and going to the best clubs. Every weekend, he was jet-setting to some exotic locale to hang out with famous people. He told me he liked doing it when I asked him if he ever got tired. Sometimes, though, I'd catch a look in his eye that said he wasn't as happy with his life as he wanted everyone to think.

"Since he's Jane's best friend. I'm a total idiot. I'm taking advice from all of you and nothing seems to be working. Maybe I should just go over to her house, fall down on my knees and crawl over broken glass to beg her forgiveness." I flopped back in my chair and stared up at the ceiling.

"You're actually considering dating a girl who Dean is friends with. Man, are you

brave, Anderson.” Coop chuckled. “So did she like the game you got her?”

“Dean did.” I shrugged. “I don’t know how she felt about it. Jane avoided me all last week, plus I was busy with taking the company public. I left on Friday to meet with Michael and talk about his proposal. She didn’t even call or anything.”

“I never thought I’d see the day when Josh ‘Fuck ‘em and leave ‘em’ Anderson got twisted up over a woman.” He stood and walked around the desk.

I stared up at him as he stood beside me. His hand dropped on my shoulder and squeezed. My eyes bugged out of my head. That I was surprised was an understatement. Coop didn’t make gestures like that. He didn’t touch anyone.

“I’m glad to see that there is a woman out there who can slide under your skin.” He dropped two more papers on my desk. “Sign those and have them back to me by tomorrow. I can’t wait to meet her.”

“Thanks. Maybe in ten years, if we’re still dating, I’ll have enough nerve to introduce you,” I muttered.

I was pretty secure about my looks and how much women seemed to like them. But on days when my confidence was as full of holes as Swiss cheese, Cooper could make me feel like the silly swan that thought he was a duck. If I introduced him to Jane, he’d sweep her off her feet and show her how a man should treat a woman.

“Argh,” I groaned and hit my head on my desk. “This is driving me crazy.”

“So just call her.” Cooper leaned in the doorway and shook his head. “I have to admit I’ve never seen you so worked up over a woman before.”

“I can’t call her. I have to have some pride. I mean, I made the first move in sending that package. I went to all the trouble of finding stuff she’d actually like. Now the ball’s in her court.”

“Ah.” Whatever Cooper was about to say was interrupted when he was pushed out of the doorway.

My eyes might have bugged out of my head when Jane came strolling in like she owned the place. My dick registered the fact she was wearing a short black skirt with three inch heels that showed off her legs to perfection. The deep green top had a neckline that showcased her impressive cleavage. I managed to drag my gaze from her breasts as she leaned over me. Her hands trapped me in my chair and all I could do was watch her lips descend towards me.

I’d never had a woman take control of a kiss like she did. Not even when I played at being a submissive and spent some time with a dominatrix. Jane devoured me. Her teeth bit my bottom lip hard enough for me to gasp. I started to protest but her tongue thrust inside me with determination. She stroked and teased me. I let my head drop back against my chair. I wasn’t going to fight her.

By the time she pulled back, my head was swimming and I was seeing stars. Some of it had to do with the kiss. Some of it was the fact that I was oxygen-deprived. She turned and headed out of the office. Cooper was doubled over, laughing his ass off. She stopped and gave him a quick once-over before she started to leave.

“Wait. Jane?” I couldn’t move out of my chair. I’d never had a kiss make me weak before. My cock was so hard, I’d probably be walking bent over anyway. So I decided staying put was the best idea I’d had in a while.

“Be at my house at eight.”

The smile she gave me sent a chill down my spine. Her brown eyes glared at Cooper



once more and then she was gone. I flopped back in my chair with what might have been a whimper. My friend wiped tears from his cheeks and grinned at me.

"I think she hit the ball right back at you, friend." Cooper was still chuckling as he left my office.

I was seriously fucked.

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## Jane

7:59 p.m. The sound of Josh's Mustang pulling into my driveway hit me in the gut like a ton of bricks. I'd never, ever, taken charge of anything and my performance in Josh's office this afternoon was bound to land me in trouble. I walked to the front-facing window in my bedroom and peeked out. He sat in his parked car for a minute. It looked like he was talking to himself. Fine with me, my bravado from earlier had started to fade.

The click of the car door brought my attention back to the window and I watched him get out empty handed. Good, I had everything we needed. I walked back to the bed and took stock of the scene. Candles were lit everywhere, soft music played in the background, new sheets were on the bed and my secret stash of toys were in my bedside table. I had bottled water chilling in an ice bucket on my dresser. I didn't want alcohol impairing either of our performances tonight. This was to show Josh that I was a big girl, independent, and ready to play the guy game and be fuck buddies.

I wore a pale green silk robe and black stiletto sandals. I was still a bit self-conscious about my body, but if Josh was here, then he wanted it and I sure as hell wanted him. My nipples were already hardening at the thought of the evening ahead.

"Jane?"

I'd left a note on the door for him to come in. Showtime. I scooted to behind the door so he wouldn't see me when he walked in. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath.

"Jane? Are you in..."

"Stop," I said as he stepped through the door. "Don't turn around."

He froze. He'd changed from his work clothes, wearing jeans and a soft black T-shirt. His hair looked shiny, almost wet. He'd taken a shower before he came over. I groaned inwardly. There was almost nothing that did it more for me than a freshly showered man.

"I'm glad you came." I stepped from my hiding place and shut the door. There wasn't anyone that was going to interrupt, but it just seemed appropriate.

He started to turn around.

"No, don't. I don't want to talk about what happened or what's going to happen, Josh. Tonight I just want to do." I slid up behind him and in my heels I was tall enough to blow a warm breath on his exposed neck. "Agreed?"

I think he gulped, but he nodded.

"Good." I reached up and with my finger traced the line of his collar along his neck, then eased my hand into his damp hair. I leaned into his back, my breasts pressing against him, and inhaled the clean scent of him. "Mmmm, you smell good enough to eat."

"Jane," he croaked.

"I know." With both hands I traced down from the back of his head, following the strong line of his shoulders to the waist of his faded jeans. I pulled and untucked his shirt, reaching around, making sure it was out of his jeans before I lifted it up and pulled it over his head.

He stood, much the same as he had, when this whole thing started a short week ago. Wearing jeans, his tattooed, muscled back exposed.

“Don’t turn around, but take off your shoes and socks.”

He toed off his sneakers and bent over to pull off his socks.

I gave his tight ass a playful tap, hard enough to let him know I meant to do it and low enough it hit the base of his balls.

He moaned and fell forward, catching himself on the bed with his hands.

“You like that huh? Is that what you want me to do? Punish you for being a naughty boy?” What the hell? Now I was talking dirty ... the things he’d made me do in such a short amount of time.

“No.” He said, turning around and grabbing me unexpectedly. He pulled me to him, his wide lust-filled eyes boring into my brave façade. “I don’t need punishment, Jane.”

Now it was my turn to gulp.

He thrust gently against me, his hard ridge digging into my soft belly.

My breath came out in short gasps and I felt woozy. No matter what I tried, this man overpowered me.

“I just need you.” He bent to kiss me.

“But,” I halted his kiss. “I want this to be equal.”

“Equal?” His confused look was too cute.

“I want to give as much as I take. Equal partners in this.” Shit, I sounded like I was setting up a contract or something, and maybe I was.

“Fine with me, Jane.” God, did he have to purr my name?

I met him halfway in the kiss. His soft lips parted and our tongues met in a sensual dance. I wrapped my arms around him, slid my hands past his waistband and grabbed his naked ass.

I lied. A man who goes commando and smells clean flat out does it for me.

I gripped his ass cheeks. Fuck equal. I wanted to devour him.

I pulled from the kiss and moved to unbutton his jeans. I tugged them down as I pushed him onto the bed.

His hard cock sprung out of the jeans and bobbed there, waving at me.

I left his jeans around his ankles and knelt on the floor. I spread his knees wide and took his cock into my mouth, opening my throat to take him all the way.

“Shit!” He tried to sit up, but I pushed him back down.

I lifted up, adding pressure on the underside of his cock with my tongue, flicking the head when I reached the top and smoothed back down, again taking his full length. I tripped a bit on my robe and with a frustrated grunt I slowly pulled off him and stood to take it off.

Josh sat up a little and watched me, wide eyed, as I let the silk robe fall to the floor, revealing that I wore nothing but the shoes underneath.

“You slay me, Jane.”

I smiled. “God, I hope not.” I winked and knelt between his legs again, this time tugging the jeans off all the way.

I nipped and licked my way from his left knee to his groin, teasing him with soft brushes of my lips on his bobbing cock, only to retreat again to trail to his right knee.

He sat up more, leaning on his hands and I thought he was going to stop me, but he just watched me kiss him in the candlelight. I don’t think I’d ever been more turned on in

my life or more self conscious. I hesitated when I'd made my way back to his erection and looked up at him.

He gave me a lazy smile of encouragement, his eyes heavy with lust and a fleeting emotion I couldn't name before he reached for his cock and held it still for me.

I exchanged his hand with mine. I licked around the head, then took it in my mouth, then off again and back to licking. I varied my assault with quick thrusts into my mouth to slow ones, swallowing him down only to speed up again.

I glanced up and saw that he was no longer watching me; his head was flung back, his mouth open in ecstasy. As much as I wanted to feel him inside of me, I was enjoying the control. I grazed his sac with my hand the same time I engulfed him fully in my mouth.

"Jane." His moan shot to my core and my sex pulsed with need.

I squeezed and rolled him in one hand and inched the other up his chest to pinch his nipple. Up and down. Squeeze, roll, pinch. Over and over until he started to buck off the bed.

"Enough," he yelled, sitting up and pulling me up off the floor and onto the bed, sprawling me on my back. He pulled my legs open wide and sat back on his heels.

"You're beautiful." He slid a finger up my wet thigh and brought it to his mouth. "You're tasty."

I was going to have to seriously look at my list of things that turned me on, because ... wow ... yeah.

"And," he leaned over me, bracing himself with his hands on either side of my head. His cock rested teasingly against my sex. "You're making me crazy for you."

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## **Josh**

I knew Jane wanted to have control over our lovemaking. I wasn't sure what was going on in her head, but I knew I couldn't wait any longer. I rubbed against her wet pussy and bent down to suck on her nipple.

"Oh." She arched her back, pushing her breast further into my mouth.

I nipped her and pulled back. "Condom?"

I fought back a grin when she waved a weak hand in the general direction of her nightstand. I reached out for the foil package, making sure to keep my cock in contact with her body. A shudder wracked her body and I knew it wouldn't take long to make her climax. I wanted to take her fast and hard.

I pushed my thigh between her legs and rubbed it over her clit. No way was I going to let her lose some of that passion. I wanted her mindless with lust. I mentally rolled my eyes at myself. I sounded like the hero of a silly romance novel. Somehow I managed to put the condom on without embarrassing myself. Jane rocked her hips and I felt the wet slide of her pussy over my thigh. I rolled, taking her with me. She ended up straddling my waist.

"Oh," she gasped.

I smiled up at her and winked. "It's all yours now, baby. You're in control."

Surprise lit her eyes for a moment, then she grinned down at me. There was something in her smile that made me think I might be in trouble. I set my hands on her hips to steady her, but that was it. This was her show.

Reaching behind her, she grasped my cock in her hand and stroked. I fought the urge

to thrust into her palm. When she tightened her grip and twisted her fingers around the base of my shaft, I groaned.

"I don't think it's very nice to tease me like this," I commented.

She shot me another evil grin and said, "I haven't even started."

Before any words came to my mouth, she set the head of my cock at her slick opening and lowered herself a few inches. She massaged the tip with her inner muscles while continuing to stroke me. Bracing my feet on the mattress, I tried to thrust deeper into her. She rose up on her knees and glared down at me.

"I thought I was in control this time." Her pout made me want to pull her down and devour her mouth, but I managed to hold on to my lust and nod.

"You are, baby, but you're killing me here. I can't take much more." Begging wasn't a very macho thing to do, but my cock really wanted to be buried deep inside her and it was willing to do anything to be there.

"Aw. Poor baby." She lowered her hips again and teased me by taking me only a few inches in again.

I bit my lips and fisted my hands in her bed sheets. "You're a cock tease, you know that, don't you?" I forced between my lips.

"Your cock is the only one I tease." She circled her hips and we moaned in unison.

"Good," I grunted, grabbing her hips and pulling her down so my shaft slid deep inside her.

Her body arched and her head fell back. She surged up, then impaled herself again. I took my hands off her hips, no longer interested in urging her to ride me. One of my hands crawled up her stomach to cup her breast and squeeze it. She leaned forward and gave me better access to her nipples. I pinched one of them, giving it just a little pull.

"Again," she pleaded.

I did, but this time I moved my other hand between her legs and tugged on her clit as well. She started to move faster, making sure my cock slid farther into her with each downward thrust of her hips. I picked up the rhythm, playing with her breasts and her clit at the same time.

"Josh." Her voice was breathless. I could tell she was close because her smooth rhythm started to get jerky.

My balls tightened and I knew it would only be a matter of seconds before I climaxed. Wrapping my arms around her, I rolled us so that I was on top again. I fucked her hard and fast while her hands grasped my ass and encouraged my thrusts.

"I'm gonna come," I grunted.

"I'm right with you." She threw back her head and arched her back.

Her nails bit into my butt as I slammed against her. Her inner muscles contracted and began to milk my climax from me.

"Oh," she groaned, trying to keep the sensations going by rocking her hips.

Pleasure exploded through my brain and I bit my lip to keep from crying out. I stroked my cock in and out a few more times before I dropped my head to rest against her shoulder. We were both breathing heavy and my arms were shaking from my release.

She protested a little as I pulled out of her and sprawled next to her on the bed. I encircled her with my arms, letting her rest on my chest. Her hand traced lazy patterns over my skin and her breath teased my nipple.

I felt her tense and I wondered what she was going to say. I braced myself for a

tirade. I knew I deserved one and hell, all of my friends informed me that Jane had every right to kick my ass. At the moment though, I was too tired to deal with an angry woman. I wanted to stop her and ask if we could talk about it in the morning, but even I knew that wasn't a good idea. Never stop a woman when she wanted to talk especially if you wanted to sleep with her again.

"Will you stay the night?" Her voice was low and hesitant.

Surprise rippled through me. That really wasn't what I thought I'd hear. I figured she'd kick my dumb ass out of bed and send me home with my tail between my legs.

"Sure, if you want me to." I stroked my hand over her shoulder.

She shrugged. "We need to talk about some stuff, but I don't feel like doing that tonight. Tomorrow will be soon enough for me to tell you off."

"You're right. I can think of better things to do tonight." I kissed her.

Jane let me kiss her for a minute, then she pulled away. Poking a finger into my chest, she stated, "We'll be doing more of that, but don't think me letting you have sex with me means you're off the hook, buddy." She gestured wildly and then poked me again. "I understand that we're just fuck-buddies, but someone has to teach you some manners. I figure that'll be my job, so you don't screw around with some other girl's mind."

Fuck-buddies? Where had she come up with that idea? I grabbed her hand and rubbed my chest where the skin was starting to bruise from the force of her finger. Then I opened my mouth and said the one thing guaranteed to send her right over the edge. "What the hell are you talking about? Are you crazy?"

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## **Jane**

I rolled over and sat up on the edge of the bed. My anger and hurt still boiled under the surface but I had to remember I was playing his game. "I guess we're not waiting till morning to talk?" I picked my robe up off the floor, put it on and cinched the tie before I leaned against the dresser.

"Hell no, I don't want to wait until morning, Jane." Josh sat up and leaned over, placing his elbows on his knees and scrubbed his face with his hands.

I was starting to feel lost again. Why was he so upset? It's not like this relationship was anything more than sex. Men thought women were confusing, I was beginning to think I was trapped on a seductive merry-go-round. "Look." I paced to the door and back. "I'm sorry I brought that up. I'm sure most guys like to think the girls they're fucking don't know that's what's going on, but we're both adults here right?"

"Jesus, Jane." Josh lashed out and swept the contents of the top of my nightstand to the floor, making me flinch in shock. "I'm not most guys." He stood and stalked toward me. "Is that what you think is going on here Jane? Just fucking?"

I stared at him, not knowing what to say, then his face transitioned from anger to a sad confusion. That struck a chord. I was never going to be able to remain aloof if he continued to melt my heart. The fact it was melting in the first place was starting to scare the shit out of me.

"Uh, let's just pretend I didn't even say anything." I walked to the closet, facing away from him. Tears pricked my eyes and my throat constricted. Why was I crying? I didn't know what was going on here. Why did it feel like I was losing something I never really had?

“Jane... Jane, I...”

“Hey, you know what?” I interrupted, blinking back the tears. I spun around and walked to the bedroom door. I didn’t want to hear false words from him, I was too afraid of the real feelings that were beginning to creep in.

He reached for me as I passed him, but I bent down to grab his jeans, dodging his hand.

If he touched me I was a goner.

“I just remembered I have an early meeting, Blackman wants to go over the final proofs before he gives his final approval.” I feigned a yawn.

Josh stood there by the bedroom door, his mouth agape, brows furled in confused anger.

“You don’t mind, do you?” I shoved his jeans into his hands and turned to pick up his other discarded clothes.

“Ah, actually...”

“Great.” I pressed the rest of his clothes into his arms, avoiding his gaze. “This account is really important, could mean a promotion.” I reached around him, making sure not to touch him and turned the door handle, forcing him to move as I opened it. “Well, silly me, you already know that. You are my boss, after all.”

My heart thudded in my ears. I did a mental slap on the forehead. I couldn’t believe those words had just rolled off my tongue. I waited for Josh to rant and rave but he didn’t. I dared a glance at him.

He was silently dressing, and not looking at me.

Shit, not only had I ruined the whole try-and-have-sex-without-getting-involved thing, but now I probably just lost my job. It was on the tip of my tongue to retract what I’d just said when he pulled his shirt over his head and pinned me with his gaze.

“I have an early morning too.”

The tears sprang up again, my heart ached. My fairy tale was crumbling before my eyes, and I was to blame.

He turned to leave then stopped and looked at me over his shoulder. “Thanks for tonight. You were...” He glanced away. “It was great.” He walked down the steps.

I don’t know if it was the fact that he turned the corner to head for the front door or that the tears I’d been holding back spilled over, but he faded from my vision.

I fell to my knees, clutching the door handle for support.

The front door slammed, fragmenting the last remaining tower of my fairy castle to a million pieces.

## Tuesday

### Jane

“Ms. Van Poppel?” Blackman’s voice cut through the fog surrounding my brain.

“Hmm? Oh, I’m sorry.” I sat up straighter in the lush conference room chair. “I’m not feeling so well this morning. What did you say?”

Dean widened his eyes at me, giving me a ‘get it together’ smile.

Blackman gathered up his papers and set them in his briefcase. “I’m sorry to hear that Ms. Van Poppel. I said I’m impressed with how you’ve handled my account.” He gave her an understanding smile. “I’m aware that I’m an asshole, my wife reminds me daily, so I appreciate your patience.”

I smiled weakly and stood with him. Dean walked around the table and stood behind me, placing his hand on my back, his touch reassuring and giving me strength as only a best friend could.

“I’m telling Anderson I want you in charge of all of my accounts from here on out, and if he doesn’t give you a promotion soon I’ll have something to say about that.”

“Thank you, Mr. Blackman.” I shook his hand and waiting until his flunkies finished following him out of the conference room before I slumped back into Dean.

He wrapped me in a hug and held me. “You did great, bug.”

I smiled, he only called me that when he was worried about me. Hell, I was worried about me.

I shrugged off his hug and turned, flashing him a fake smile I knew he would see right through. “Thanks.”

“Do you want to talk about it?” Dean motioned for me to sit back down.

“Nah.” I shook my head. Fear and confusion still welled up every time I thought about last night and I wasn’t ready to play lab partners and dissect what had happened. “I think I’m going to head home early, I really do have a headache.”

“Okay.” Dean opened the conference room door.

Marsha strode in through the open door. “Jane, Mr. Anderson would like to see you.”

Shit. “Uh, now?”

Dean coughed, though it sounded a little like the word “chicken”.

“Well, yes, now.” Marsha looked at me like I had three eyes in my head.

“Okay,” I turned and gathered up my papers and laptop off the table. “I need to drop these off at my desk first.”

Marsha laughed and took my stuff from my hands and gave them to Dean. “Mr. Anderson said you’d say that. Dean dear, will you drop these off for Jane?”

“But of course, Madame.” Dean intoned in his fake French accent and bowed deeply. He cocked his head to the side and winked at me.

I rolled my eyes. I felt like I was in the middle of a conspiracy, the world against Jane. “Well,” I sighed. “I guess that settles it.”

I strode off in the direction of Josh’s office, wondering what shade of pink my *Sayonara* slip was going to be.

## Josh

I stared out the window, trying to figure out what to say to Jane when she got here. I had spent the rest of last night thinking about how fucked up this entire relationship had become. Not that it could be termed a relationship. It was great sex with the potential of being more, if we could manage to keep our hands off each other. At the best of times, I felt like women were speaking a different language than men, but this was the worst.

Every time we talked to each other, it was as if we weren't hearing what the other one was saying, or at least didn't understand what the other was talking about. She thought we'd just be fuck-buddies. Hell, I've never had a fuck-buddy. Never needed one, actually. It was as if she didn't believe I would want her for anything else. I'd been frustrated and angry when she acted as if I was the one who wanted that kind of relationship. When I thought about my rather dramatic exit after knocking everything off her nightstand, I felt like an idiot. I'd always had a temper, but rarely allowed it break free of my control.

I shook my head, thinking about how intriguing she was. *Maybe if you told her you loved her.* A voice that sounded remarkably like Michael rang in my head. Shit. I was willing to admit to myself that I could fall in love with her, but there was no way I'd come out and tell her that. Not after having truly gotten to know her only two weeks ago. I believed in lust at first sight, not love. The way she was acting, if I said the 'L' word, she'd run screaming in the opposite direction. Not a good thing for the ego.

A knock sounded on my door. Time to decide what to tell her. "Come in," I called.

She pushed open the door and I felt my entire body tense. *Take a deep breath.* I tried not to throw myself at her feet and beg. I wasn't sure what I wanted to beg for, but I did know I wanted to kneel down in front of her, lift her skirt and taste her again.

*Down, boy.* I thumped my cock before turning to face her completely. She looked like she was walking to her execution. I gestured to the chair across from my desk.

"Please have a seat, Ms. Van Poppel. Would you like a drink?" I moved towards the mini-fridge. "I have water, juice. Something harder."

I wanted to hit my head on the nearest wall. What the hell was I doing, using her whole name? Not exactly the casual conversation I'd wanted to start. I needed to shut up.

"A little early in the morning to start drinking, isn't it?" Her green eyes studied me.

If she hadn't said something, I would have poured myself a drink, but now I couldn't without looking like an alcoholic. I grabbed two bottles of juice and tossed one to her as I made my way back to my desk. I settled in my chair as she sat, glaring at the juice bottle.

"I didn't poison it or anything." I joked, trying to make her relax.

"Why'd you ask to see me, Mr. Anderson?"

No small talk. Great, I wasn't good at that anyway. "I just got off the phone with Blackman."

"He called you pretty quick." She frowned and opened the bottle.

"He's a friend of the family and he was also extremely impressed with your work. He asked that I make sure all his accounts are given to you and Dean. You'll be the group leader." I took a swig of juice and grimaced. Ugh! Orange juice. I really had to pay attention when I grabbed stuff.

"You're not going to fire me?" Shock filled her eyes.

"No. Why would I?" I lean forward, puzzled by her comment.

"Well, after the way I treated you last night and what I said, I figured you wouldn't



want me around.” She twisted the cap on and off her juice.

I shot to my feet, vaguely insulted that she would think I’d fire her because she kicked me out of her bed. “We’ll talk about last night soon enough. What kind of asshole boss do you think I am?” I stalked over to her side of the desk and leaned over her. “Your job isn’t dependent on whether or not you sleep with me. I thought I made that clear from the beginning. Shit. What the hell do I have to do? Sign a contract, saying that I won’t fire you when you’re tired of me?” My mouth snapped shut.

There wasn’t any need to dump all my insecurities at her feet. Jane was pressed against the back of her chair, watching me with confused eyes.

“Why would I ever get tired of you?” She sounded serious.

“Ah hell, Jane. You’re intelligent, gorgeous and lots of fun to be with. You’re certainly aren’t after me for my money and that’s the only thing I have going for me. Why would you choose to stay with me?” My anger built, but I wouldn’t allow myself to lose my temper.

*Enough.* I bit my tongue and turned away. She wasn’t my therapist. Jane didn’t need my problems spilled in her lap. I walked to the window and hit my head on the glass.

“Back to the original topic. I won’t fire you at any time because of our personal lives. As long as you continue to do your job to the best of your abilities, you’ll continue to work for me. I know you’re up for a promotion soon. With the job you did on the Blackman account, I’m sure you’ll get it. Of course, that isn’t my decision. It belongs to your immediate boss.”

My eyes were closed, so I didn’t know she’d moved close to me until her hand touched my shoulder.

“Josh.” Her breath tickled the back of my neck.

My cock went from limp to stiff in a second. I ground my teeth together. No. I wasn’t going to think about sex, not this time. It was our biggest problem. Whenever we were near each other, I thought about fucking her. It wasn’t conducive to conversation. I needed to prove to her that I wasn’t just after her body. I wanted everything she had.

“About last night,” she said.

“Not today, Jane. We both need to think about what we want out of this relationship before we have a serious conversation.” I shrugged off her hand and turned to smile at her. “You did a great job today. Why not take the rest of the day off?”

“Okay.”

No argument from her. Either she was just as confused as I was or she wanted to get away from me as quickly as possible. I was hoping it was more of the first than the latter. She was walking out of my office when the phone rang.

“Anderson,” I growled into the phone.

“Hey, don’t forget. We have that big charity ball on Thursday,” Cooper informed me.

“Aw shit.” I slumped into the chair.

“Guess you forgot. Do you even have a date for it?” Cooper’s voice held laughter.

“Just a sec.” I set the receiver down and raced out of my office. Jane was just reaching the elevators when I reached her. “Jane, will you go out with me Thursday? I need a date for a stupid charity ball.”

“Well, what a romantic way to ask for a date.” She smirked at me.

“Come on. I’ll buy you a dress and shoes. The whole nine yards. I’m desperate.” I

started to kneel in front of her. "I'll even beg."

"Stay off the floor, you imbecile." She gestured for me to stand up. "Lucky for you, I have nothing else scheduled for that night. Don't worry about the dress and shoes. I won't embarrass you." The elevator doors slid open and she stepped inside the car.

"Great. I'll be around to pick you up at seven. Thanks." I dashed back to the phone. "Got the date covered. Jane's coming," I gasped into the phone.

"I thought you liked this girl, Anderson."

"I do." I frowned, puzzled by Cooper's comment.

"So you're going to subject a woman you actually like to an entire night with your family. I'd hate to see what you did to a woman you hated." Cooper hung up.

"Damn it." I slammed the phone down and slumped in my chair, holding my head in my hands. I'd forgotten my family would be at this event. After Thursday night, I wouldn't have to worry about figuring out my relationship with Jane. By the time the night was over with, I'd be lucky if she hadn't killed me.

## Thursday

### Jane

I ended up buying a new dress that I barely got zipped before Josh came to pick me up for the ball. Despite our unofficial peace treaty, the limo ride was tense. I'd been comparing us to a fairy tale since he first made a pass at me. Not really believing that this was real, that what I felt was real. You'd think, going to a ball with the handsome prince, I'd come up with something more inspiring than, "Have you been to many balls before?" Stupid. After that I sat in silence, a little uncomfortable in my deep red, floor length, strapless dress and insanely high heels.

"Jane, I..."

I looked away from staring out the window and almost drowned in his heated gaze. "Yes?"

"We don't have to stay long, in fact, I'd love to not have to go at all, but it's my family's charity and you know ... expectations and all."

"Really Josh, its okay. I'm ... well, I'm glad you asked me."

"Really? Because after everything I was sure you'd say no."

I shifted uncomfortably on the leather bench seat. After I said yes I'd really thought about calling him and faking a sprained ankle or sudden fever. We still had so many unresolved issues. I mean, we didn't even have a real relationship, we couldn't stay out of bed long enough to really develop anything more than passion, right?

"Well, I've never been to a ball, but I have been to formal functions, so it shouldn't be that much different right?"

He leaned forward and grasped my clasped hands from my lap, pulling them apart and running his thumbs back and for the on the palms of my hands. "You'll do great. All the old men will be adjusting their pacemakers at the sight of you and their young trophy wives will be baring their fangs."

I laughed. "You're crazy." I tried to look away but he gently gripped my chin and brought my face to his.

"Crazy for you."

His lips were soft and warm, this kiss made my heart beat a stuttered rhythm. He pulled back and leaned his forehead against mine. "I want to tear this gorgeous dress off you right now, Jane, and have my wicked way with you."

God, how was I ever going to protect my heart when his lips, his voice, his very breath was the key to my cage? "Only step-mothers are wicked, Josh, and this dress cost me a fortune, if you even think of tearing one thread of it I'll have your head on a platter."

He laughed.

I joined him, and suddenly the tension melted away.

The limo pulled to a stop and a valet opened the door.

"After you, m'lady."

I rolled my eyes, but took the valet's hand and stepped out into the balmy night.

Bright lights flashed as the hem of my dress caught my heel and I tripped, but Josh

was there to catch me before I fell flat on my face. “Easy there, I got ya.”

I was mortified and the flashes kept going off, I didn’t know up from down, let alone could see where the heck I was supposed to go.

“Just hold my hand and follow me,” he whispered in my ear then let me up the red carpeted walkway.

“You didn’t say anything about paparazzi,” I hissed at him, all the while keeping a fake smile plastered to my face.

“Sorry.” He gave me a look of resigned chagrin. “I guess I don’t notice it anymore. You’ll get used to it.”

My insides melted a little, that had the tone of future to it.

\* \* \* \*

The evening passed in a blur of faces of people whose names I’d only seen in the society page, big band music, and Josh’s smile. Josh’s hand on the small of my back. Josh’s arms around me as we waltzed around the dance floor.

My heart bloomed under his attention and I couldn’t even remember why we’d fought, or why I thought we’d never make it in a relationship. The song ended and Josh released me with a gracious bow.

I giggled and pulled him back to a standing position.

He leaned in to kiss me.

I closed my eyes, awaiting his warm lips.

“Ahem.”

I blinked my eyes opened and met the cool gray eyes of Josh’s mother, Victoria Anderson.

She dismissed me with a sneer and turned to Josh. “Your father is looking for you Joshua.” She turned back to me. “But you must introduce me to your date for the evening, I’ll take care of her while your gone.”

She said date like you’d say roach.

“Hello to you, Mother. If this is business, don’t you think father can wait until the board meeting on Monday?” Josh moved closer and took my hand.

I didn’t dare look away from his mother’s cold, snake-like stare. You know what they say about sudden movements and all.

She flicked her eyes at him, annoyance filling her features. “It can’t wait, darling.” She looked back at me expectantly, as if I was a juicy steak and she a starved lioness. “Joshua?”

He sighed and squeezed my hand. “Mother, this is Jane Van Poppel. Jane, my mother, Victoria Anderson.”

I was waiting for her limp hand and a “charmed I’m sure” but she just kept up her cold stare.

Josh tugged on my hand. I looked at him, but kept his mother in my peripheral.

“Jane, I’m sure it’s nothing. I’ll go see what my father wants and be right back. You’ll be okay?”

I nodded and swallowed the knot of fear in my throat. “Don’t be silly. I’ll be fine.”

“Of course she will, dear.”

I almost gasped in horror as his mother broke our hands apart and took mine in hers and started to lead me away. “I’ll introduce her to the family.” She tutted and shook her

finger at Josh. "Shame on you for not doing so earlier."

She walked gracefully to the other side of the room, greeting people as she passed in a syrupy sweet voice, all the while keeping a vice grip on my hand.

We stopped at a cluster of supermodels who all turned to look at me with the same sneer of disgust Victoria had.

"Ladies," Victoria crooned. "This is Jane Van Doppel."

"Van Poppel" I muttered.

"Jane, this is Joshua's elder sister, Sybil." She pointed to the tall skinny blonde with daggers shooting out of her eyes.

Sybil mocked me with a curtsy. "Charmed."

Ah, there it was.

"Next to her is Hailey, Joshua's younger sister, and Brittney, their cousin."

I briefly wondered if it was bimbo law to have a name ending in "y".

"It's nice to meet you ladies." I was shaking in my proverbial boots here. I'd been dragged into the lionesses' den. "I understand you are behind this wonderful gala tonight, you've done a great job." What else was I supposed to say? *Where'd you buy your boobs, I must know?*

Hailey and Brittney giggled, but Sybil smiled almost graciously and stepped forward to take my hand, a sudden look of sincerity washing over her face.

"Jane dear, we wanted to have a moment with you in private."

"Really?" I must try to not have my voice squeak when I'm nervous.

Victoria pulled me closer into their inner circle. "Yes, we felt you needed to know the truth before things got out of hand."

"The truth?"

Sybil pulled me into a hug and I felt like I'd been transported to bizarro world.

"Mother?" Sybil pulled back and looked at her mother expectantly.

So I did too.

"Jane, I'm not really sure how to say this." She wrung her hands together and her cold snake look had been replaced with a more somber one. "I think you should know the truth about Joshua before your heart is broken." Victoria's voice broke.

I almost laughed. No longer in a fairy tale ... I'd been transported to a freakin' soap opera, but the serious looks on all their faces gave me pause.

Sybil cleared her throat. "It's okay, Mother, I'll tell her. Jane..."

I gave her my full attention, threads of dread already weaving their way through me.

"My brother has a problem. It's not something we like to talk about, but as women we felt you should know."

Hailey began to cry softly.

Shit.

"We've had to," Sybil continued. "How should I say this, relocate women for their safety."

Hailey's tears turned to sobs. Victoria moved from me to her youngest daughter to comfort her.

"I don't understand." I was genuinely puzzled.

Sybil turned to look at Hailey and then back at me, tears pricking her eyes.

"Joshua has a history of physical abuse, Jane. It began in high school. At first we didn't believe the young ladies that told us, we dismissed them as jealous accusations.

But when we continued to hear things through his college years, we couldn't dismiss them so easily. The last girl was about two years ago."

"Alexa!" Hailey sobbed the name and almost crumpled to the floor.

"I have to take her somewhere." Victoria said. "Listen to her Jane, for your life, listen to Sybil." She carted a weeping Hailey and Brittney off into the throng.

"Oh, my God, Sybil, what are you telling me?"

"He's charming enough, lavishes gifts on naive young girls." She gestured to me. "Women." She pulled me away from the crowd of people and into a darkened alcove. "Dinners, romantic gestures. Possibly even alluding to falling in love with them, that he can't be without them."

I shuddered, thinking of all the sweet things Josh had done for me, the carriage ride, the hints that he wanted more than a fling.

"But if they try to leave, if they begin to feel overwhelmed with the weight of his attentions, he becomes violent. Alexa." She nodded in the direction Victoria had taken her sobbing daughter. "Alexa was Hailey's best friend." Sybil looked away. "She was in a hospital for a month."

"No." Sybil was lying, they were all lying. "I don't believe you."

"I know it's hard to imagine. Our father keeps him close so we can catch it before it happens again. We thought after all the therapy and drugs that he was out of the woods." She grabbed my hands and pulled me in to a gripping hug. Her heart was beating rapidly and she was shaking.

I wondered if she was shaking from fear like I was. Everything she'd said had happened. I'd missed the signs. I'd seen sparks of it when I said we could be fuck buddies, but didn't think it was more than natural anger.

"We'll help you in any way, Jane." She released me to wipe away tears. "Any way we can."

"No, I'm okay. I ... I'll be fine."

"Is there someone you can go to that he doesn't know about? A place you'll feel safe?"

"No, I can ... yes, my grandparents' cabin in the mountains." In my mind I was already at my apartment packing.

"Good, I think you should go now, while he's distracted." She pushed me a little toward the door, but a handsome man in a black tux and a wheelchair rolled in her path.

"Sybil? What's going on here?"

"None of your business, Michael, move out of our way." She shoved past him and helped me outside and down the steps of the museum.

I was numb. How could I have been so blind to believe the flattering words Josh had spoken? "Thank you for telling me."

"No, Jane." Sybil sounded resolved. "Thank you."

I stumbled down the steps, not understanding what she could mean by that, and let the driver Sybil directed to me lead me to a black town car.

"I've been instructed to take you home miss, and wait for you to take you to the airport." The driver tucked my dress in the car.

"No, I won't be going to the airport. I'll be taking my car, but thank you."

"As you wish, miss."

The door shut with a finality that broke my heart.

## Josh

I pushed my way through the crowd, anger simmering in me. When I found Father, he didn't have any idea why Mother would send me to him. I should have known the witch was up to something. Father and I hadn't really talked about anything for years, ever since I left the family company and went my own way. While I wanted to go and shake my mother silly for tricking me that way, I really just wanted to find Jane and blow this popsicle stand.

I'd done my time. Shown my face and smiled nicely for the newspaper people. It was time to go and do something I enjoyed. Which would be snuggling up to Jane on my couch, watching movies or sports or hell, just a blank screen would be great as long as she was with me. I caught a glimpse of Sybil making her way through the crowd.

"Sybil," I called.

She threw a glance over her shoulder at me and I swore a look of fear crossed her face. What the hell? My sister took off moving in the opposite direction and I was sure she'd done something I wasn't going to like. Sybil didn't move that fast unless there was a sale at Tiffany's.

I made a grab for her arm just as she was about to slide out into the garden. "Gotcha, sis. So where did you put Jane?"

She gave me her patented 'I don't know what you're talking about' look. "Jane? She isn't with you?"

"If she was, I wouldn't be asking where she was." I tightened my grip. "What did you do to her?"

"Ow. Let go. You're hurting me." She whined and tugged, trying to make me to let her go.

"Shut up. I'm not hurting you. Where's Jane, Sybil? Don't lie to me." I stared at her and the same old thought surfaced, how could we be related? I've often thought I'd been adopted into the Anderson family, because they were all money-grubbing, society-loving fakes.

"She left, Josh."

I dropped my sister's arm and turned to find Michael, my best friend, behind me. Leaning over, I gave him a hug. "Hey man, I didn't know you were coming in for this thing."

Michael smiled up at me from his seat in his wheelchair. Michael was our old chauffeur's son. While his father worked for us, we had been glued together at the hip. Even though he spent most of his time in and out of hospitals while he was younger, we stayed friends. Michael's leukemia and his need for a wheelchair disgusted my family, who only liked perfection. For so long he'd been my voice of reason about how the real world worked.

"I just got in right before the ball. Threw on my tux and headed over here. I'm surprised you even showed up." Michael looked over to where my mother and sister had their heads close together. "Man, if the lady in red was Jane, you've got a problem."

"Shit. Did they do something to her?" I knew my sister was a harpy, but she was a beginner compared to my mother.

"Well, they didn't kill her and bury her in the backyard, but she certainly ran out of here in a hurry with your sister whispering in her ear the whole way." Michael whirled

his chair around and wheeled towards the entrance of the museum where the ball was taking place.

"I knew I should never have left her alone with those two. Damn it, I'll be lucky if Jane isn't planning my death by now. You saw her leave?" I followed him, like the children following the Pied Piper.

"Yes." Michael stopped and looked up at me. His blue eyes were serious as they studied me. "If you really believe you're falling in love with her, then go after her, fix whatever it is your mother and sister broke and have a happy normal relationship for once in your pathetic life." His smile told me he was joking, a little anyway.

"Thanks, man." I slapped him on the shoulder and headed out to find my limo. I turned back and yelled, "I'll catch up with you in a day or two and we can go over those final plans."

He waved at me. I pulled out my cell phone and dialed Jane's number as I flagged Paul over. He was used to my early exits, so he had the car ready to leave at a moment's notice.

The phone rang and rang. "Come on, Jane. You have to be there. Pick up the damn phone," I mumbled while climbing into the limo.

"I'm not here right now. Please leave your name and number. Thanks." Jane's answering machine picked up. I waited for the beep.

"Jane, listen. I don't know what my mother and sister told you, but it isn't true. Don't ever believe anything that comes out of their mouth. If lying were an Olympic sport, they'd be gold medalists every time. I'm on my way over. Please don't leave. We have to talk." I hung up and shot Paul a glance. "Take me to Jane's house."

"Yes sir." Paul didn't ask any questions. He just drove like a madman. He must have sensed my desperation.

By the time we got to Jane's house, I was furious and really wanted to go back to the gala and choke the life out of my family. My hands balled into fists and I had to take a deep breath. There wasn't any point in frightening Jane. We pulled into her driveway. Her car was gone and there weren't any lights on in her house.

"I don't think she's here, sir." Paul's voice caused a sinking feeling in my chest.

He was right. I'd missed her and maybe missed out on a chance at finally making a relationship work.

"Fuck. Take me home, Paul." I leaned back in the seat, staring out at the streetlights flashing by. I found myself wondering how in the span of a few days my entire life could be turned upside down and screwed up. Well, actually, in a way, my life had always been screwed up. Thanks to my family.

A few minutes later, Paul stopped in front of my house. I raced in, yelling for Stevenson.

"Stevie, I want your ass in my study now." I headed for the room, tugging off my jacket and flinging it in the general direction of the couch.

"What the hell is going on? Are your mother and sister here?" A flash of fear raced over Stevenson's face at that thought. He hated my family as much as I did.

"No, but they better hope I never see them again. I think they said or did something to Jane. She left the damned event and now she's gone. I stopped by her house and her car wasn't there." I slumped in my desk chair, running one of my shaking hands through my hair. "Where would she go this late at night?"



Stevenson picked up my jacket and then went to pour me a drink. Handing it to me, he said, "Why not call Dean? Didn't you say he was her best friend?"

"You're right. God, my brain's turned to mush." I reached for the phone.

"This would probably be the time to ask for a raise then." Stevenson winked as he headed out of the room.

I flipped him off, but made a mental note to do what he suggested. Stevenson had put up with a lot of shit from me over the years.

"This is Dean." Dean's voice came over the phone. My friend sounded a little aggravated.

"Hey man, I need your help." I winced. I'd never needed help from anyone with a woman before.

"God, Josh. What the hell did you do this time?" Dean's voice faded out. He must have covered the phone to talk to someone.

"I'm sorry. You're probably busy, but it's Jane. She's gone and I don't know where she went." I pushed the papers around my desk, trying not to whine.

"You've lost Jane?" Someone spoke to Dean in the background. Dean's voice went up a few notches. "You took Jane to the charity ball? What the hell were you thinking?"

Frowning, I wondered how Dean knew I took Jane. Then the voice in the background spoke again and I almost dropped the phone. "Is Cooper with you, Dean?"

"Keep your nose out of my business, Josh. Unlike you, I don't need help. If Jane's gone, then she probably headed up to her grandparents' cabin. Grab a pen and paper. I'll give you directions, but that's all. I'm done trying to fix things between the two of you. From now on, you two have to talk. Shit, I can't believe you exposed her to those barracudas."

I was still trying to overcome my shock about Cooper being with Dean while I searched for a blank piece of paper and a pen. "Why isn't Coop at the ball?"

"It's your fucking ball. How do you know he didn't make an appearance and then leave?" Dean sighed. "Fix your own problems, Josh. Don't get involved in mine."

"Right. Okay, I'm ready. Shoot." I decided to bug Cooper about it later.

After Dean gave me the directions and hung up, I raced upstairs to my room. "Stevie, have Paul bring my truck around. I'm going to the mountains to bring Jane back."

Stevenson stood in the door, watching me change my clothes. "It's all ready out front for you. This time keep your hands off her until you talk."

I nodded as I flew back down the stairs. Paul had left the keys in the ignition. I threw myself into the cab and started the truck. The tires sprayed gravel into the lawn as I stomped on the gas and tore out of my driveway.

I needed to find Jane and fix whatever my family did. I had to find her and tell her that I was falling in love with her. I wanted her to know that it wasn't just sex, that there was something more. I wished I had a way with words. I didn't know if I could convince her that falling in love in such a short time was possible when I had never believed it myself.

Heading out into the night, I vowed to cut all ties with my family. This incident was the last straw. I didn't care what they said or did to me. I'd learned how to brush their poison off, but when they reached out and hurt Jane, that took their little games too far. I scrubbed a hand over my face. It didn't matter. I had a new family made up of friends who liked me in spite of my money. Thinking about my friends brought my mind back to

Cooper and Dean. Was something going on there that I didn't know or hadn't noticed?

I glanced down at the directions on the front seat next to me. It would take me at least an hour to reach the cabin, if I could even find it in the dark. I should take my time driving, figure out how to talk Jane into loving me instead of wishing me to the seventh level of hell.

\*

## **Jane**

By the time I got on the road it was close to eleven. My grandparents were out of town so I didn't bother to call them. Good thing I knew my way to their cabin with my eyes closed, because I couldn't stop replaying the scene at the ball in my mind. Something felt off, wrong, but I couldn't deny that I'd seen his temper.

Hell, I'd been there the day he'd had his sister escorted from the building. What kind of brother did that? I dug in my purse for my cell phone to call Dean, stared at the backlit screen, then put it back. He'd said something about a date tonight and this was something I could take care of myself. Besides, the signal was only going to worsen the higher up I went.

I downshifted as the incline increased, my hurt and fear escalating with the elevation into something more tangible.

Anger.

Again, I replayed the confrontation with Sybil and Victoria. Victoria had gone from hoity bitch to comforting mother a little too quickly. Hailey's tears had seem a little over the top. Sybil, though, she'd seemed so sincere.

I slowed the car and turned right onto the gravel driveway that led to my grandparents' cabin. Five minutes later I was using my key in the door. The smell of wood and leather enfolded me as I stepped through the door. I set my bag down and flicked on the light switch. It was cool and I should have started a fire, but all I could do was drop exhausted onto the leather sectional.

Tears threatened, my throat constricted, holding them back. My emotions seesawed back and forth.

I'd fallen in love.

I couldn't have fallen in love.

He was upper class.

I was low rent.

According to his family, he had a sketchy past.

I'd barely lived.

I felt like the last couple weeks had been orchestrated by some psychotic puppet master, evilly plucking the petals off a flower connected to our lives. She loves him. He loves her not. He loves her. She loves him not.

I got up and walked through the living room to the back porch. The cool night air helped me push the tears back. The moon peeked out from behind the clouds, illuminating the amazing view of the valley below. I took a deep breath and tried to will my grandmother's presence. She always knew the right thing to say, but they were a world away in the Bahamas. What would she say?

Do you love the boy?

Did I? I'd never felt so deep for anyone. The thought of him, the smell of him, the taste of him made my stomach hurt and my heart beat fast. He was always close to my

thoughts, as if waiting in the wings of my consciousness, ready to jump out and overwhelm me at a thought. Was that love?

I tested that on my tongue, felt the weight of that on my hand. I could hazard a guess that yes, it was, but the warnings from Sybil and Victoria still rattled around in my head.

Forget about those selfish hussies, girl, do you love him?

I didn't answer. I went back inside and lit the gas fireplace, the heat soothing the chill of the night and in my heart.

"Well, might as well and see if Grandma has any chocolate." I rummaged around in the kitchen and found a coffee tin reincarnated as the holder of my grandmother's famous hot cocoa mix. I grabbed the powder blue teakettle off the stove, filled it with water and set it back on the stove to heat up. If I'd had any brains I would have stopped at the grocery store before I headed up the mountain, but morning would come soon enough and I could go back down and buy some food for the next few days.

Shit. In my haste I'd forgotten tomorrow was Friday, and I was supposed to be working. Now I'd lose my job for sure; my heart was already a foregone conclusion. I slumped down at the kitchen table and waited for the water to boil.

Thoughts of Josh filled the silence. He might have a temper but he'd never shown any aggression or violence towards me. Although wasn't that how all the Lifetime movies started? Happily Ever After until he turns into the Big Bad Wolf? Could this be some horrible plot enacted by his hateful family to be rid of me?

I stewed over that thought. Typically rich people used money to pay people off. Sybil had even suggested that they had in the past when it came to Josh's "indiscretions". Money didn't matter to me, though. I made good bank as a graphic designer and didn't want to live the life of the wealthy. I'd had companies try to lure me away from Centurion Graphics, dangling thousands in front of me, and I'd always turned them down. I'd never made that a secret.

The kettle whistled as the truth of the situation hit me. It had all been a farce. Not Josh. Never Josh, but uber-slick Victoria, and hateful Sybil. Con-artists extraordinaire, and I'd been conned.

Anger boiled like the water. I pounded my fist on the table and let out a yell of frustration. I got up from the table and turned off the stove, the high pitch whistle of the kettle softening into the silence of the mountain night. My anger followed suit, quieting into the realization that I did love him, but I hadn't wanted to believe it and had fallen hook, line, and sinker into his family's trap. "Those bitches."

Now I was pissed. Prince Charming had grown up with the Wicked Witch of the West and Cinderella's evil step-sisters.

Dumb, Jane. So stupid. They'd played me. They'd taken hold of my insecurities, thrown a pity party with them and I'd joined in. Sybil and Victoria were probably toasting each other's guile over a class of Cristal.

I glanced at my watch, a little after midnight. The time when all fairy tales went back to reality. Well, this was my fairy tale, my life, and I'd be damned if I was going to let the magic go.

## Friday

### Jane

I dialed Josh's cell for the fifth time, still no answer. I'd tried his home phone too, no luck there either. I pulled up to his house and got out of the car. The front light was on but the lights were out in the house. I walked up to the front door and rang the bell. Nothing. I knocked and still no response. Shit.

Where could he be? Where was Stuff Stevenson?

The weight of the long day began to fold in on me. Hopefully Josh would be at work tomorrow, or today, as I looked at my watch again. Three a.m. Sleep was pulling at me, but I didn't want to go home. Maybe he was at the office. The work day started in a few hours anyway.

I walked back to my car, climbed in and headed to work. I had after-hours access and if I was lucky Josh would be there.

My anger had diminished and as I drove to work, the joy of accepting my feelings crept over me. It was new, raw, still vulnerable, but I was strong deep down inside and I only hoped Josh would forgive me for being such a dolt.

I pulled into the parking garage, waving my parking card at the reader and pulled into my spot. I didn't see Josh's car but that didn't mean he wasn't here, Paul could have dropped him off.

My nerves jangled as I climbed into the elevator. I had visions of hearing the elevator ding, the door sliding open, Josh there with arms open wide, love shining in his eyes. I'd run to him, telling him I was an idiot and that I loved him. He'd shush me and take me to his house and we'd make mad, passionate love the rest of the night.

My body tingled remembering his mouth on me, his hands, gentle yet firm at the same time, his hard length filling me. My nipples beaded and pushed against my bra, my panties dampened, ready for my vision to come true.

The elevator dinged, the doors whooshed open ... to nothing. Damn. It was a good fantasy, and one that I was going to make come true when I saw Josh in the morning. I made my way to his office and closed the door behind me.

"I'll just wait here." I settled into his plush leather office chair, kicked off my sneakers, and rested my heels on the desk, tilting the chair back so that I could catch a few winks of sleep.

Sleep wouldn't come, though; my body still hummed from my elevator fantasy. I spread my legs wider and reached into my sweats with my right hand, using my left to unclip the front clasp of my bra, releasing the weight of my breasts. My already hard nipples reacted to the soft cotton of my T-shirt.

I slipped under my panties and dipped into my sex, dragging the moisture up to my clit. I used two fingers and teased my clit to a hard nub. My other hand pinched and pulled at my nipples then lightly brushed them with the palm of my hand.

"Josh." Just his whispered name sent shivers of pleasure down my spine.

I alternated between sensations, bringing me close to the edge, then pulling back. Building up the tension, imagining it was Josh's hands on my breasts, his mouth on my

clit, his tongue plunging into my heat.

The tension coiled, ready to spring, to let go, to release all the confusion, the anger, the hurt and fling it over the edge. I pumped two fingers into me, fast, hard. The heel of my palm tapped my clit with each plunge of my fingers.

“Uh ... Josh ... Josh.” I panted his name over and over until one last plunge and I came, yelling his name into the empty room.

\*

## **Josh**

My anger and fear grew during the drive up to Jane’s grandparents’ cabin. No one was there. I fought the urge to go find my mother and sister and beat them, but I knew it wouldn’t do any good. I needed to see Jane face-to-face and try to fix whatever they had done to our relationship.

My phone rang. “Jane?”

“Not even close. I take it you haven’t found her yet.” Michael’s voice made my heart drop.

“No. She’s not at her grandparents’ cabin. Either she never made it here or I missed her.” I leaned against the truck. Scrubbing my hand through my hair, I sighed. “I don’t know why I thought taking her to the ball was a good idea.”

“Because basically you’re still a good man, Anderson. You think people should have morals and try not to hurt each other. Unfortunately, your family didn’t receive that memo and they’re out to take all they can. Are you ready to let them go completely?” Michael was the voice of reason more often than not.

“Yeah. Are you going to be in town long enough to draw up partnership papers? I want to go in with you on your construction company. I’ll call my accountant tomorrow and tell him to sell all my stock in the family businesses. I don’t want to dirty my hands with them anymore.” I glanced up at the night sky. The stars shined like the brightest streetlights.

“You’re ready for a fight, right? Your father won’t be happy when he finds out.”

That was an understatement. “I know, but maybe it’ll shake him up enough to take a firmer grip on Mother and Sybil before they get into serious trouble. I’ve told him that their antics will cost him business, but he doesn’t listen to me.” My phone beeped in my ear. I checked it. My low battery signal flashed at me. “Shit. My battery’s about to die. I’ll give you a call later today and set up a time for us to meet with the lawyers.”

“Great. Take care, man. I’m sure it’ll all work out. You just have to have faith.” Michael hung up.

I hung up just as my phone died. I should have invested in one of those car chargers for my phone considering how often I let the battery run down on me. Climbing back into the truck, I check the clock. Almost six in the morning. It would be close to eight when I got back. Might as well go straight to the office and hope Jane showed up. I didn’t think Dean would be helping me anymore. There was a man who had little patience for idiots and I was willing to admit I was the biggest fool in the world at the moment. Before I put the truck in drive and headed back to the city, I glanced up at the brightest star in the sky and made a wish. Michael said to have faith. I’ve never had much of that after living with my family during my formative years. But for Jane, I was willing to believe that things would work out for the best. I wanted to believe in happily ever after for us.

\* \* \* \*

People were arriving at the office when I pulled in. I nodded as my employees waved and called out to me, but I wasn't interested in talking to any of them. Though I did pause a moment when I saw Dean and Cooper standing close to each other. Dean was straightening Cooper's tie and my friends were smiling at each other. Shit. I didn't have the energy to wrap my mind around the budding relationship between them.

Dean's eyes widened as he saw me. I stopped him with a raised hand and shook my head. Heading to my office, I saw the empty desk as I remembered I had given Marsha the day off. That meant I had to make my own coffee.

"The damn coffee maker needs a rocket scientist to work it," I grumbled as I opened my office door and walked in.

The sight greeting my eyes made me want to laugh with joy and swear with anger. Jane was asleep, sprawled in my chair with her feet up on my desk. I shut my door quietly and locked it, not wanting to wake her up just yet. I moved to stand beside her and stared down at her. She was beautiful, even in sweats that didn't hide her wonderful curves and full breasts. I found myself torn between reaching out and shaking her awake or choosing the more gentle way of kissing her awake. Of course, if I shook her awake, she'd probably punch me, so I decided to take the less dangerous route.

As I leaned over to kiss her, some noise must have startled her and she woke up, popping up in the chair. Her forehead collided with my chin hard enough for me to bite my lip and see stars.

"Fuck." I moaned. "I think you were just waiting to pay me back for hitting you in the eye." I pressed my fingers against my lip, trying to stop the bleeding.

"Well, what the hell were you doing looming over me like that? You should have let me know you were here." She held her forehead and I could see a red mark on her skin that was sure to turn into a bruise before the morning was over with.

I traced the mark. "People are going to think I beat you."

She got the strangest look on her face. "According to your mother and sister, you beat and stalk your girlfriends on a regular basis. Or maybe it was just Alexa."

"Alexa? What does that psycho bitch have to do with us?" And then I registered her other words. "Beat and stalk my girlfriends? Sybil told you this?"

Jane nodded. "She said that you put Alexa in the hospital for a month because she wanted to leave you and you got angry."

"Alexa was in the hospital for a month because the crazy witch overdosed when I told her I didn't want to have anything to do with her. She's the one who stalked me. I have a temper, Jane. I'm not denying that, but I don't go around beating up women or men for that matter. My nannies taught me better manners than that."

She didn't look one hundred percent convinced.

"Is that why you left the ball so fast last night?"

Jane nodded.

"Why didn't you come and ask me? Why would you believe my family over me? Have I ever done anything to make you think that I'd get off on beating up women?" There was a hint of anger and hurt in my voice, but I couldn't help it. I thought we had gotten to the point where we trusted each other. *Your family can be persuasive when they want to be and they are very good actresses.* "You ran away. Why did you come back?"

She turned to face the window. Okay, maybe I didn't want to know why she came

back. Maybe she'd been waiting in my office to tell me to fuck off and that she never wanted to see me again. I could be about to lose not only the best graphic designer I had in the company, but the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. Sweat broke out on my forehead while I waited to hear what she had to say.

\*

## **Jane**

I stood looking out of the window. Josh was pretty much off the hook, but it felt good to let him stew. Plus, I was trying to formulate my answer.

"Jane?"

I felt him move behind me, almost touching, yet the heat of him enveloped me as if we were skin to skin.

"Why did you come back?"

"Because you're not the Big Bad Wolf."

"Huh?" He spun me around to look at him, confusion etched on his face. "I think I missed something."

I smiled and reached up to caress his stubbled jaw. So he actually looked a little wolfie, but he was a sheep inside. "Those things your mother and sister said about you?"

He nodded and pulled me close, reminiscent of the first time he held me in the gym locker room.

"They aren't true, and I was more than stupid to believe them."

He opened his mouth to respond but I held up my finger to shush him.

"Wait, let me finish." I snuggled closer and felt his cock swell against my belly. I gave him an "Oh-My" look.

He shrugged and looked chagrined, yet still a little worried around the eyes.

"I went to my grandparents' cabin last night, to run away, from you, from me." I looked away. "From us."

He began to rub small circles with his fingers on the small of my back. "I went to find you, you know. Up there, I must have missed you on the road."

"You did?" I returned his gaze; his fingers were working magic on me and I was forgetting what we were talking about. "I'm sorry you did ... missed me that is."

"But I have you now?"

"Yes, it seems that you do."

"Jane..."

"Ah, just a second." My body was humming, responding to his closeness, yet at the same time I felt the need to cry, my throat constricting against the tears. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for not trusting you. I'm sorry for not trusting myself." A tear escaped, rolling down my cheek.

"Shh," He leaned forward and kissed away the tear. He kissed my forehead, then the other cheek, then my lips. He pulled my head to his chest. "It goes both ways, Jane. I'm sorry I pushed you when I shouldn't have. I didn't give you the time you needed, but I needed you. No..." He pushed me back and tipped my chin to catch my gaze. "I need you."

My doubting heart broke then, my insecurities flying out the window and love flooded my soul. Love for this man. Love for my Prince Charming.

He moved to my lips, gentle nips that turned into tongues and teeth clashing. His hands moved down my back into my sweats and panties, cupping my ass, pressing me to

him.

I lifted my leg and wrapped it around his waist, fitting his hard cock to my sex.

He groaned and pulled away. "Wait," he panted, as breathless as I was. "Wait, we always move to this before we're really finished talking. Shit..." He ran his hand through his hair and took a few deep breaths, like he was getting ready to dive deep into the water.

Shit was right. I was ready to ravish him on his desk and he wanted to talk? He was right though, our bodies were like a magnet to steel, both gravitating—

"I'm pretty sure I'm in love you."

My heart stopped, my breath whooshed out. I think I tried to say 'what' but all that came out was gobbledygook.

He smiled. "I do, I can't help it. I think I've been half in love with you since I hired you." He moved back to me, enfolding me in his arms again. "I love your hair, I love your body, I love the way you respond to me."

I was still breathless, but my heart had started working overtime now.

"I love your sarcasm. I love the fire in your eyes when you're angry. I love your taste." He bent down and sipped from my lips. "I love you, Jane."

"Shit, you beat me to it." I met him in another searing kiss that I felt to my toes. "I'm in love with you, Josh Anderson."

He whooped and picked me up, spinning me around until we reached his desk. He lifted me up so I sat on the edge and he stood between my legs. He picked up the phone and dialed a number.

I was so giddy all I could do was giggle like a little schoolgirl.

"Dean?" He practically barked into the phone. "Tell everyone to take off the rest of the day." He looked at me and winked. "Don't tell me what time it is, I know what time it is, but I'm officially declaring today a work holiday."

He kept the phone at his ear and bent to kiss my neck.

I could hear Dean arguing in the phone.

"I don't..." Josh nibbled my earlobe. "care..." My neck. "what you tell them, just get them out of here." He hung up the phone. "Now where were we?" He started to lift up my shirt.

"What did you just do?" I batted away his hands and pulled my shirt down.

"You're right, not here."

"Not here? Josh, you just told everyone to go home."

"Yes, I did. It's my company and I can do what I want, and what I want is to run up the stairs to the rooftop and shout to the city..." He moved back from me and cupped his hands around his mouth. "JANE VAN POPPEL LOVES ME!"

I tossed a paperweight at him which he caught easily. "You goof. The elevator is faster."

He looked at me, an evil glint in his eye. "Yes, my pretty. The elevator is faster." He snatched my hand, tugging me off the desk and pulled me toward the door.

"Where are we going?"

He fumbled for a minute with the lock. "You'll see." He gave a little shout of triumph when he finally got the door open and hauled me through it.

The office was empty. Dean must have told them there was a fire or something, I'd never seen the office clear out so fast.



As if by magic, the elevator opened just as we got to it. Josh flung me inside, pushed a button and had me against the wall before I could even fathom where we were going.

The humming was back again, with each touch of his lips and his hands, surges of heat rushed through me.

The elevator stopped with a jolt, or maybe it was that I was just off kilter from the sex buzz I had going.

Josh pulled back, grabbed my hand and with a wink pulled me out of the elevator.

I recognized the floor then; we were headed for the gym.

"I wanted to do this that first night you know."

I laughed. "Do what?" Innocence oozed from my mouth.

He shoved open the locker room door, pulled me in and pressed me against the first row of lockers. "Kiss you. Fuck you."

I took my shirt off this time. "If you're gonna use such pretty words with me, Mr. Anderson, you might just make it into my pants."

He yanked off his shirt and started to unbuckle his pants. "My thoughts exactly."

I couldn't undress fast enough.

He was naked and at full staff as I kicked my shoes off. "Allow me." He knelt in front of me and tugged my sweats and panties down, his hot breath following the trail of the waistband.

I stepped out of my sweats and he tossed them aside. "We won't be needing these." I started to laugh, but his mouth on my inner thigh turned it into a moan.

"Open for me, Jane. Let me taste you."

I widened my stance and his mouth was on me. His tongue delved into my folds, lapping at my juices.

"Uh, God, Josh."

He used his thumbs to spread me open and licked and nibbled at my clit.

I arched my back, pressing my sex into his mouth. I reached up and lightly grazed my already peaked nipples with my hands. Fire seared down from them to where Josh was feasting on me. I continued, alternating between soft caresses and pinches.

Josh mimicked my moves, licking and sucking, thrusting his tongue in me, teasing me with what I wanted him to do with his cock.

I looked down at him just as he looked up. He held my gaze as he pushed two fingers inside.

My muscles clenched around him. I closed my eyes and banged my head against the locker. "Shit... I'm..."

He pulled his fingers out. "Oh, no you're not." I felt him move a little away, heard the rip of foil, then he was back. His cock nudged my sex. "Look at me, Jane."

I opened my eyes and held his gaze, pouring all the love I felt for him into that look.

He lifted my leg and wrapped it around his waist, his cock inched into me. "I love you." He thrust into me, pushing me against the locker.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and lifted my other leg around his waist.

He held me up, pistoning into me, each forward thrust grazing a spot inside me that sent zings of fire to my clit.

I dug my feet into his ass, encouraging his thrusts.

His tempo changed, increased, matching his breathing. "Come with me, Jane."

I was close, so close I could feel it in my bones. I nodded and looked up into his

eyes.

“Now, Jane. Now.” He leaned in, full body contact, and met my lips.

We came together, suspended in a bliss I’ve never known, but knew it was the only truth I would know from now on.

My body shook from my orgasm.

Josh held me in a vise grip as we slid to the floor, still connected.

I lay on his chest, the sound of our ragged breaths filled the room, and I started to laugh. I was so high on him I couldn’t help myself.

He hugged me close and laughed with me. He slipped out of me and rolled me over, so I was laying on the cold floor, cradled in his arms, him half on top of me.

“Will you be Lady to my Tramp?”

I lifted up and kissed his chin. “Will there be spaghetti?”

“Lots.” He bent and licked a line up my neck up to my ear. “Will you be Cinderella to my Prince Charming?”

I laughed, snuggled into his neck and bit him. “Only if you promise to turn into the Beast at night.”

He growled and nudged his already hard cock against my leg. “Only at night?”

I kissed him, delving my tongue for a quick lick between his open lips. “It’s not a fairy tale, you know.”

He smoothed back my hair from my forehead and looked into my eyes. “I can’t agree with you there, Jane.” His lips met mine in a gentle kiss. “I wished upon a star for you, and here you are.”

I sighed, happy and content. He was so the man for me. I winked. “Then this must be The End?”

He moved away from me, removed the spent condom and grabbed for another one out of his jeans. He sheathed himself and crawled to loom between my legs. “Not by a long shot, Jane.” He placed his cock at my ready opening and slowly eased in, filling me body, soul and heart.

“The End, Jane, is far, far away.”

## **The End**

### **About the Authors:**

Tiffany Aaron has always been writing. She still has one of the first stories she ever wrote about a time machine and talking mushrooms. While her head was in the clouds, her parents told her to prepare for the “real” world. So she got a degree and a job, but never stopped writing. Her favorite question is “What if?” and so a story is born.

She lives in Michigan with her loving husband. She has two dogs—one who believes he’s human and the other who loves to hear the sound of her own bark. When she’s not writing, she’s reading or watching Jet Li movies. Please visit her at [www.tiffanyaaron.com](http://www.tiffanyaaron.com)

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\* \* \* \*

*Paige spends her days contemplating the complexities of romance and passion. She puts pen to paper, scribing elaborate stories for her many fans in her lush, secluded office at her beach cottage...*

In reality, Paige tries to convince her two growing boys that her space at the dining room table is an invisibility capsule, and she's not really there writing stories laced with humor and passion. Her husband of ten years looks on in devotion and love, encouraging her to write her little heart out. Oh, wait—reality. He wants her to be the next Rowling so he doesn't have to work anymore and can play more golf.

Paige is a master juggler of many personas—mom, wife, granddaughter, sister, jewelry designer, and coffee maker. Her family is her passion, and writing is the perfect outlet.

For romance that sizzles, come visit Paige and add fuel to the fire.

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