

*Annmarie McKenna*



Two  
Sighted

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# Two Sighted

*Annmarie McKenna*

# Dedication

Debbie Chisnell~Thanks for the help and the distractions. 😊

## Chapter One

*Bright light from the full moon glinted off the stainless-steel appliances in the immaculate kitchen. A scream echoed through the large space, drowning out the grunts and moans coming from the two men fighting near the center, arms locked in a combative embrace. The sickening thud of flesh on flesh was followed by a spurt of blood that showered the island countertop. The man dressed in black from head to toe took advantage, flinging them both to the ground with a bone-jarring crunch. He rolled, kneeling above the other man, who was wearing only boxers. With a snick, the man in black flicked open a switchblade. He swung it in an arc above his head, catching the moonlight, making the metal glow. The knife slashed through the air into the bare chest of the man below and another scream pierced the kitchen's confines.*

“Yoo-hoo.”

Aislinn Campbell sucked in a breath and shook her head, trying to ward off the last vestiges of the vision plaguing her yet again.

“Are you there, hon? Earth to Aislinn.” Christina Marshall, the closest friend Aislinn had—the only friend she had—waved a hand in front of her face.

Aislinn had tried more times than she could count not to get close to the uber-bubbly personality that was Chris, to no avail. Chris had insinuated herself in Aislinn's life and never looked back.

Aislinn flushed with embarrassment. Of all the times for her to have a vision—at work in front of numerous coworkers. Great. She could probably count the minutes until word got around about her freakiness. Fighting the urge to cover her ears against the memories of past taunts, she fisted her hands on the arms of the ergonomic computer chair.

Her gaze traveled from one side of the room to the other, taking everything in. Mr. Turner liked the open work spaces instead of offices that shut everyone away. It was a fun atmosphere, which in turn led to lower turnover of employees and more production. No one seemed to be looking at her, not even Chris, who hopefully was too busy picking on her fingernail to notice Aislinn's distress.

"So how late did he make you stay last night?" Chris's focus remained on her nails but Aislinn heard the hint of amusement touching her voice.

Aislinn cleared her throat. "What?" Her friend wasn't acting like she'd noticed her momentary space out. Well, except for the *Earth to Aislinn* comment.

Chris dropped her hand and propped a butt cheek on the corner of Aislinn's desk. She looked her typical bored self, but Aislinn could see her attention was focused on something. Her gaze darted between the bank of elevators and Aislinn.

If she didn't know better, Aislinn might be offended. Despite Chris's protests, she was seriously interested in one of their boss's bodyguards. Aislinn hadn't figured out which one yet. And she didn't care. No man would ever have that kind of hold over her again.

"You know," Chris murmured. "Last night. The meeting. How long did he make you stay?"

"Oh. That. Not too late. Seven twenty-eight."

Chris laughed. "Not too late, but late enough you noticed the exact minute you walked out the door? Were his groupies with him?" she sneered.

Aislinn straightened the paperwork on her desk. Not even eight o'clock in the morning and already Mr. Turner had four messages. Her mouth went dry thinking about Kyle Turner III. Somehow she had to warn him without drawing attention to herself. She'd left him an email, but who knew if he'd even open it. Most of the time he left the menial task to her.

So she'd have to open her own email and then tell him what it said without letting on that she'd been the one to send it.

And just how would she go about that? *You got this strange email, Mr. Turner. It says, "Please watch yourself. I think someone's going to kill you in a kitchen."*

She could see it now. He'd look up at her from beneath his mile long eyelashes with those gorgeous cornflower blue eyes, the corner of his mouth would quirk and he'd say, "Haven't I told you to stop opening strange emails? You're going to get our entire system infected with a virus."

Not to mention he would consider her for a "whacko of the century" award. She could imagine the padded cell with her name on it. Either that or his groupies, as Chris referred to them, would call her an accomplice to whatever nefarious demise was planned for Mr. Turner and have her locked away in a different kind of cell. One with bars, a disgusting toilet, a bunk with grungy, paper-thin mattresses and a cellmate named Large Marge.

Either way she wouldn't have to worry ever again about David. Her ex would have no access to her in jail. Huh. Maybe she should think on the possibility some more... Jail couldn't be all that bad. Food cooked for her, exercise time, TV time—Good Lord! She was actually contemplating going to jail to get away from the man who should be there himself. What did that say about her?

Aislinn shook her head and forced herself to unclench the arms of the chair she'd taken hold of at some point for a second time.

"Man you are in another world today. What's up, chickie?" Chris crossed her arms over her chest.

"Nothing," Aislinn mumbled, rearranging her desk. Since when had she become OCD? "I've got a lot to do today and you're sitting on my faxes."

Chris lifted her butt and Aislinn yanked the papers out from under her.

“Were his groupies with him? Did they walk you to your car at least? Nothing about them seems at all civil. Do you think they ever leave Mr. Turner’s side, or do you think the three of them sleep together too?” Chris had a habit of pulling questions out of thin air just for the sake of speaking. She was a chatterbox. The quirk was probably one of the reasons Aislinn liked the woman so much. Chris reminded Aislinn of her mother. Darla Campbell could talk the ears off anyone.

Aislinn snickered. “Yes, yes, and I have a feeling none of those men have ever been near a bed at the same time. Well, a real bed anyway. Probably when they were in the military they spent a lot of time watching each other’s backs when they slept.” She paused and cocked her head, thinking about something she’d seen a few weeks ago involving a blonde bombshell of a model and her friend’s “groupies”. “On second thought, TJ and Jonathan might be in cahoots.” She winked at Chris. Talking about the two men was bound to raise Chris’s hackles.

“No way.”

Aislinn hid a smile at Chris’s outright denial. “I was kidding,” she consoled and watched Chris’s shoulders droop. A second later her friend’s back went ramrod straight.

“Speak of the devils.” Chris jumped from her seat on the desk and straightened her clothes. The woman was practically primping herself. It wouldn’t have surprised Aislinn if Chris ran her fingers through her hair too and dabbed on some lipstick.

Aislinn looked through the wall of glass at the three men making their way across the expansive lobby from the elevators. She fought the temptation to do some primping of her own. Her pulse sped up and her breath hitched the same way it did every time Kyle Turner III came near. Strange, considering she never wanted to be with a man again.

“Way too much testosterone right there if you ask me. Eighteen feet plus of packed muscle, tanned bods, gorgeous hair and enough charm to coax a snake to part from its skin. Throw in Jon’s clear blue eyes and TJ’s fathomless brown ones and what have you got? Sex on wheels,” Chris grunted. “They practically swagger. Can you see them in long



dusters and cowboy hats? Picture an old western film and them moving across a dusty street in slow motion. It's disgusting."

Aislinn snorted. "Is that why you're fixing yourself up?" Damn. The duster image was a nice one. She could see Kyle in one of those. And nothing else. *Oh God.*

"TJ will sleep with any woman who moves and Jonathan with anyone blonde and blue eyed. They both think they're God's gift and have egos the size of Texas." Chris's words wiped the vision from Aislinn's mind.

"For someone who says they can't stand TJ and Jonathan, you sure talk about them a lot. The color of their eyes, how sexy they are. Maybe you really want them." Aislinn stood and gathered up the message slips, a memo pad and a pencil. Kyle was a creature of habit and liked to have her attention first thing in the morning.

She shrugged off the feeling he asked her to join him for coffee for more than just catching up on what she'd done in the hour before he arrived.

Chris' mouth opened and closed and her cheeks turned red. "I do not," she hissed, keeping her voice low as they drew nearer.

"Uh-huh," Aislinn agreed, sarcastically.

"Morning, ladies," Kyle said, sauntering up to them like he owned the place.

Oh yeah. He did. Anybody who employed two bodyguards on a 'round the clock basis certainly owned the business.

"Good morning, Mr. Turner." Chris turned to Aislinn. "Lunch, Ais? Mexican?"

"Yes." Where else would they go? Their chicken tortilla soup was to die for.

"Can we come too?"

Aislinn nearly laughed at the pitiful puppy-dog-eyes expression on Jon's face.

Chris practically lifted her nose in the air. "No."

"Can you feel the love, Teej?"

“I can feel it, Jon.” TJ put a hand over his heart in a wounded way.

“Stuff it, groupies. Later, Ais.” Chris walked away, but not before Aislinn saw how red her ears were.

Totally unaffected by TJ and Jonathan. *And pigs could fly.* The woman talked about them nonstop until one or both appeared and then she clammed up and threw them a cold shoulder. Her attitude reminded Aislinn of a high-school crush where you really liked a boy but you didn’t want him to know it so you were mean to him rather than telling him how you really felt. It was still a type of flirting in a roundabout way.

“Are you ready?” Kyle’s deep voice rolled through her body, giving her goose bumps and the insane thought he was talking about more than work.

“Absolutely.” Aislinn smiled and fought the temptation to lean into the warm hand he placed at the small of her back as he guided her to his office. She’d been there done that with David. Look what it had gotten her. A ton of bruises, a life in hiding and a lot of bottled-up secrets.

Aislinn looked fucking gorgeous this morning, as always. Freckles danced across her nose and cheeks. Kyle wanted to count them. With his lips. Her green eyes sparkled like brilliant emeralds from the laughter she’d been engaged in with Christina a minute ago. Sometime soon she’d laugh with him the same way. He was working on it, slowly but surely.

When she walked, the unruly red hair she had in its usual ponytail swished across the back of her neck, trickling over delicate skin. When he finally got her into bed, that space would be one of the first places he tasted. Aislinn never quite pulled the hair all the way through the band, but left the ends tucked in so the tail became a bun. Sort of, he guessed. Kyle had no clue what women called those particular things.

He only knew he couldn’t wait to strip the elastic out of her hair and feel all those glorious fire red strands sliding over his thighs as she sucked his cock.

His dick twitched inside his jeans, coming to life the way it had every day for the last six months. If her past was anything to go by—and he

knew it was—he had very little time left to make her his before she bolted again. He wasn't about to let that happen. It was time for her to stop running. And he was the man prepared to see to her safety.

She didn't know it, but Kyle had been keeping a periodic eye on her since the moment he'd learned the reason she'd come to Turner Industries in the first place. Hell, she'd only been there for three days when his private investigator had come in with a background check on Aislinn—a background that included an abusive ex who had stalked and tormented the fiery redhead until she felt the need to get a restraining order.

The order had only succeeded in pissing the bastard off to the point of attack. According to the police reports, Aislinn had barely lived through the terrifying ordeal. Kyle fisted his hands, remembering the pictures he'd seen of her battered face. The fucker should be in jail. Instead he was out there somewhere, hiding like the little mole he was.

Where the urge to protect her so fiercely came from, Kyle had no idea. He only knew that from the second she'd walked into his office, he had to have her. The background check had given him pause and made him back off when he would have started in immediately trying to make her his. If he waited much longer, his cock was likely to shrivel up and fall off from lack of use. It knew Kyle's hand in explicit detail, but it wanted the soft recesses it would find buried deep in Aislinn's pussy.

He fully applauded her attempt to flee David Tarkell. She'd done an excellent job, moving from place to place, never staying in one location for more than eight months or so, never getting attached to the people she worked with. Except she had this time. He could tell how close she'd gotten to Christina. He even recognized her initial wariness to do so.

“Coffee, Mr. Turner?”

He growled low in his throat, loud enough for her to hear, if the way her spine stiffened was any indication. Kyle hated the way she said his name. Or rather, didn't. No matter how many times he'd asked her to call him Kyle, she still refused. He guessed it was some sort of defense mechanism. If she didn't get close to anyone, it was easier to move on.

“Coffee?”

Kyle cleared his throat. “Please.”

She moved past him, carefully skirting his body even as he crowded her between himself and the desk. Her sharp, white teeth bit on the full lower lip he couldn't wait to taste.

He inhaled her scent as she came within inches of him—a combination of something fruity from whatever shampoo she washed her hair with and all woman. Based on the fact he could smell her sweet essence, she sure as hell wasn't as immune to him as she would like to believe. He would bet anything she was wet under the shapeless black slacks.

He snorted. If she thought she was hiding anything from him, she was sadly mistaken. She could wear a potato sack and he'd still be able to see her great body. The only thing left to do was strip the material from her so he could actually feel the perfect skin he knew he would find beneath.

“Do you have a duster?” she blurted, rolling the words together.

Kyle jerked his gaze from her ass to her face as she turned around, coffee in one shaky hand, eyes wide, lip still being worried by those teeth.

Fuck. At the rate she was going, she'd have a hole in that lip by noon. He moved to her slowly, an eyebrow quirked. She'd thrown him for a loop for sure.

“As in...feather?” he asked, getting closer and not even beginning to imagine where she was headed with the question. He knew what he'd like to do with a feather duster and a whole lot of her gorgeous, bare skin.

She swallowed and two spots of red graced her pale cheeks.

“Oh God.” Her cheeks got impossibly redder and he bit back a smile.

“And just why is it you want to know if I have a feather duster?” he whispered, running his knuckles up the arm holding out the mug. Beneath the white blouse she wore, her nipples puckered. He wondered if she even noticed how her body responded to him because he sure the hell did. She tensed and sucked in a breath, but he didn't let up. It was time for her to stop running.

Aislinn cringed and croaked, “Not feather.” She stepped back, out of reach, but the counter stopped her and he moved in again.

“No?”

She shook her head vigorously enough to slosh hot coffee over the rim and onto her delicate skin.

“Shit.” Kyle jerked the mug from her hand as she squeaked in pain, and he turned her to face the sink.

He plunked the coffee down, ignoring the spill of more dark liquid, and flipped on the faucet. Grabbing her wrist, Kyle guided her hand under the cold water and held it there. His heart thumped against her upper back right between her shoulder blades as he held her snugly against his chest. Her bottom cradled his erection and he bit back a curse. The damn thing should have gone bye-bye the second he’d seen her injured, instead it grew bigger at her nearness.

She hissed at the cool against the burn and Kyle rubbed his thumb over the pink area just above her thumb. It wouldn’t even blister, he didn’t think. He pulled her hand from the stream and looked closer at the damage. What he saw made his temper explode.

“What the fuck is this, Aislinn?”

She gasped and yanked her hand from his hold, burying it behind the other at her belly.

Kyle jerked her around to face him, cursing under his breath when he saw the panicked look. He eased her hands apart and recaptured the injured one to inspect it again.

Why the fuck hadn’t he seen the fading white scars gracing her hand before? Because he hadn’t been looking at her hands, that’s why.

Rage flared to life. If he ever caught the mother fucker who’d done this to her, he’d kill the bastard himself. And since he knew exactly who’d done it, he was one step away from murder.

“It’s nothing,” she cried and tried to pull away.

This time, Kyle held fast. “Bullshit,” he spat and turned her hand over. The healed scars covered her palm too. In his book they were

clearly defensive wounds. He smoothed over all of them and fought the desire to punch something for the injustice done to her.

“Who did it?” he rasped, knowing full well who the culprit was. If Aislinn had any chance of getting over David Tarkell she would have to talk to someone.

“No one,” she insisted, tugging harder.

Kyle whipped his gaze to her startled one. “You did this to yourself?” He didn’t believe it for a second but Jesus, he’d heard of people who hurt themselves when they felt they had no other outlet. Cutters, he thought they were called. He closed his eyes against the pain threatening to seize him. Please God, don’t let her be that far gone.

“No, I...”

He opened his eyes and met hers again. They were wild, searching everywhere but him.

“You what?” he demanded.

He had to give her credit. She straightened her spine and lifted her chin. “I didn’t do it.” This time she twisted her hand in his and pulled free. He let her, allowing her the space she needed.

“Then who did?” He might have let go but no way was he backing down.

“My ex, all right!”

Finally. He refrained from pumping his fist in the air. This was the first time she’d ever mentioned him. Instead he crossed his arms over his chest.

He stared hard at her. “He can’t hurt you anymore, you know that, don’t you?”

## Chapter Two

Aislinn sucked in a breath and felt the blood drain from her face, leaving her dizzy. “What are you talking about?”

Kyle sighed and dropped his arms.

What the hell was going on here? She’d gone from getting her boss coffee and wondering how to tell the six-foot-three, muscle-packed, ex-Special Forces, blond stud his life was in danger to having her own sordid life thrown out before her. She didn’t want to do this. Not with him. Not with anyone. She glanced at the door, judging the distance of her getaway and fighting the flight instinct at the same time.

“What am I talking about?” he snarled. “The fact that you’ve been here for six months and have never said one word about yourself. The fact that you have defensive wounds on your hand which clearly say you’ve either been attacked or cut yourself, which I highly doubt. The fact that I know everything there is to know about you and I know you’re safe here with me and the fact that I want to fuck you so bad I can taste it. That’s what I’m talking about.”

Stunned, Aislinn leaned on the counter for support and tried to breathe. He wanted to fuck her? It was almost laughable. According to David, she was frigid. Based on the way her body reacted to the sound of Kyle’s voice, she was beginning to wonder if David had been wrong. Still, if Kyle had any clue she’d never once had an orgasm he’d probably turn tail and run. How many men would bother with a woman who couldn’t perform in bed?

Yet, at the moment, her nipples were rubbing against her bra, making her want to smooth the ache away with her palms, and her tummy was doing a dance. She ought to be used to her response to his nearness by now.

Then the other half of what he'd said filtered through. How much did he know, and how? She'd never said a word, just like he mentioned. Her knees wobbled and she started to sink to the ground.

"Damn it," came the hiss from above her.

Black dots swam in her vision. Strong arms lifted her and cradled her against a hard chest. Aislinn buried her nose there. Shame riddled her.

"Did you eat this morning?" Kyle demanded, lowering her to the long sofa on the far wall.

She nodded and gripped his shirt in her hands, unwilling to let go, but knowing she should. Had to. She didn't want his pity. His hands covered hers and pried them from the silky fabric, then transferred them both into one of his. Big, warm, calloused fingers enveloped hers. He knelt in front of her and lifted her chin with his thumb.

"Nothing will happen to you here," he assured her, his tone brooking no argument. "I know everything."

Aislinn sucked in her bottom lip and bit down on it.

"Christ, woman, if you don't stop biting that lip, I'm going to turn you over my knee and spank you." He tugged the offended lip from beneath her teeth and caressed it with a fingertip.

Her heart pounded like it wanted to leap from her chest and her breath caught in her throat. It took precious seconds for her to decide if he'd really just threatened to spank her or if she'd imagined it in some depraved corner of her mind. The way he said spank brought to mind nothing but intense pleasure, not pain.

She didn't think Kyle was anything like David but her track record proved she knew nothing about men. David had been nice once too.

Kyle angled closer. Instead of pulling away, she found herself meeting him halfway. Everything else slipped from her brain. Everything except his mouth, which crept dangerously close to her own. Her eyes slid shut



and she breathed in his scent. She wanted this. For the first time in her adult life, she wanted a man to kiss her. Wanted Kyle to kiss her. No one else. She wanted Kyle to see her as a desirable woman, not one with an ugly past.

“Yes, spank. You heard me right, Aislinn.” His breath puffed out on her lips.

And then he was there, his mouth on hers, his tongue demanding entrance, which she gave him way too easily.

She opened and fumbled her tongue on his, feeling like a virgin kissing for the first time. He tasted minty like he’d just brushed his teeth. There was nothing virgin on Kyle’s end though. He expertly insinuated himself in her mouth, feasting on her, tilting her head for better access. Aislinn leaned into him, wanting more, needing more. She couldn’t get close enough. It was a position she’d never found herself in.

Threading a hand in the hair at her nape, Kyle pulled back and looked at her. “Slow down, baby. We’ve got all the time in the world for this.”

The spell broke with a whoosh. Memories flooded, overriding her desire and bringing back all the pain and insecurities. She wasn’t good enough. She never would be. David had made that clear as day. And *she* would never let a man have control over her again.

Aislinn scrambled off the couch, thankful when Kyle let her get up. She twisted her hands in front of her. Her belly turned over when she looked at Kyle and saw the dismay on his face. He seemed almost hurt.

But he had broken the kiss, not her. Why should he feel pain?

“Hey,” he said, standing and then stalking toward her again. “I know what you’re thinking, Aislinn.” He traced the eyebrow above her right eye with a gentle finger. “We aren’t over by a long shot, sweetheart. I just don’t want it to happen here, in my office. On a couch.” Kyle eased her against his body, enfolding her in a semi-loose embrace, one she could easily escape. For that she was grateful. His breath feathered her ear, making her shiver.

“When I get in you the first time, we’ll be in a bed. And you will be more than ready for me. Drenching wet.” He kissed the shell of her ear and down her neck. “There will be no inch of your body I haven’t tasted.” His mouth moved to the V at the base of her throat and up the other side.

Aislinn moaned and tilted her head. He made her forget who she really was, casting a spell over her with his kisses alone. Her skin tingled in anticipation. A tiny flicker of something she’d never experienced before pulsed between her legs, making her fidget and want to rub herself against the hardness pressing into her belly. The feeling was entirely alien, and yet felt so good. Could she do this?

No. No. She couldn’t let herself be drawn into his world. She wouldn’t lose herself to another man. Ever.

So why couldn’t she make herself pull away from him now?

“No, wait. Me licking every delectable inch of you will have to wait ’til round two.” Kyle trailed his fingers down the length of her arms and she let him. Let him make her feel like a goddess when she knew giving in to him would only lead to trouble. And pain and heartache. It was time to leave. She needed to get away from him before this went one step further. Why couldn’t she make her feet move?

“The first time will be fast and furious,” he mumbled, teasing her mouth open again and thrusting his tongue home.

Both of his hands lifted to tangle in her ponytail, pulling it loose from its semi-bun. Their bodies were plastered together. She felt his penis against her belly. Oh God, it was so big.

Aislinn knew firsthand what kind of weapon it would make, had felt the pain David had inflicted on her vagina, her mouth and her bottom, and the searing humiliation she had to live with afterward.

She panicked and threw her hands between them, pushing for all she was worth. With a desperate cry she tore free. Kyle shoved a hand through his hair, leaving it disheveled and sexier than ever.

Aislinn swallowed and looked away, hating what had become of her life. Afraid of sex and men. Afraid of getting close to anyone again. She’d

have to apologize to Kyle. Another lesson à la David. Always apologize for pissing him off before he brought the wrath of God down on her.

Tears sprang to her eyes. Damn. She thought she'd gotten over this. Thought she'd finally become a stronger woman. She had, in some respects, but apparently not when it came to men. No matter how much she wanted the one standing in front of her, going any farther would be a disaster.

Readying herself for whatever blow might land, she faced him. "I'm sorry, Mr. Turner." Her chin wobbled despite her attempt to remain strong.

Kyle smashed his face behind his hands and refrained from yelling in frustration and scaring her off. What had he thought would happen? That he'd kiss her and she'd be cured? Thank God he'd at least gotten the preliminaries out of the way. As long as he could make her see and understand that he could protect her, and that she was safer staying here than running again, he'd have the time he needed to change her mind about him.

He lowered his hands. Tears welled in her eyes, one spilling over her lower lashes and tracking down her cheek. One single tear and his stomach felt weighed down with lead, deflating his raging hard-on in half a second.

He stayed where he was. No need to cause her further distress. That was the last thing he wanted.

"What are you sorry about, baby?"

Her gaze jerked to his, another tear dropping off, and her mouth opened and closed.

"You...I...I didn't mean to lead you on."

Kyle shut his eyes and counted to ten. Then twenty. Hell, fifty wouldn't have been enough.

"Jesus, baby." Kyle wanted to shout, but if he saw her flinch it would make him come unglued. "Lead me on?" he rasped. "If anyone's sorry, it's me. I shouldn't have forced you."

Face going red, she spluttered and wrung her hands.

“David really did a number on you, didn’t he, baby?”

“How did you know his name?” she whispered.

“I told you, I know everything.”

“How?” She looked ready to faint.

“Aislinn, sit down before you fall down.”

She did. Or rather, she perched on the very edge of the couch, prepared to bolt if need be. He watched her eye the distance to the door yet again and was getting damned tired of her constant visual assessment of escape routes. He didn’t blame her one bit after what she’d been through, he just wanted her to feel safe enough in his presence that she wouldn’t have the need to size up her location. Of course he knew all about keeping one’s back to the wall.

“Would it help if I opened it?”

“What?” She jerked her gaze back to him.

“The door. Would it make you more comfortable if I opened the door?”

Indecision marred her pretty features. She schooled them and straightened. Kyle released the breath he’d been holding.

“No.” She shook her head.

“Good.” He didn’t want an audience.

“How do you know about David?” she asked again, strength returning to her voice.

“I’m not going to lie to you, Aislinn.”

“I didn’t ask you to, Kyle.”

His heart stopped hearing his name roll off her lips. “Say it again.”

“I didn’t ask—”

“Not that.”

She tilted her head in confusion.

“My name, Aislinn. Say my name again.”

For a long moment she paused, pursing her lips. She hadn’t meant to say it apparently, which meant he was making headway of a sort. If she

said his name unconsciously, in the heat of battle, it meant she wasn't as immune to him as she'd like to be. Her kisses said the same thing.

"Kyle," she muttered.

He smiled. "Again."

"Why?" she demanded with a huff.

"Because I've waited six long, fucking months to hear it and now that you've said it once, you can't go back."

"I can."

The indignancy in her words made him chuckle and he bent over her, rubbing his nose on hers and invading her space another time. It was a risky move but she needed to get used to being near him. He planned on spending a lot of time close enough to touch her.

"You can't, Aislinn. Get it through your pretty little head. You and I will make love, and you will scream my name when you come. Over and over and over. As many times as I want to make you come."

Kyle stood before she could protest and walked to his desk chair. He sat and reached for a file folder. When he glanced back at her she looked disappointed.

"I can't," she said with a semi-hysterical laugh and slapped her thighs.

"You can't what?"

Her chin rose. "I can't come."

He snorted. "Every woman can come." With the proper lover, anyway. There were probably a few who were physically incapable but Kyle had yet to meet any of them.

"Not me."

Kyle held his pencil so tightly he felt the wood crack in his palm. "Sweetheart, just because your bastard ex never gave you the chance, doesn't mean you can't."

Her chest rose on a deep inhalation and her lips parted. Hell, even from the distance separating her from him he saw her pupils dilate.

“Did I have any messages?” he asked, neatly avoiding the topic of her prick ex and the fact he’d never given her pleasure.

He hid his smile—his teeth were starting to hurt from gritting them so much—at her flustered look and watched her compose herself.

“Yes,” she said, reaching for the slips of pink paper she’d brought in with her.

“Go ahead.”

“No.”

Kyle barked out in laughter. Aislinn jumped. He sat back in his seat and twisted it from side to side. “Six months we’ve been doing this every morning. Six months and you’ve never once told me no. Why today?”

Bastard. He knew why. She’d like to wipe the cocky smile right off his face. Where was it written that a man could get a woman all hot and bothered—when they didn’t want to be, no less—and then turn all business in a second flat?

She could practically feel her blood boiling beneath her skin. Her entire body was probably the same hot pink as her cheeks.

“Today, because you’ve never said before you were having me watched.” There. Let him wonder if maybe he hadn’t done a good job trying to get her all worked up.

Her boss raised an eyebrow. “I don’t remember saying I was having you watched.”

Well, he had her there, didn’t he? She searched her brain but found he was right. He hadn’t actually said anything about watching her. But he knew about David and how else would he know those things unless... Lord, why had she ever said anything about the damn duster?

If she had just kept her mouth shut, they would have gone through their normal morning routine. There would never have been a stray of topics and Aislinn would be sitting out at her desk right now—sipping coffee, filing reports, filling out forms and working on how to keep her

boss out of kitchens. But no. Christina had put the rogue image of Kyle, naked behind a duster, in her head. She groaned inwardly.

“I’m a smart woman, Mr. Tur—”

“Hey,” he snapped. “You won’t get away with it, Aislinn.”

She gritted her teeth. “Kyle, then,” she ground out. “You may not have said anything about following me, but—”

“Now I’m following you?”

“You are an infuriating man.”

He grinned. She should have been irritated to hell by the action. She wanted to be. Instead it only melted something inside her heart. Kyle made it nearly impossible for her to stay mad at him. A miracle in itself since she hated all men.

*Liar.*

She took a deep breath. “How did you know about David?”

Kyle shrugged. “I do background checks on all my employees, particularly the ones who will be working the closest to me. I had to do a lot of digging for yours. To quote you, I’m a smart man.”

She was floored. “But...why did you hire me if you knew about me?”

He snorted. “You have to ask me that after the speech I just gave you?”

Aislinn swallowed. She hadn’t gotten up this morning with anything on her mind other than warning her boss of imminent danger. Now she found herself embroiled in digging up a past she wished dead and picturing the man sitting across from her naked. Ripped abs, sleek tanned skin, a thick cock jutting out in anticipation. Of her. Cheeks flaring, she licked her lips and tried to shake the image.

“You’re thinking about it, aren’t you?”

“No,” she hissed, hating being caught in a lie.

“You are.”

“You have four messages.” She bit her tongue and handed the slips to him, careful not to touch any part of his fingers. “The caterer’s confirming, Michael Whitehall wanting to know why his wife hasn’t been

caught yet, Mrs. Givens can't find Fluffy again and Crystal called. Again. She sounds...sweet," she couldn't help adding.

"You don't approve of Crystal?"

Aislinn cleared her throat and smoothed an invisible wrinkle on her shirt. She'd never questioned his business before. Her flustered attitude was all his fault.

"I don't know Crystal," she murmured, trying to redeem herself. She wished now she had begged him to open the door instead of trying to be a tough girl. She looked anywhere but at him and prayed he was done with her for the day.

His silence got to her. She lifted her gaze to find him smiling at her. Again. Her body melted. Impossible. Frigid women did not melt in front of smiling egotistical men, nor did their nipples tighten or their wombs clench. Sweat popped out on her forehead. She had to get out of here.

"Anyway," she said, standing, "you also have several emails to look at." She edged toward the door and freedom, for at least the next few minutes. "Some of them looked important, so make sure you actually *read* them."

"You mean you're not going to tell me what's in them today?"

"No."

"I'm impressed." Kyle crossed his arms over his chest. "That makes three noes this morning."

She reached for the handle, praying he wouldn't say something stupid like, "Come back here and tell me what's so damned important in these emails you want to make sure *I* read them this morning."

"Wait just a minute," Kyle's voice rumbled. "I want to know what's in these emails that is making you not want to read them today."

Damn it. She'd been so close to escape. Aislinn wiped a sticky palm on her hip and licked her lips, moistening the suddenly dry skin. "Nothing, I've just got quite a bit to do, you know, with last-minute details of the party and such and, like you said, you're a smart man."

If the man smiled one more time at her she was going to scream.



“By all means, work on the party. I will see you there, right?”

She knew it wasn't a request. All of the employees went to his annual Fourth of July party. Why wouldn't they? Held on his multi-acreage wide, lakefront property, there was food, dancing, a bonfire and a massive fireworks display, from everything Chris had told her. Plus, Kyle handed out half-year bonuses. The man was generous to a fault.

Aislinn nodded once. Of course she would be there. If she didn't show up, he'd more than likely sick TJ and Jon on her and have them drag her there anyway.

She slipped out the door, his laughter ringing out behind her. Hell yes, she was running. She needed to put some space between them. *Please, God, let him read those emails.* She did not relish the idea of telling him face-to-face and revealing more of herself than he already knew, which seemed to be a whole lot more than anyone else.

For a second she pondered leaving. The urge to get in her car, drive to her apartment and pack her bags was strong, but what he'd said was true. She most likely was safer here than anywhere else. With his and TJ's and Jonathan's backgrounds in the Special Forces who better to provide protection? Not to mention the type of business they ran. Spy equipment and high-tech gadgets used in finding people. It was one of the reasons she'd come to Turner Industries in the first place. She couldn't find a better business to hide in.

She'd been naïve in thinking he wouldn't use those same gadgets on her. Six months did seem a rather long time not to hear from her ex. Had she gotten lax or did she feel that much more comfortable in Kyle's presence?

As evidenced today, her body sure as hell wanted him. Was she ready for another stab at a relationship? Kyle might actually be a perfect candidate because he was a no-strings-attached kind of man with all his women. And it was more than clear he wanted her.

What could it hurt? Her pride, for one, when she didn't perform the way he thought she would. Good thing David had stripped most of hers away, she guessed. Not much more to get trampled.

Aislinn realized she'd been standing at her desk staring into space and slid into her seat. Straightening papers that didn't need straightening, she thought about what it might be like to make love to Kyle Turner III. What he'd said to her had certainly made her pussy weep for the first time. Ever.

Maybe enough time had passed. Maybe David really was history. Maybe he'd found another poor soul to pick on, God help her.

Determined to start moving on with her life without constantly looking over her shoulder, Aislinn resolved to...keep an open mind about Kyle. Yeah, she decided. If he ever kissed her again, she wouldn't try to keep herself from kissing him back.

\* \* \*

A couple of hours later, Kyle stared at his computer screen. Subtle was not Aislinn's middle name. Of course, if he hadn't already known about her clairvoyant ability, he might have handled this particular email a little differently. Like laugh and delete it.

One of his SEAL buddies had had a similar trait. Perhaps not as defined as Aislinn's gift of "seeing" the future, but he knew things intuitively. Things that had more than once saved the team's backside. Things that had gotten them out of various tight spots. You can bet your sweet ass he believed in what Aislinn could "see".

He idly rubbed his right thumb along his forefinger as he decided what to do with the information in front of him.

No kitchens. He could handle that. One of the reasons he employed a chef at home was because he couldn't boil water. Give him an MRE any day. At least he was used to the Meals Ready to Eat. Some of them were even palatable.

Question was, would he heed the warning? Maybe it was better to face his potential murderer head on, since he had no doubt Aislinn's prediction would come true. Running wasn't an option. He knew about it

ahead of time and had an opportunity to change the way things panned out.

He hadn't told her the complete story. Not only did he know everything there was to know about her, but he'd also been in touch with her mother several times. He'd updated the woman whose daughter had been forced into hiding, letting her know Aislinn was safe from the bastard. Darla Campbell had been the one to tell him of Aislinn's ability—a talent the two women shared along with previous generations of females in the family.

Kyle admitted he was a little disappointed Aislinn hadn't told him about her gifts, but he understood. Why would she? In her mind, her clairvoyance only caused people to wonder if she was crazy. More than anything, it drew attention. And attention was the last thing she wanted right now. In fact, Kyle applauded her adeptness at keeping her secret.

A few times, from his office, he seen her off in another world, but she seemed more than capable of snapping out of it in time to prevent questions. Usually. Twice Kyle had stepped in and diverted a possible disaster. Both times she'd been sitting at her desk, a faraway look on her face, when someone had stopped to speak with her.

Kyle had simply walked out of his office and detoured them.

Thank God it didn't happen on a routine basis. If it did, he'd have made a space for her inside his office, something he knew she would protest.

He heard Aislinn's voice outside his door so he stood and stretched. Staring at the anonymous email wouldn't get him any closer to the answer.

Aislinn was grabbing her purse and gabbing with Christina when he stepped out the door.

"Where are you going?"

She gasped—he loved when she made those noises—and swung around. A mutinous look crossed her face. "To lunch."

"Yeah? Who with?" Not that he had any real right to ask.

"Chris."

“Ah.” He nodded. “Where are you going?”

“You already asked that.”

“I did. You told me lunch. Maybe I want to go to lunch. Where are you—”

“You can’t.” Christina’s eyes widened in mortification.

Kyle turned to her, crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the doorframe.

“How come? You gonna talk about the boss?” Why else would she look so panicked about going to lunch with him if they weren’t going to discuss him?

Christina gulped and Aislinn smiled behind her hand. What the hell was going on?

He watched Christina’s face as she did some quick thinking.

“Because, well, you usually go with your gr— I mean, TJ and Jonathan and you know what they say,” Christina finally came up with.

“No,” he said, trying not to chuckle at the poor woman he knew had a crush on one of his buddies. He wondered if she was aware they were attached at the hip and liked to share their women, or if she had any idea they’d set their sights on her. “Who are they, and what is it they say?”

“Oh, um.” She waved her arm in the air, twisting her wrist around in circles. “Two’s company...er, five’s a crowd.”

“Five?”

“Uh-huh.” She looked at Aislinn for relief.

Aislinn took her time getting herself together. He bet Aislinn knew about Christina’s crush too.

“Besides,” she continued, “we have some girlie issues to discuss and I doubt you’d be comfortable talking about...tampons.”

Kyle laughed. He couldn’t hold it in any longer. “You’re going to lunch to talk about the absorbency of feminine products?”

“Chris,” Aislinn hissed and grabbed her elbow, pulling her toward the elevators. “Damn, woman. Talk about sticking your foot in your mouth. Couldn’t you think of any other topic?”

“Have dinner with me tonight,” Kyle called before they could get too far. He hated watching Aislinn’s retreating back. The only time he wanted to see her back was when she was on her hands and knees in front of him, his cock buried deep inside her.

The girls spun around so quickly they bumped into each other.

Christina’s chin lifted. “Excuse me?”

Aislinn shook her head in a firm no. Her lips formed a “shush”, and her eyes narrowed. He smiled and stepped away from his perch.

“Yes,” he said.

“No way,” Christina retorted as if he were speaking to both of them.

Kyle ignored Christina’s refusal and never took his gaze off Aislinn. He *would* win this round. “Have dinner with me,” he repeated, standing toe-to-toe with her. Her mouth opened but nothing came out.

“I can’t,” Aislinn finally said.

He tilted his head and studied her. Weariness marked every millimeter of her face.

“Why?”

“Because. I don’t think it’s proper to date employees.”

“I’m not an employee,” Kyle clarified. “Christina, why do you think Aislinn asked me about dusters earlier today?” he asked, still not looking away from Aislinn’s eyes. There had a to be a reason why she would suddenly ask him about something personal, and he had no doubt her closest friend Christina had put the idea in her head. Since he hadn’t gotten the answer from Aislinn earlier maybe he could get it out of Christina.

Christina gasped and turned to Aislinn. “You didn’t.”

*Bingo.*

Aislinn’s eyes narrowed into thin, angry lines and twin spots of color graced her cheeks.

“She did. Something about feather dusters.”

“I did not,” Aislinn yelled then slapped a hand over her mouth.

Kyle smiled. What had she and Chris been talking about this morning? His cock hardened thinking about the possibility they had been talking about him.

“Aislinn.” There was a twinkle in Christina’s eye as she admonished her friend with a new playful side Kyle could honestly say he hadn’t seen before. She was more outgoing with the women at Turner but she gave men the cold shoulder. He’d leave the mystery to TJ and Jon to penetrate. No pun intended. “I never said feather, honey.”

“I didn’t either,” Aislinn muttered, turning back to the elevators and grabbing Christina’s arm again.

Christina glanced back over her shoulder. “I told her you and your groupies looked like cowboys wearing dusters walking through the old west.”

The forwardness of her response shocked him. Groupies? What the hell was that all about? He’d dig into all of it later, he decided, when he realized his date for the night was swaying those fine hips of hers farther and farther away.

“Dinner, Aislinn. Don’t make me go home to a lonely kitchen to fend for myself.” He issued his ultimatum with a soft command knowing she wouldn’t be able to resist.

She choked and twisted in horror.

He had her.

## Chapter Three

Kneeling, Aislinn threw the last piece of clothes from the dresser in her closet over her shoulder and groaned in defeat. Nothing. Absolutely nothing to wear for dinner with the boss. Kyle. The boss.

She dropped her head back and sighed.

God, she was going on a date. With her boss. Why? Why was she about to put herself in a situation with a man again?

She had the sudden urge to call her mom. Tears filled her vision and dripped down her cheeks. She swiped them away with an angry hand and sniffed. Damn it. The asshole was still controlling her life after all this time.

How long had it been since she'd talked to her own mother? How long since she'd heard her mom's sing-song voice telling her to listen to her dreams or to follow her heart?

Too long to remember. But the total cut from her previous life had been what was recommended to her by a man who knew how to make people disappear. She hadn't been able to part with her name in the end. A switch of names had made the situation seem too permanent, like she'd never be able to return home, so she'd chosen to live the life of a nomad, instead. Every eight months or so, she picked up and left.

In the beginning she'd moved every couple of months just trying to stay ahead of the demonic bastard who claimed to love her so much. He hadn't loved her at all. David had wanted to own her.

Aislinn sat back and drew her knees up to hug them. Maybe it was time to stand and face the music. Insinuate herself back into her old life. Show David what she'd become in her years of self-imposed exile.

What had she become? Was she a different person than the one who'd gone on the run?

The doorbell rang, startling her out of her musings.

"Shiiiiit." She jumped to her feet and stared at the disaster surrounding her. Every article of clothing she owned lay strewn on the floor.

Thank God he wouldn't be in her bedroom.

At least, she didn't think he would. She couldn't really put anything past Kyle.

She hurried through her tiny rented house, still dressed in what she'd worn to work. That ought to make a good impression.

The doorbell pealed again.

She couldn't help but smile. "Impatient man. I'm coming."

Flipping open the curtain, Aislinn peeked out. And got a view full of flowers. A lot of flowers in a riot of colors. She twisted the deadbolt open and flung the door wide. "I can't believe you did this."

He lowered the flowers and Aislinn sucked in a breath at the angry slash of his eyebrows. "You didn't even ask who was standing out here, Aislinn."

Her heart stopped. Had she been wrong about him? She lifted her chin and steeled herself. "You invited me to dinner, said you'd be here at seven." She glanced at her watch. "It's six fifty-eight. And I looked out the window and only saw flowers. I knew this wasn't a good idea."

She tried to slam the door shut but Kyle stuck his big booted foot in the way. With little effort he pushed it open and stepped inside, crowding her back into the wall.

"I had the flowers up so I could make sure you were taking the proper precautions when answering the door." He pressed against her, smashing the bouquet between them.



She licked her lips. "I'm not stupid, Kyle."

"I know you're not, sweetheart, I just need to know nothing will happen to you when I'm not around," he said, softening his tone.

"I've been fine on my own all this time."

"There's no reason for you to be alone anymore."

"That's a little presumptuous, don't you think?"

His head lowered closer to her face. "Nope." His lips descended and meshed with hers.

Lava flowed through her veins, despite her anger at being yelled at like a five-year-old. Velvet softness swept around her mouth, minty and tangy, and she wanted to devour him. Her breath mingled with his. His hands cradled her face. It took a few seconds to realize the flowers were no longer between them.

Aislinn lifted her hands to his chest, unable to keep from touching him or exploring him with tentative fingers. He tilted her head and delved deeper into her mouth, sweeping into her and practically feasting on her.

Having never been kissed with such passion, she reciprocated, moaning and feeling like she wasn't getting enough.

She shifted her hips wanting to get closer, to ease an ache that started somewhere in her belly and trailed down between her legs.

His lips left hers and traveled along her chin, down her neck to the collar of her blouse. She whimpered and had the insane urge to rip the fabric wide open so he had better access to the points of her breasts tingling against her bra.

God where was this coming from? These riotous, foreign explosions of sensation.

Kyle spun them, his mouth still kissing over every inch of her skin, his hands roaming her back and down to her hips. His feet moved, pushing them further into the room. They paused for a moment and somewhere in her mind, Aislinn heard the door slam.

His lips returned to tease hers, his tongue licked and pressed between her teeth. They dueled in her mouth and shyly, Aislinn thrust into his.

Her knees hit the couch a second before she was spun wildly around again, and she fell into his lap with a squeal. Kyle cut her off, kissing her into oblivion, his groans meeting hers head on. Never breaking their kiss, he shifted her, bringing her legs across his, seating her bottom comfortably in his lap. Her hip ground into his erection and she panicked until his hand came up to cover her breast. Aislinn sank into him.

Exquisite. His thumb flicked over her nipple, his lips moved to her ear. Teeth nibbled on the soft flesh there and his breath tickled.

“Okay?”

Oh, God. She could weep. David had never asked her, just taken. She nodded once when what she really wanted was to beg.

“Feel, sweetheart, just feel,” he whispered.

Feel? She was about to implode from the feelings. His hand wandered down her rib cage until she felt his rough fingertips against her bare skin. Her tummy muscles quivered in reaction. She wanted...what? More? To stop? What?

He burrowed under her shirt and then the cotton of her bra to cup her breast. A light pinch on the already sensitive nipple shot lightning bolts through her. Her womb clenched and her clit ached. Aislinn squeezed her legs together and fought the temptation to rub the nubbin. Whatever was coming excited her like nothing else ever had.

She pulled away, breathing heavily. Everything in his face seemed sincere. But what if she didn't please him? Was now the time to show her gratitude? Why did part of her want to get on her knees and reciprocate? Would it make him angry for her to want to do that? God she was so confused. A jumble of emotions coursed through her. He made this seem so natural, so beautiful. What did he expect from her in return? Why hadn't he already demanded what he wanted?

“Come back here, Aislinn. I'm not finished with you yet,” he murmured.

“Should I...touch—”

“No,” he growled, yanking her back to his chest. “You touch me now and we’ll never make it to dinner.”

He pinched her nipple again and she arched into his callus-roughened fingertips.

She wanted to explore, but held back, unsure of how he’d react. David hadn’t ever allowed her to touch him except when and where he wanted her to. Were all men the same?

Kyle pulled her close and resumed their kiss. Lord he made her forget everything. She could no longer help herself. She wanted to touch him so badly.

Before she could, his hand wandered south, pressing along her stomach, and he let his finger dip into her navel. She laughed into his mouth and felt his smile.

“Ticklish?”

“Guess so.”

He fumbled at the button of her slacks. Aislinn held her breath and closed her eyes. Do or die time. If she couldn’t come, he’d know the truth and she could leave. Get on with her life by putting aside men for the rest of it.

Long fingers pushed through the curls shielding her entrance.

“Breathe, sweetheart.”

Oh, God, she wasn’t. In fact, she was rigid against him, her fists gripping his shirt.

She took a conscious breath, filling her lungs, and let it out slowly. A fingertip grazed over her clit, making it pulse in awareness. Without pausing, Kyle slid between her folds. Aislinn shifted and spread her thighs wider. He traced her entrance, spreading the moisture gathered there.

Her face heated.

“You’re hot, Aislinn.” He kissed the corner of her mouth. “Hot and wet.” His palm pressed into her clit, sparking off a burst of energy.

She couldn't stand it. The touch was intense, but not enough. Aislinn lifted her hips.

"That's it, sweetheart. Move on me."

When she dropped down, a lean finger penetrated her and she gasped, waiting for the inevitable pain. There was none and she stared into Kyle's eyes.

"Keep going, baby. Let me see you come."

He slid in and out of her sheath and worked the tiny bundle of nerves with his thumb. The sensations spun tighter and tighter until she thought she'd literally explode.

Her orgasm rippled through her entire body. Aislinn bowed in his lap, throwing her head back with a moan while her womb clenched in an unending riot of pleasure. White lights sprang in her vision. Her clit spasmed on and on, and all the while the magical thumb never quit.

When it finally subsided, Aislinn's head was on the pillow behind her and she was draped across Kyle's lap. With his hand still firmly against her pussy, he played with her, lightly caressing her sopping wet lips.

Lungs heaving, Aislinn went limp and closed her eyes.

David had been wrong. She wasn't frigid. Not with Kyle. The man had played her body and made it sing with slow and steady fingers. Not an ounce of pressure, no forcing her to do something she didn't want. And she wanted. Oh my God, did she want.

Kyle leaned over and kissed her lips softly, no trace of the smugness she expected to see. Only tender emotion held her captive and made her tumble just a little bit further for him. Not in love. She could not be in love with Kyle Turner III.

\* \* \*

"You're beautiful, Aislinn." Kyle stabbed a forkful of salad and smiled over the way her cheeks reddened at his compliment. He meant beautiful in every sense of the word. When he'd made her come with his fingers,

her cheeks had flushed, sweat had beaded on her forehead, plastering her bangs to the soft skin there. She had given herself to him wholeheartedly and been absolutely gorgeous in the throes of passion. And he'd only given her a small taste of how things could be between them.

"Thanks," she muttered.

"David's an ass."

"You don't have to tell me that." Aislinn laid her soup spoon down and picked the napkin up off her lap. "Does it make you feel like a big man to know you can do that to me?"

He snorted at the attitude. It was a defense mechanism for her.

"Nope." He sipped his wine. "But it makes me feel like King of the World to know I was the first."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean for that to come out that way." She cocked her head. "Does it...happen like...well what you made happen"—she twisted her hand in the air—"every time?"

Kyle shrugged. "Probably not. It's something I work for though."

"With all your women?"

"I won't back off, sweetheart. No matter what you say. And I already told you, there hasn't been anyone since you came to work for me."

"Why?"

He reached across the table and took her hand in his. "I don't know," he answered honestly. "There's something about you, I guess." There was more to it than that, but he didn't know how to put into words what he felt. Protector, lover, cherisher, friend, anything she wanted him to be, he was ready.

"So who's Crystal if you haven't been with anyone, 'cause she sure calls a lot to not be in your life."

"Sweetheart, I do believe you're jealous."

She pulled her hand away and shook her head. "Am not."

He laughed. "You are." Might as well put her out of her misery. "Crystal is my sister. She's fifteen. Lives with our parents in Ohio."

Aislinn choked on the water she'd started drinking. When she could breathe again, she stared at him, obviously at a loss for words. He guessed it would throw anyone for a loop to know he had a fifteen-year-old sister. Because of his past, most of which was spent taking out some really bad people, Kyle kept his family life quiet.

Now he did so for a different reason, same end result. He didn't want anyone trying to get to him through his family. His parents were older, getting on in their years. Crystal had been more than a blessed surprise, to say the least.

"Fifteen?" she sputtered. "How old are you?"

"Thirty-two. My mom was in her forties when Crystal came along. And just so you know, I don't talk about Crystal to anyone."

Aislinn narrowed her eyes. "Why?"

"I've done a lot in my life, made a ton of money. There are any number of factions out there willing to use any means necessary to get to me. Any means now includes you too. I'll do anything in my power to keep the people closest to me from becoming a target for one of my enemies." He wasn't extraordinarily happy about the fact, but to have her in his life he'd make the changes to keep her safe. Hell the security was already in place and had been since he'd learned of Tarkell.

"I thought you were out of the Special Forces."

"I am," he acknowledged, "but I more than pissed off a lot of ugly people during my time in. And a good majority of those people would probably love to get their payback anyway they can. Taking out a family member or loved one is an easy way to do it. An eye for an eye."

"Is that why TJ and Jonathan are always around you?"

What? He had to laugh silently. "Is that what they say about us at work?"

"Well it's obvious they work for you. Some kind of bodyguards or something. You said yourself you'd pissed off a lot of people, and we all know you're worth *a ton of money*."

This time he threw his head back and laughed out loud. He couldn't wait to tell his two best friends what everyone thought of them. Kyle took a long swallow of his water and smiled.

"No, they're not my bodyguards, although I'm sure they'd get a kick out of people thinking they were. TJ was our team leader. If any one of us were to be a bodyguard it would probably be me. Maybe Toad or Lazlow. But not TJ or Jonathan."

Aislinn gave him a curious look. "Then what do they do all day?"

"They're part owners of Turner Industries."

Her eyes bugged out.

"*Silent* owners," he stressed firmly, waiting for her to understand. Neither man wanted other people to know their exact involvement in the company, nor how much they were worth. They liked their lives simple. Adding money-hungry females into the equation only made things awkward. They may love women in every way possible but they wanted to find their third on their terms, not because a female was greedy. "TJ and Jon are the inventors I guess you'd say. Testers, too. They make sure the products are sound and work when they're supposed to. As for why they hang around the office so much?" He shrugged. "I think they have a vested interest in a certain female."

The mouthful of drink Aislinn had just sipped flew across the table at him.

Kyle calmly wiped the icy water from his face.

"Oh crap. I'm so sorry." Aislinn yanked her napkin from beneath her silverware and blotted everywhere the water spewed from her mouth had landed.

He chuckled. "Something I said?"

She nodded vigorously and changed the subject. He wondered if she knew the object of TJ and Jon's desire was Christina.

"So all this time you've been watching me or having me watched—"

"I did a background check. An extensive one, yes, and I've had someone looking in on you now and then. Not watching. Making sure you

were safe, more like,” he said returning to their original subject. “Of course there really hasn’t been a reason for any of my enemies to look at you until now because I haven’t gotten close to you before today.” He smiled, thinking about how close he’d actually gotten. It wouldn’t be long before his cock replaced his fingers in her tight, slick, little pussy. Before he tasted the sweet heaven between her legs. Kyle shifted in his seat hoping to ease the pressure building in his groin.

“So why spend the money and time on me?”

Kyle straightened in his chair and cleared his throat. “You have one bastard of an ex. I saw what he did to you. I’ve heard the threats, talked to the police, and I know that he’s found you in every new city you’ve gone to. Maybe I just wanted you to be able to relax here.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re not mad?”

“I was. At first, in your office earlier.” Aislinn rubbed at the goose bumps Kyle saw on her arms from across the table.

“Cold?”

Her long hair swayed in its ponytail when she shook her head, and she busied herself with straightening her place setting. “But then I thought why should I be mad when this man has gone out of his way to see to my safety? Now I’m grateful, because I think, in the back of my mind, I must have felt comfortable all this time. I no longer think of David every minute of every day, and I haven’t been looking over my shoulder constantly which is something I’ve pretty much done nonstop since I started running.” Her eyes were glistening when she looked up at him.

“A perfect segue.”

“Huh?”

“Let’s talk about your mind, sweetheart. What exactly is it you can do with that beautiful brain of yours.”

Aislinn fidgeted. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”



“Right.” He leaned forward so the other patrons couldn’t hear them. “I wasn’t lying when I said I know about everything, and you can’t tell me you weren’t surprised by my comment about the kitchen earlier today. I mean, it is why we’re here tonight in the first place.”

She gulped down the remainder of her water and searched for the waiter.

“I’ve talked to your mother, Aislinn.”

Aislinn’s gaze zeroed in on Kyle and her face paled. “You what?”

“I contacted her some time ago. She wasn’t hard to find. Got the entire story from her. She’s very happy to keep in touch so she knows you’re safe.”

“God. Do you know how big of a bastard you sound like right now?”

Their waiter arrived and placed the entrées they’d ordered, then asked them if they cared for anything else. Kyle ordered another bottle of wine knowing he’d opened an ugly can of worms. Keeping her from speaking to her mother had been a bastard of a thing to do, but he had his reasons.

Aislinn shook off the waiter. He promised to return to refill her water and took his leave. “Your mother asked me not to tell you, Aislinn.”

“Mama wouldn’t do that.”

“She did.” He pulled his cell phone from his pocket and dialed Darla Campbell’s number. It was past time for mother and daughter to talk.

“You talk to her so much you know her phone number?” she hissed.

“Photographic memory,” he said, listening to the phone ring on the other end.

“Hello?”

“Darla, it’s Kyle Turner.” He gazed across the table at Aislinn. Her whole body was a mass of vibrating nerves. Her nostrils flared with every inhalation and her eyes were as wide as the saucers on the table.

“Mr. Turner. What is it? Has something happened?”

“Actually, something has happened, but I think I’ll let you talk to Aislinn herself.”

“Oh my God,” Darla breathed, a hitch catching the “God” in her throat.

Kyle held the phone out to Aislinn. For long seconds she stared at the phone as if it might come to life and bite her. Then with tentative fingers she reached out and took it from his fingers. He heard Darla on the other end, “Aislinn? Baby? Hello?”

“Mama?” she whispered and covered the sob that tore from her throat with her hand.

## Chapter Four

Her mama was on the phone. She was talking to her mother. For the first time in so long.

“Oh Lord, girl, it’s so good to hear your voice, baby.”

“Mama.” Aislinn swallowed past the lump in her throat. Kyle stabbed into the humongous steak he’d ordered like nothing was out of the ordinary. She eyed her own bowl of Pasta con Broccoli and decided she would be happy never seeing food again. Her stomach dipped and her heart clenched.

“Oh, baby, I miss you so much.”

“Me too,” she mouthed, unable to speak the words out loud. A tear slipped down her cheek. Kyle handed her a napkin. She took it and wiped her face and nose which had started to run.

“You’re safe, Aislinn? Nothing’s happened, has it? I told Mr. Turner not to tell you we’d been talking, honey. I didn’t want you to think I was putting you in jeopardy again. He assured me that whenever he called we were on a secure line and that no one could trace it. God, no one did, did they? He hasn’t found you again, has he? Please tell me you aren’t having to move again.”

“Mama,” Aislinn laughed, “no, I’m still here, he hasn’t been seen.” She sought Kyle’s eyes and held his gaze. “I had a vision, Mama, and Kyle seems to know all about it.”

His cheeks and jaw worked as he chewed, sending an odd little shiver deep into her belly. Sensation started to return, taking over the numbness that had formed the second she’d heard her mother’s voice.

Kyle nodded. Yep. He knew all right. Everything. Something very few people knew about.

David had known. It was one of the reasons he'd been so intent on keeping her. To use her as his own little sideshow.

"I told him," her mother admitted without an ounce of remorse. She must have trusted Kyle implicitly to share their generations-old secret with him. The fact eased Aislinn's mind more than anything Kyle could have said. Her mother had the same gift, as did her grandmother and great-grandmother and all the women before her.

The second sight passed down through the first daughter of the first daughter. Along with the flaming red hair and green eyes. Lucky Aislinn.

"He had to know if he was going to protect you at all, Aislinn. He's a man of honor and of his word. I believe he will do anything to keep you safe."

The same man devouring his still mooing Porterhouse like he'd never eaten before *would* do anything. Aislinn believed this also. Like she'd told him minutes ago, if she hadn't felt safe in his vicinity, she probably wouldn't have stayed so long here, nor would she be relaxing her position of no more men.

She thought back to when they were in her house, with her stretched out over his lap, his fingers deep inside her pussy and the resulting explosive climax. Her first. She suddenly wanted to feel it again. Her cheeks flamed and one of his eyebrows rose. Aislinn dipped her head but felt that his gaze didn't leave her.

"Besides, I've *seen* him, baby. I know he's the man you need."

She snorted. "The man I need, Mama? Seeing him in a vision isn't the same as meeting him in person. What if I'm not ready for another man?" A lightning bolt was surely going to strike her dead any second. Kyle's fork landed loudly against his plate and she jerked her head up. His eyes were narrowed into deadly slits, making her nipples harden and ache. She hadn't really meant for him to hear that. Hell, she hadn't meant to say it. So why had she?

“You’re a liar, Aislinn Campbell,” her mother scoffed. “Listen to your heart, it will tell you where you need to go.”

“Like it did with David?” she cried.

“Oh, honey. No part of your heart was involved with that rat bastard. I’m not sure what attracted you to him but it most definitely was not your heart.”

“Maybe I just have horrible taste in men.”

Now Kyle slammed the napkin from his lap onto the table. Cutlery jumped, clanging against the china. He licked his teeth and she wondered if it was her he’d rather be eating than the steak he’d already worked halfway through. The thought was a little more appealing than it should be.

“No, you don’t. David had some kind of pull over you, Aislinn. But he’s good and gone now and you need to get on with your life. Speaking of which, where are you two that you’re together so late in the evening?”

“We’re”—she cleared her throat—“at dinner.”

“Ooh, dinner. As in on a date?”

She glanced at Kyle again. He was still glaring at her, fisting the napkin in one hand and the wicked-looking knife in the other.

“Not a date. We’re discussing—”

“We are on a date, Aislinn. Gimme that phone, woman.” Kyle reached out and snatched the phone from her hand.

“Hey,” Aislinn squeaked, but she couldn’t hold back the smile. It felt...nice, she guessed, to get that kind of reaction from Kyle.

“Darla, your daughter and I are on a date,” he said, promising sensual retribution that made her toes curl, while giving her more of the evil eye, “to discuss the fact she’s seen me in a vision getting murdered in a kitchen. It is a *date*.”

She heard her mama laughing through the phone.

“Oh, my,” Darla sighed, still laughing. “Kyle. May I call you Kyle? I most certainly know you are on a date. Aislinn is not the only one who can see things. I just wanted to hear her say it.” She chuckled again.

“She’s a tough nut to crack though and David hasn’t made things easy for you.”

“Yes, ma’am, I know that.”

“Right. Well then, I think I need to get off the phone so you can finish your date. How’s your steak, dear?”

Aislinn had heard it all and she got the smug satisfaction of seeing him whip the phone off his ear and stare at it, then his steak, then back at the phone as if it had grown horns.

“My mother’s talent is far more advanced than mine,” she explained and stuck her tongue out at him.

“It’s fine,” he answered Darla calmly.

“Good. Good. I’ll say goodbye now.”

“Goodbye, Mama,” Aislinn called, loud enough her mother could hear.

“Ma’am.” Kyle nodded and flipped the lid closed before sticking the phone back in its holster. “You happy now?”

Was she happy? Couldn’t he tell? She was ecstatic, bouncing in her seat. Hearing her mother’s voice was a balm to her senses.

She tilted her head and studied him as he picked up his fork again. “Thank you.”

He eyed her over his wineglass, took a sip, set it carefully down and said, “You’re welcome.” His face radiated sincerity and her heart thumped. This man was absolutely the polar opposite of David.

David had told her what she’d wanted to hear. After pondering what had gone wrong in the relationship, she’d realized everything David had done to her had been brainwashing, plain and simple. Post escape—because it had been an escape from the bastard—it had taken her a long time to come to terms with her inability to see through his exterior to the man he truly was.

Kyle was different. At least, so far he hadn’t tried to act anything like David, who in hindsight had basically stalked her from the moment they met. At first she’d seen him as sweet, showering her with gifts and taking

her to shows and dinner all the time. She'd thought it was because he liked spending time with her. Instead, he'd wanted to mold her into his perfect idea of a wife. It wasn't until they were married his true colors had come out.

Kyle pointed at her plate with his fork. "Eat. Your food's getting cold."

She looked down at the creamy pasta and her stomach growled. Kyle snorted and she laughed. A few minutes ago she'd thought she'd choke if she took a bite, now she found herself ravenous.

Scooping up a spoonful, she savored the richness. She'd never eaten here before, couldn't afford to. It was a different taste than any other Pasta con Broccoli dish she'd had before. Almost had a kick to it. She shrugged and dug in.

"Good?"

Aislinn nodded. "It's different," she said, echoing her thoughts.

"You should try the lasagna next time, it's excellent. What they're known for."

She raised a brow. "Next time?"

"Yes." His eyes begged her to disagree. He dug into his steak again. "You love your mother."

"Well, yeah, don't you love your mother?"

"Sure, but you have a different relationship with your mom then I do with mine. My parents worked hard all their lives providing for us and doing whatever they could to give my sister and me the best life possible. She cried when I told her I wanted to join the Navy and be a SEAL. She supported me and the pride was evident, but deep down I knew she hated my decision."

"What mother wouldn't?" Hers probably. Darla Campbell would have already seen it in a vision, along with any outcomes and would have kissed her daughter on the forehead and told her to go forth and make a difference. God only knows why her mother hadn't seen the disaster David would become. "Wondering if you were safe every second of the day while you were gone must have been sheer torture for her."

"I'm sure it was," he agreed, "but I get the feeling you had an entirely different upbringing. And I can see you being much closer to your mother than I am to mine."

"Maybe that's because I'm a girl."

Fork halfway to his mouth, he paused. "My sister doesn't get along with Mom."

"Your sister is fifteen. I didn't get along with mine either at fifteen."

"Good point." His eyes twinkled and the corners of his mouth turned up. "Now. Tell me about this kitchen."

Aislinn choked on the piece of broccoli she'd been chewing. The man needed the word persistent tattooed on his forehead. He already knew about the clairvoyance but that didn't make it any easier to talk about.

"Maybe it was just a dream."

"Do you always dream of killing off your employers?"

"I bet more than three-quarters of the world dream of killing the people they work for."

"Perhaps," he spoke around a bite of potato. "But you don't *just* dream. I've watched you at work."

Her face paled as she searched her memory for anything she might have said or done at work. No specific instances came to mind.

"You're very good at covering yourself, and the couple of times you weren't capable, I stepped in. Don't worry, sweetheart."

"Don't worry? Not many people outside of my mother know what I can do, and I'd kinda like to keep it that way," she said through gritted teeth. No sense in letting the entire restaurant in on her secret. "You have no idea how people treat you when they know. I become some kind of carnival freak show."

"I don't—"

"Not to mention all the people who want to test you and poke you and prod you like a pincushion."

"Ais—"



“And then there are the people who’d like to lock you up in a loony bin on the premise of, ‘We don’t want you to hurt yourself’, all the while patting you on the back and twirling their finger in a circle beside their ear. So you’ll have to excuse me if I worry about people getting too close.”

Kyle sat back in his chair and studied her for a moment. She felt like a newfound species.

“Are you done?”

Aislinn straightened from her position leaning over the table so she wouldn’t have to shout. A quick glance around showed she hadn’t succeeded. Several patrons whispered and stared.

Great.

“I can honestly say I’ve never seen the temper. I think I like it.” Kyle looked ready to drag her out of here. His eyes glowed with heated promises.

“You would,” she muttered.

“For the record, I don’t think any of those things about you. Okay, I’m lying, I don’t want you to hurt yourself, but I promise not to lock you away. Keep eating so everyone will stop looking at you.”

She did. The food was good, no reason it should go to waste because she’d had a hissy fit.

“If you’ve seen something pertaining to me and, oh I don’t know, my death, then yes, I want to know about it. I’m not ready to die, sweetheart. I haven’t gotten the chance to sink my cock so deep inside you, you don’t know where you end and I begin yet. Trust me, that time is coming.”

Aislinn sucked in a breath at his outrageously sincere comment as he looked at her from beneath his lashes.

“What makes you think I’ll allow you to?” Christ, her pussy creamed just thinking about him stretching her and getting as close as two people could. She squeezed her thighs together, but she was afraid nothing would dissipate the ache there except the man sitting across from her.

“If you think it won’t happen, maybe you do belong in a loony bin. Right now, however, I’m more interested in how I’m going to die.”

“You are infuriating.”

He grinned. “Thank you.”

She buried her head in her hands. “I give up.”

“I knew you would.”

“There isn’t much to tell,” Aislinn capitulated.

“Anything would be more than the cryptic email saying ‘stay out of the kitchen’.”

He was laughing at her! She glanced up, her eyes narrowed, only to find no sign of a smile on his face. “What did you want me to say? I predict you will die in a kitchen by the knife of a madman in the very near future?”

Kyle pointed at her. “Anything spoken to my face would have been better than the email, sweetheart. The knife of a madman, huh?”

“And if I had said that, TJ and Jonathan would have wrapped me in a straitjacket the minute the words left my mouth.”

“And I already told you, TJ and Jon aren’t my bodyguards.”

“Can I get you anything else? Perhaps some dessert?” the waiter interrupted, his gaze straying to her mostly uneaten plate of food. “Or a box?” He looked worried. “Was there something wrong with the dish, ma’am?”

Guilty color stained her cheeks. “No, not at all. I had a...I just haven’t been able to eat it yet, thank you.”

His shoulders relaxing visibly, he nodded before turning to Kyle. “Another glass of wine, sir?”

“No, I’m good. Thank you.”

The waiter nodded again and turned, leaving Aislinn and Kyle alone.

“Continue,” Kyle urged.

Aislinn sighed and rubbed at a spot of pain blooming at her temple. It was congruent with the one forming in her tummy. “It was dark, but there was enough moonlight to see the knife. The intruder was wearing all black and you were...not.”

“Not? What am I wearing?”

She gulped. "Very little."

"Yeah?" he said with a smirk. "How little?"

Blowing her bangs off her forehead, Aislinn held on to her temper. It turned him on more than anything anyways, and wouldn't get her very far in the current situation. He was starting to piss her off by not being serious. He said he believed her, so why wasn't he concerned?

"Come on, tell me how little I was wearing," he whispered, hovering over his empty plate.

"Boxers," she ground out. "Is that all you care about?"

"Boxers, huh?" His face turned serious. "No, but sweetheart, there's nothing I can do about it except follow your advice and stay out of kitchens for a while. I'll do anything you tell me to concerning this."

Her shoulders drooped. There really wasn't anything else she could do. If he believed her, it had to be enough.

"Okay?" he asked, concern lacing his tone.

She bit her lip and nodded.

"I did warn you what I'd do if you didn't stop biting that lip, didn't I?" he growled.

## Chapter Five

Kyle parked the car in Aislinn's driveway and studied the small ranch-style house. The porch light was on. Nothing looked disturbed. Even the light he remembered seeing on in what was probably a bathroom window still glowed.

Didn't make him want to leave her here though. "Come home with me," he asked again, reaching over and dragging her closer with a hand around the back of her neck. He caressed her forehead with his lips and inhaled the strawberry scent of her hair. This made the third time he'd tried to convince her to stay the night with him. It killed him that she kept saying no.

She shook her head and peered up at him. "I can't," she sighed. "Not yet." Aislinn pulled away and the soft strands of her hair trailed along his arm. "I..."

"What?"

"It's just too fast."

Throwing his head back, Kyle groaned. "It's been six months."

"For you maybe. We haven't been seeing each other, Kyle. I still feel weird because I just had dinner with my boss. For me our relationship's only like six hours old."

He snorted. "You can't tell me you've felt nothing all this time. I see it when I walk in the room, sweetheart." He traced her cheek with his thumb. "Your breath hitches"—he moved down and laid his fingers on her chest—"here, just like this." Kyle smiled at her sharp inhalation

before covering her breast. “Your nipples harden into stiff peaks the way they’re stabbing into my palm now.”

Aislinn bit her lip. Her eyes slid shut and her back arched into his touch. He wasn’t lying about her response to him. Getting her to see it and believe it and to forget everything in her past was the key.

“Your pussy creams,” he whispered, feathering kisses on her nose and lips.

“I can’t.” Her voice wobbled in desire and her thighs clenched with the thought.

He smelled her in the confines of the car and wanted to spread her legs and dive between them to feast on the offering he knew he’d find there. They didn’t serve any dessert as good as what lay nestled at the juncture of her thighs.

Kyle rubbed his forehead on hers. Close but no cigar. If he pushed any harder, he was afraid he might lose her. She wasn’t going anywhere. Not tonight anyway. Tomorrow morning he’d show up bright and early, ready to ease her more fully into his life. Spend the day with her, maybe surprise her and buy a birthday present before his annual Fourth of July party tomorrow night. Anything her little heart desired. And he was getting sappy.

“Fine,” he gave in, “I’m going in with you. I want to make sure you get in okay before I go.” And give himself time to walk off the erection painfully pressed against his fly.

“But, I—”

“Don’t argue with me on this, Aislinn. You won’t win.” He threw the door open and stepped out, sucking in a lungful of night air to replace the scent of her skin and her sopping pussy. Tonight would be long and restless, and tomorrow probably longer because of the party. She’d be there, but he wouldn’t have much time alone with her. Not with the entire Turner Industries staff hanging around.

Kyle didn’t care about the attention they’d garner by being close, but Aislinn would and he wasn’t willing to risk her bolting.

He walked around the hood of the car, already sticky with sweat from the early July heat. The impatient woman had one foot out her door before he reached her side.

“I’ll be fine, Kyle.”

“And I’m going to check the house out.” Shutting the door, he directed her up the path with a hand on the small of her back. He felt her shiver.

“Don’t tell me you’re cold.”

“Uh-uh.” She shook her head and stumbled, nearly losing her boxed-up pasta.

Kyle reached out and grabbed her shoulders, pulling her into his chest. “Whoa, you okay?”

“Yeah.” She rubbed at her temple, something he’d seen her do earlier at dinner. “Just got a headache.”

“All right then, let’s get you inside and into bed.” Bye-bye erection. Now he knew the cure. Let the woman he loved not feel well.

Love? Damn. Did he love her? Kyle took the key she dug out of her purse and unlocked the front door. Pushing it open, he stood for a moment, listening for anything out of place. He ushered her inside and propped her against the wall.

“Stay. For me, please. I’ll be right back. Yes?”

She nodded, eyeing him as if he’d lost his mind. Kyle shrugged it off. This was part of his nature. Ingrained from his years as a SEAL. The need to watch his back and that of his family and friends would probably never fade.

“Don’t be long,” she whispered. “I’m tired.”

He growled at her. “Don’t move.”

He heard the loud snap of her finger and thumb and then, “Oh, shit.”

“What?” He swung back around, hands fisted, ready to drop someone when he saw her expression was really one of a light bulb going off in her head.

“Umm...” Her cheeks colored to an impossible shade of red. “My room. Uh, yeah, the clothes, my fault. Sorry. Just didn’t want you to think someone had been in there.”

He chuckled. “Are you a slob, Aislinn?”

“Something like that,” she grumbled.

It didn’t take long to go through her house. Not near as long as it took for him to stop staring at the massive amount of clothes piled on her floor. Slob was an understatement. Everything she owned had to be thrown on the heap. What the hell had she been doing? The rest of her house hadn’t looked this way.

Along the way, he stopped in the bathroom off her bedroom and grabbed a couple of aspirin from the very precise medicine cabinet and a glass of water.

“Here.” Kyle handed her the glass and relieved her of the to-go box before giving her the pills, then turned to the kitchen to stuff her dinner in the fridge.

“You are a god,” she moaned.

“I heard that.”

“As if you didn’t know it,” she muttered.

“I heard that too,” he called over his shoulder and tried to figure out a place to stash the box in her crowded refrigerator.

“Whatever.”

By the time he came back into the room, she was gone. He traipsed down the hallway to find her slumping on her bed, leaving the mess for later. Must be a killer headache. She closed her eyes and sighed.

Kyle put his hands on his hips. “That’s it.”

She glanced at him from one eye. “What?”

“Come home with me.”

“No.”

“Lord you’re stubborn.”

Her smile was laced with pain. “My mama says stubborn is my middle name. Must have something to do with the red hair.”

“I don’t want to leave you here when you’re not feeling well.”

“I’ll be fine.” She grabbed the back of her neck and rolled it on her shoulders. “It’s a headache for heaven’s sake.”

“Do you have them a lot?”

“Only when I’m about to have a vision,” she answered with complete nonchalance.

Kyle counted on his years of training to keep him from exploding. “God damn it, Aislinn—”

“I’m kidding, Kyle. It’s a headache, that’s all. Everyone gets them. A good night’s sleep and I’ll be good as new.”

He took a deep breath. What else could he do? Sleep on her couch. In his car. No. She was right. Staying would only show her he didn’t think she could handle herself. He didn’t want to betray the trust they were developing.

“If you’re sure?” He couldn’t resist trying one more time.

She yawned. “Positive.” A second later she was stretching out on top of her quilt-covered bed, still fully clothed.

He couldn’t help but smile. “Don’t mind me, I’ll see my way out.”

“Kyle?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“Could I have...?”

Damn if her eyes weren’t begging him for something. His cock stirred to life. If she even hinted she wanted him to stay he’d be a goner because no way could he lie with her in a bed and not touch her. And from the distressed look on her face, there was no way he could do anything but hold her.

“Can you have what?” he growled.

Her gaze met his, the slightly glazed look in her eyes making him feel like a sex-crazed heel.

“A good-night kiss?” she whispered huskily.



Shit. Shit. He swallowed, half afraid he wouldn't be able to stop if he got that close to her, but damned if he'd walk out when she clearly wasn't used to asking for even something as simple as a kiss.

He leaned over her warm body and pushed the bangs off her forehead with two fingers. She turned into his touch with a sigh.

"Did you take those pills, sweetheart?"

"Yes, Dad."

He snorted and placed a chaste kiss on her cheek. "I'm feeling anything but dad-ish right now, baby, and I'm trying very hard to keep my hands off your body."

Eyes widening, Aislinn sucked in a breath and licked her lips. He could have kicked himself.

"Thank you."

"For what?" Kyle inhaled her scent.

"For not pushing it."

"We will make love, Aislinn. That's a promise."

Eyes wide, she pursed her lips. "I know."

He nuzzled the soft skin between her jaw and shoulder, licking and nibbling his way to her earlobe and down to her mouth, where he met her open, eager lips. Her admission was all he needed. She wanted it too. He tangled his tongue with hers, rubbing along the velvet length, tasting her sweetness. It would have to do for tonight.

Breathing heavily, Aislinn retreated. He wondered if she realized her hands were tucked into the open collar of his shirt. Standing slowly, he unfolded the afghan from the foot of her bed and covered her with it.

"Tomorrow morning, Aislinn. I will be here." He made it a fact, not a question.

"I'll see you then."

He nodded once. "Sleep tight, sweetheart. Oh, and one more thing." Kyle pulled his wallet out of his back pocket and retrieved a business card. "My home phone number. Call it if you need anything in the night. *Anything*, Aislinn."

“I will.”

“You better,” he grunted and turned to leave before he was tempted to stay, whether she wanted him to or not.

\* \* \*

The vomiting started about a half an hour after Kyle left. One minute she was sleeping, the next vicious cramps seized her stomach. Aislinn had barely made it to the toilet the first time. She hadn't the second time—ten minutes later. Using a towel, she'd sopped up the mess and thrown it in the bathtub to deal with later.

Now she was on her fourth trip in a total of twenty minutes. This wasn't the flu. Her stomach clamped down and lights burst behind her tightly squeezed eyes. She'd never felt this bad in her entire life. Curled up in the fetal position on the bathroom floor, she wondered if she was even capable of making it back into bed. Or if she wanted to try. Another wave of nausea struck. Aislinn bucked into a kneeling position and dry heaved violently.

Slumping to the floor once more, she tried to remember what she'd eaten during the day. Lunch with Christina at their normal café. She'd had the chicken tortilla soup, same as every other time. Dinner with Kyle tonight. The pasta. Aside from its spiciness...

Her stomach revolted but she couldn't find the energy to move from her spot. Her belly was empty anyway. Tears sprang to her eyes. Sweat plastered her hair to her face and her blouse to her body. She needed help. And the phone was so far away. She glared across the expanse of bathroom and bedroom to the portable phone on her nightstand.

Who could she call? Christina was her only hope. She couldn't move. Didn't want to move for fear it would set off another spasm. Breathing through her nose, Aislinn closed her eyes. A chill on top of her sweat-drenched body sent a shiver through her.

After another fierce round of dry heaves, she decided she had to try to call someone. At this moment 911 was looking like a beautiful option.

She crawled, inching her way over the mile-wide distance to the nightstand. At the foot of the bed she had to stop to puke and pressed her head against the cool wood of the footboard.

She was dying. From the inside out. She'd never get to make love to Kyle. The swirly pattern of the rug beneath her danced and moved. She just needed a little nap. Collapsing face first, Aislinn did her best to stay awake. Not hard with the intense pain seizing her belly. The coarse fabric of the rug abraded her cheek adding immensely to her discomfort. She gauged the remaining space between her and help. Her vision swam and she feared in a few minutes she'd pass out without making any call.

Garnering all the strength she had left, Aislinn army crawled to the stand and reached up to feel for the phone. Finally finding it, she pulled it off. A small piece of paper fluttered down from the top of the table and landed on her nose before sliding to the ground.

She groaned as if the paper had been a rock shot from a cannon.

Kyle's business card.

Aislinn fumbled the card and squinted at the rapidly blurring numbers. His home phone. Call me anytime, he'd said.

Dialing the tiny buttons proved nearly impossible for her shaky fingers but at last the call went through. Too weak to lift the phone to her ear, she left it on the floor.

"Hello?" Kyle's rough voice answered on the first ring.

She sobbed in relief. "Kyle?"

\* \* \*

Christ, he'd never been so scared. Hearing Aislinn's panicked voice on the end of the line had stopped his heart. One word. Kyle. It was all she'd said before going silent.

He'd shouted through the phone and gotten no response. The line was still open though. He knew because he'd tried calling her several times on his cell with no luck.

Kyle took the turn onto her street with a screech of tires. Her house was dark and quiet when he pulled into the driveway behind her Civic. Having no idea what was happening not an hour after he'd left her, he'd grabbed his SIG from its case and bolted, prepared to take anyone out who got in his way.

He peeked through the living-room window where the drapes didn't quite meet. Nothing. As much as he wanted to bust the door down and go in guns blazing, he couldn't put her in that kind of danger. Kyle worked his way around the house. He saw nothing out of the ordinary. No clues as to what the problem might be.

Had she let someone in the house? Had David found her again? Was he too late?

His stomach twisted in knots. This was worse than any mission he'd ever gone on with his SEAL team. This was personal. Training instinct kicked in by the time he got to the back door. Taking a deep breath, Kyle closed his eyes and focused on what needed to be done.

Using the butt of the gun, he punched out a pane of glass from the door leading to the kitchen. Hopefully the tinkling of glass wouldn't alert anyone inside to his presence. He could have used more stealth but had a feeling there wasn't time for detailed planning.

Kyle reached in and unlocked both the deadbolt and the knob's lock. He remembered seeing a chain lock too when he'd been in the kitchen earlier. Her smart, extra-added safety measure was a tad unfortunate for Kyle. He turned his wrist and pushed further into the small opening, hissing as a shard of glass cut into his forearm.

Ignoring the pain, he groped for the chain and slid it free. A second later he stood in the dark kitchen listening for the slightest sound. He got it. Down the hall towards her bedroom. He searched his brain for what he'd heard. Heaving was the only thing he could come up with. No other noises intruded.

Son of a bitch. Aislinn was sick and he'd been outside her house in SEAL mode. Stuffing the gun in his jeans at the small of his back, Kyle slid the deadbolt home and raced to her room.

“Shit.” He dropped to his knees and carefully turned the woman he loved onto her back. “Sweetheart. Talk to me.” He patted her pale, sweaty cheek and her eyelashes fluttered.

“Aislinn,” he said with more force.

She groaned and tried to pull her knees to her chest.

“Christ. Come on, baby.” He yanked the quilt off her bed and after covering her with it, lifted her into his arms.

He kicked the front door closed with his heel. Halfway down the walk Aislinn jackknifed in his arms, rapping his chin with her forehead and crying out in pain. She retched only nothing came out.

“How the fuck long you been doing this, baby?” he growled. Since the second he’d left her asleep on her bed most likely, if she only had dry heaves now. She cried and turned her head into his chest, gripping his shirt with a weak fist.

Kyle yanked open the car door, placed his precious burden on the passenger seat and jogged to the other side. A quick phone call later and the emergency room knew he was on the way.

## Chapter Six

Kyle paced the cubicle Aislinn had been placed in, hands on hips. He'd filled out paperwork, listing her as his wife to hurry things along. The ploy had worked. Or maybe it was the fact he was Kyle Turner III and they knew any lack of insurance on Aislinn's part wouldn't be an issue. Who knew? The end result was that she'd been brought into the ER without having to wait her turn in the waiting room. Or maybe it had been the look on his face. Could have also been the fact she had puked three times while he stood holding her at the triage desk. They'd offered him a wheelchair but he'd refused. Instead they'd rushed her into their present cubicle.

The doctor had taken blood, inquired whether she'd been out of the country, asked what she'd eaten lately, and finally—after Kyle had impatiently answered *almost* every question without strangling the man—had given Aislinn a shot of something for the nausea. It seemed to be working. The last ten minutes her stomach had been quiet. In the car she hadn't gone three without her tummy erupting. She'd scared the shit out of him.

Not even a buddy of his who'd gotten some nasty bug down in an undisclosed South American location had been as sick as Aislinn.

Kyle had a pretty good idea what had caused what the doctor had determined to be food poisoning. In the morning he'd send TJ to her house to retrieve the pasta and find out what the fuck was actually in it.

The restaurant they'd eaten in was well known and catered to the wealthy. Kyle had a hard time believing they'd made a bad batch of pasta. It could have happened but after dwelling on the possibility the

last half hour, he was not inclined to go that route. Not when he knew there were people capable of deliberately doing him harm by any means. Since it was a little early for any of his possible enemies to have targeted Aislinn, he had a feeling David Tarkell had succeeded in finding her yet again.

From what he'd seen at her house, he didn't think David had entered her dwelling space. Yet. He had two options, he thought, swiping her bangs off her forehead. She turned into his touch on a sigh.

One, he could try and convince her to stay with him for the next couple of days so his men would have time to get out there and find the bastard before he was able to get to Aislinn again. Two, he could tell her what he thought was happening and hope like hell she didn't panic and run. He liked the former plan much better.

"Mr. Turner."

Kyle turned to the doctor.

"I'm going to release your wife into your care with this prescription." He finished scribbling on the tablet he held, ripped off the top sheet and handed it to Kyle. "It should help her get some rest. The shot will last several more hours."

Kyle nodded. He'd glue her to his bed if he had to, to make sure she got the rest.

"If you've got any idea what she ate that might have caused this, I'd like to know, so we can keep our eyes open for any more possible cases. This kind of thing has to be reported so the FDA can intervene."

"I'm not sure where she ate today," Kyle lied again, sticking to his original answer. "I'll ask her about it when she wakes up."

The doctor accepted his answer. "If she starts vomiting again in the morning, get her in to her personal physician."

*He'll come to the house, trust me.* "I will. Thank you." He shook hands with the man.

The doctor turned Kyle's arm one way then the other. "That's a pretty nasty scratch on your arm there. Do you want me to look at it?"

Kyle stared at the blood on his arm. Where had...the glass. "No. It's just a scratch." He couldn't tell him it was from the glass shattering when he'd broken into her house. He was supposed to be her husband.

"Give it a good wash and a dab of antibiotic cream then."

"I will." Kyle watched him walk away before turning back to Aislinn.

"Aislinn, sweetheart." He rubbed her cheek with the back of his knuckles. She was completely wrung out and didn't even stir.

He had her in his bed, right where she belonged, within an hour.

\* \* \*

Aislinn sighed and turned onto her side, snuggling into the pillow that smelled so much like Kyle she had to smile. She inhaled his scent again, loving the dream currently occupying her sleep.

"Nah, she's still asleep. I need you to go over and get the pasta though."

She lifted an eyelid. There, staring back at her was Kyle, sprawled in a big overstuffed armchair, legs stretched out wide in front of him.

"Hey, one eye," he said, giving her a wink. "No, she just peeked at me. I want you to analyze it ASAP."

Who was he talking to and why was he in her room? She lifted her head, groaned and looked around in confusion.

Not her room. One she'd never seen before and not one generic enough to be a hotel.

"It's mine," Kyle stated, flipping his cell closed on his cheek.

"How did..."

"You get here?" he finished. "You don't remember last night?"

Aislinn closed her eyes and laid her head on the pillow. His pillow. The reason it smelled so much like him. Her stomach growled, bringing everything that had happened back.

Mortified, she buried her face, hiding it from him. How many times had she puked? How many times had he seen her puke? Half the night



was a blur, the other half she wanted to be. On top of it all, he'd carried her everywhere and she specifically remembered at one point upchucking on him. There could be nothing worse in life than throwing up on the man you were falling in love with.

She took another quick peek at him. A roguish grin split his lips. Fabulous. He thought this was funny. Even funnier would be when she peed on his bed. The pressing need was making itself more than evident. No matter what, she'd have to get out of his bed and use the bathroom.

Aislinn groaned again. She didn't want to move. It was cozy and warm tucked under his covers.

"Need to get up, sweetheart?" He chuckled.

"I'm glad you find this so hysterical," she mumbled, turning to face him.

In a flash he was by her side, mere inches away. Tender fingers brushed her hair from her face.

"There is nothing funny about what you went through last night, and I promise I'll get to the bottom of it."

"To the bottom of what?" What the hell was he talking about? She got sick, called him and ended up here. What was there to get to the bottom of?

"Aislinn, last night wasn't a bout of flu. You were poisoned."

She sat up gingerly, aided by Kyle's hands on her shoulders.

"Go slow," he said.

"What do you mean, like, *food* poisoning?"

He shrugged. "My guess is there was something in your pasta. Thank God you didn't eat the whole thing. If you'd had more, I can't imagine you'd be with me right now."

"So, what, the sauce was bad? There's not much in Pasta con Broccoli that can go bad, Kyle."

He shook his head. "No. I don't think it had anything to do with the restaurant. I don't know much right now, but I have people looking into it."

Confused, she looked at him, trying to figure out what he wasn't saying. If the food wasn't tainted then the only other option would be that someone had done it on...

"You think David did this?" she whispered.

Kyle rubbed his hands up and down her arms in a reassuring gesture. It did little to ward the chill quickly taking over. So much for finding a safe place. When would she be free of her ex? Never? Would she have to look over her shoulder for the rest of her life?

"I'm not saying anything, Aislinn."

"But it's what you're thinking."

"He's a possibility, yes." He wiped a thumb across her bottom lip when she sucked it in to bite on it nervously. "Hey. Let's get you up. Use the toilet and I'll run a bath, since I don't think you should stand in the shower when you're this weak. You can slide into a shirt of mine afterwards, and if you're really good, I'll bring you some soup to try to get down."

She wrinkled her nose even as her eyes filled with tears.

"Ah, baby." He laid her head on his shoulder and stroked her hair.

When was the last time someone had taken care of her? Probably not since her teenage years. And it sure the hell hadn't been a man.

"I won't let him hurt you." He pulled back and took her face between his hands. "I want you to stay here with me until we find him."

It wasn't a request and she wasn't stupid. Staying alone was the furthest from a good idea as she could get. She nodded and he swiped away a tear from her cheek with his thumb.

"Thank God," he rasped. "I thought you'd be one of those independent types who thought you could do it all on your own."

She laughed and sniffed. "I can't handle him on my own." Aislinn looked him straight in the eye and took a leap of faith. "And I don't want to anymore."

"Fuck, baby, you don't know how glad I am to hear you say that. So. A bath?"

“Definitely.”

“Let’s hit it then.” He stood and scooped her off the bed.

“Put me down,” she squealed.

“Pfft. Put a little more strength behind your request.”

“I can’t,” she murmured and settled her head on his shoulder. She loved being in his arms. He made her feel cherished, not like an object, and she was starting to think she’d never be the same without him.

“All right.” Kyle set her on the commode. “Can you sit there on your own?” He steadied her when she tilted to the side.

Her arms and legs felt like wiggly Jell-O and the shag rug in front of the most gigantic tub she’d ever seen looked more than inviting. Soft and fluffy. Maybe she needed another nap.

“Stay,” he said, propping her against the toilet’s tank.

She snorted. “I’m not a dog.”

His gaze roamed hotly over every inch of her body and his nostrils flared. She squirmed under the scrutiny.

“No, you are certainly not a dog, sweetheart.”

He looked like he was going to step closer and strip her bare of the...Aislinn stared at the shirt she wore, plucking at it. “Hmm.”

“Yes, I did it. I undressed you and stuffed your pretty little body into a clean shirt. You wanted to sleep in the disgusting clothes you were wearing?” One of his eyebrows lifted, daring her to say yes. He crossed his muscled-packed arms before propping a hip on the sink.

His groin sat eye level to her. Aislinn licked her lips and nibbled on the lower one. She knew what lurked behind the zipper of his fly. Had felt it pressed along her lower back anyway. Besides, all’s fair in love and war, right? He’d obviously gotten a sneak peek at her when he’d changed her clothes sometime in the night. Why shouldn’t she get to have a little—

“Hey. Honey.” He snapped his fingers until she jerked her gaze to his. “Not gonna happen. I’d have you worn out after one kiss, you’re so weak.”

She curled her top lip in contempt and her shoulders sagged. He was right, damn it. Kyle stepped out of temptation's reach and started the water in the Jacuzzi-style tub. Soon steam rose from the bubbling water and her mouth practically watered. She couldn't wait to sink into its depths, letting those jets pound every bit of her body. Every bit.

God, she groaned silently. She'd spent all night puking, but her sex didn't seem to care.

"So are you gonna go or what?"

The man had grown a second head for sure. "Not with you in here," she said with as much indignant menace as she could muster.

Kyle sighed. "I've already seen all of you."

"So? You haven't seen me go to the bathroom." Her cheeks had to be fire engine red.

He winced at her shrill outburst. "Fine. But I'm going to be right outside that door until I hear you get in the tub. Someone's gotta come rescue your ass when you fall on your face," he muttered, stomping out of the bathroom like a petulant child.

She should have swallowed her pride and let him help her, she thought five minutes later. Still standing, albeit very wobbly next to the tub, she didn't have the strength to lift her leg over the edge.

"If you say 'I told you so'," she called through the crack in the door, "I will kill you."

Kyle brushed back in. "You and what army, baby?"

"One of my feet planted in your ass ought to be enough, don't you think?" she declared sweetly. She studiously ignored his rough hands on her skin as he lifted her into the tub. Her nipples didn't. They hardened into stiff little peaks and begged for those fingers. Her pussy responded in kind.

"Settled?" His voice cracked.

Ah good. She wasn't the only one affected. When he straightened, she saw his cock, hard and pressing against his fly. Aislinn smiled and melted into the heavenly hot water.

“I think so,” she purred just to egg him on.

Kyle growled, “Payback will be a bitch, you know that, right?”

“Mmm.” She didn’t care. At this moment in time all of her attention was held captive by the jets of water cascading over sore muscles.

“I’m coming back in twenty minutes whether you’re ready or not,” he grumbled.

She nodded and scooted further under until the water reached her chin, and closed her eyes.

\* \* \*

She was sound asleep when he gave up waiting for her to come out. Surprised she hadn’t slipped under and drowned, Kyle knelt next to the tub, crossed his arms and propped his chin on his forearm.

“Your twenty minutes are up,” he said softly.

Aislinn’s scream came out more like a wobbly squawk, thanks to the chafing of her throat. Her body jerked, sloshing water over the edge and soaking him in the process.

“Jesus, Kyle, you scared the crap out of me,” she sputtered. Water ran in rivulets down her chest and over her hardened nipples, drawing his attention as if she had a strobe light there.

Placing the pad of his finger against the deep mauve-colored flesh, he caught a drip. She gasped and her gaze flew to where he took the tip between his thumb and forefinger.

“I’m going to taste these sweet nipples, baby. Suck them into my mouth as far as they’ll go until they’re hard as rocks.” He tugged it. “Stay,” he commanded when she leaned forward following his pull.

Aislinn arched her back and held still when he repeated the action, stretching her breast. He released the soft tissue and lifted the slight weight in his palm. “You are perfect.” He swooped in and placed a chaste kiss on first one then the other. Her chest vibrated with her low moan.

He had to taste more of her. Kyle patted the edge of the tub. "Time to get out."

"What?"

Smiling at the squeak, he repeated himself and jerked his thumbs up in the air. "Up." He reached in and started lifting her beneath her arms.

"Kyle, I..."

"Aislinn?"

Big eyes peered back at him, not with fear, but a mixture of trepidation and excitement. Her nostrils flared and the tip of her little pink tongue darted out a second before she caught her bottom lip again.

Raising an eyebrow, he asked, "What'd I say about biting on this?" He kissed her with tender lips. "Now, up."

Taking a deep breath, she rose slowly with his help, revealing every glorious bit of skin to him, inch by agonizing inch. Her hands instinctively reached to cover her pussy.

"Uh-uh. Mine," he scolded, taking hold of both hands and guiding her to the spot he'd chosen on the rug beside the tub.

"I'm dripping everywhere, Kyle," she hissed, skin a rosy pink from the bathwater. "At least get me a towel."

"That's what the rug's for, sweetheart, and no, I don't want you covering up all this skin." Kyle took care to make sure she was comfortable before carefully spreading her thighs for his perusal.

Aislinn tried to close her legs and Kyle had a feeling she was more embarrassed than unwilling. He was about to cure her of her embarrassment really quickly.

Kyle trapped her knees with his hands. "Leave them, Aislinn, or I swear I will spank your fine ass, shitty night or not. Just feel."

Her chest rose and fell in rapid succession. Starting at one knee, he kissed and licked, nibbled and sucked his way up her thigh, getting close but skipping over the heat of her to do the same to the other leg. She whimpered and her fingernails dug into his shoulders.

Kyle worked his way back across, this time giving her what she silently demanded. Her breathy groan along with the tightening of her inner thighs was his reward. She was in no way immune to him.

With his thumbs he parted the lips of her sex, baring the tight entrance oozing with her juices. Time to feast. He licked from the bottom of her slit to the top, scooping up the cream along the way. His tongue flicked over the tiny bundle of nerves still hidden beneath its hood. Aislinn tensed again.

Where were the sexy noises he wanted to hear? He looked up at her face. Tilted back in obvious pleasure, she had a hold of that lip again with those teeth.

He'd be goddamned if she thought she needed to be silent with him. He pulled back the skin covering her clit, wrapped his lips around her sweet spot and sucked. She bucked against his mouth, but otherwise remained mute.

Using his forefinger, he slipped through her folds and swirled his tongue over the nub, continuing his assault. He penetrated slowly into her with a finger, easing his way, feeling her stretch around his digit and wishing like hell it was his cock. Tight as hell, her sheath squeezed his finger, gripping him and drawing him deeper.

Using the flat of his tongue, Kyle swept down to meet his finger, lapping at everything she poured out for him. Her breath came in shallow pants, and by now his shoulders had permanent marks from her nails. No sound.

One finger became two when he thought she was ready for more, and he pumped them in and out. A tiny moan, an insight into her contentment, slipped from her lips. He reached up and thumbed a nipple, adding another sensation. A third finger joined the first two. Her cream coated his hand, slid down his palm, filled his tongue. He could drown on her essence.

Aislinn grunted and threw a hand behind her head. He was getting close.

The tip of his tongue flicked at her swollen clit and she squeaked louder this time. He let go of her breast and focused on the nerve-rich point. With two fingers he pulled back the hood and relentlessly tongued it.

“Oh, God,” she cried. “Kyle.”

That’s what he wanted.

Increasing the pace of his thrusting fingers, he finished her off, sucking on her clit and curving his finger inside to reach her G-spot. Unable to keep it in any longer, she screamed. Her legs went rigid, clasp his body between them, and her toes pointed. Kyle continued stroking her pussy, bringing her down from the high, lapping up every bit of release until her thighs went boneless beside him.

He massaged her legs from hip to toes. She giggled when he touched the soles of her feet. Finally she looked at him, her face glowing with satiation. It quickly turned to questioning. He knew what was coming. He could read it in her expression.

She wondered if she was supposed to reciprocate now. Kyle wanted to smash David’s face into a pile of shit for creating this kind of insecurity in her.

“Bed,” Kyle whispered, and then cringed when her eyes practically bugged out. He hadn’t meant for that to sound like he wanted more from her right this second. “You need to sleep some more,” he reassured her.

She sagged in relief. Before he could stand to help her up, she reached out and cupped his cheek.

“Thank you, Kyle.”

“Mmm.” He licked his lips. “Thank you. Best dessert I’ve ever had.”

He got her dried off and settled back in his bed in ten minutes. “How’s the belly, sweetheart?”

She sighed and snuggled in. “Much better, thanks to you.”

Damn. If he didn’t have so much to do to get ready for the party tonight, he’d join her. Spoon his way around her body and hold her in her sleep.



“I didn’t do anything.”

“You did.” She yawned.

“Get some sleep, Aislinn, and don’t worry about tonight. I’ve got everything under control.”

“Oh my God, Kyle! I totally forgot about the party.” Sweeping her legs over the edge, she tried to stand.

“Whoa, uh-uh, sweetcheeks. Back in bed. You’re not doing anything. I told you I have everything taken care of. Sleep so you can join us. Please,” he added when she looked ready to run out the door and start pitching one of the massive tents outside.

She looked at him again, still unsure. “You promise you’ll come get me if you need me?”

“Absolutely,” he lied, settling her a second time. There wasn’t anything left for her to do and he wanted her to be awake for the party. Mostly because he wanted her within sight rather than dead asleep in his bed where he couldn’t keep an eye on her all the time. If David *had* found her again, this was an opportunity he might not pass up to try and get to her. A big crowd of people and lots of distractions.

He’d run into a lot of security if he thought he could try something tonight though. Plainclothes guards would be milling about and each of them would have a picture of David in hand. He’d done what he could to ensure the man couldn’t crash the party but he wasn’t God. Demented people had their own life plans and if David’s included showing up here, Kyle would just have to be ready for him.

“Okay,” she relented.

She was asleep before he closed the door.

## Chapter Seven

“Aislinn? Hey, yoohoo.”

Aislinn whipped her gaze to Chris. The fireworks had ended several minutes ago and the party was starting to disperse.

“Damn, girl, why am I always saying that to you?” Chris laughed. “You’re always off in your own little world.”

Fantastic. Caught staring into the flames of the huge bonfire Kyle had created as a centerpiece for the party. Aislinn released the death grip she had on the lawn chair’s armrests and swallowed back the repeat vision she’d had of Kyle. It hadn’t helped. Hadn’t given her any more information. She still didn’t know whose kitchen he was in or when it would happen. Hell she couldn’t even see the attacker’s face. What kind of clairvoyant was she?

“I heard what happened last night, Ais. Are you okay?”

“Yeah. I’m fine, now,” she murmured. Well-rested too, since Kyle hadn’t let her out of bed until about an hour before the guests started arriving. So far no one had questioned her being the first one present.

“Why should they?” Kyle had asked her. “You’re my PA. In every way now,” he’d said huskily, kissing her breath away. She’d wanted to drag him into the bed she’d spent all day in and devour him like he’d devoured her next to the tub.

“Sheesh. Scary shit. You should have called me,” Chris said.

“Oh, well, I—”

“Oowee. Would you look who just showed up. I swear that man could melt butter on those abs. Damn. Any time he wants to come sans shirt to work, I certainly won’t complain.” Chris whistled softly.

Why the hell was he naked from the waist up? He sure hadn’t been like that when the party had started a few of hours ago. A sudden burst of jealousy shot through Aislinn and she tamped it down. Chris wasn’t interested in Kyle. In fact... Yep, there they were. TJ and Jonathan were both within hearing distance. And both were glaring at Chris like they wanted to haul her into the trees and make her forget all about Kyle.

Aislinn had no doubt Chris knew they were there too, which is why she was making such a big deal out of Kyle’s appearance. Why the woman wouldn’t just take what was being offered, Aislinn didn’t know. Perhaps she had issues with men similar to Aislinn’s.

She glanced up and saw the longing in Chris’s eyes. The desire was there, but something most definitely held her back.

“He is sex on two feet, doncha think?” Chris blurted.

Aislinn nearly choked. Couldn’t be more obvious, could she? “The man is your boss, Chris. You see him every day.” *Plus, he’s mine*, she wanted to snarl, but knew Chris’s aim wasn’t Kyle.

“Who cares? Oh, good, his groupies are here too,” she said, acting as if she’d just noticed them.

Aislinn chuckled.

“So what are you doing for your birthday tomorrow? The big three-oh, huh?” Chris planted herself on the ground next to Aislinn’s chair and dug into the plate of food she’d carried over.

Aislinn’s stomach turned. Whether it was the sight of food making her queasy or the thought that Kyle’s demise still loomed in his future, she didn’t know.

Trying to play cool, she shrugged. “Nothing.” There wasn’t anyone around to celebrate with except Kyle, and a birthday party wasn’t what she had in mind with him. She groaned and crossed her legs as her pussy throbbed in remembrance of the orgasm he’d brought her to.

“I bet you had a blast as a kid with your birthday on the Fourth of July. You must have had some awesome parties. Lots of fireworks and food and all that shit,” Chris mumbled around a hot wing.

Aislinn lifted a shoulder again. “It’s my mom’s birthday too. We sort of shared our party.”

“Really?”

“Uh-huh. My grandmother’s too.” Aislinn stared through the bonfire at Kyle who’d taken a seat opposite her, next to one of his managers. No doubt so he could keep an eye on her like he’d warned. Somewhere in this crowd of people were other security officers waiting for something to happen.

David wouldn’t show his face here though, she knew. Despite his treatment and stalking of her, the man was a coward in front of others.

She watched Kyle speak over his shoulder to TJ and laugh at whatever his friend said back.

“No shit? How’d that happen?” Chris asked.

Aislinn scrambled to remember what they’d been talking about before her mind had wandered. Oh, yeah, birthdays. *Some kind of freaky quirk of the time-space continuum, probably*, she wanted to say.

“Don’t know.”

In reality, Aislinn and her female ancestors *were* some kind of freaks. In her family, if you were the first daughter of a first daughter, you were born on Independence Day. You were also blessed with unruly red hair, moss green eyes—and a gift, as her mother called it—to see the future. How the traits had been passed through the females no one knew, since science had already proven it was the male who determined the sex of children. So far no males had ever been born into her family. Maybe Kyle could change...

No! Good Lord, what was she thinking?

She returned her gaze to him. He had one hand suspended in midair, supported by his elbow on the armrest. His thumb and forefinger idly rubbed together, an action she’d seen him do numerous times. Aislinn swallowed back a groan. Her nipples tightened beneath the T-shirt she’d

found at the foot of his bed when she'd woken. Sweat trickled between her breasts and down the small of her back. Ack. She hated being hot and sticky. The man across from her might be able to break her of that particular discomfort in bed—she gasped at the direction of her thoughts and swiped at her hot cheeks with her hands. The back of her neck tingled and she realized she'd been staring at Kyle all this time.

He returned her heated look with one of his own, as if he knew what she was thinking about.

A log shifted, crackling in the fire and drawing her attention, breaking the connection between them.

“So, do you really think TJ and Jonathan share women?”

“What?” Aislinn laughed out loud. “Where did that come from?”

“Well, I'm just saying, you know, after what you said yesterday.”

Yesterday? Sheesh, she couldn't remember this morning, let alone yesterday. “You'll have to enlighten me, Chris, my mind's a little cloudy from puking so much,” she groaned, covering her stomach with her hand.

“You know, about them being in cahoots.”

“I was kidding, Chris.” Was she? Hadn't Kyle mentioned something about his buddies? Had she discounted whispered rumors because she couldn't imagine having sex with two men?

“Oh.”

“Well don't sound so deflated, Chris.”

“I'm not deflated,” she screeched.

Aislinn snorted. “Now you're offended.”

“Not.”

Aislinn turned in her chair and faced the only true friend she'd allowed herself to have since going on the run. “You want them both,” she claimed.

She had her answer in the way Chris's cheeks turned pink. “I do not,” she stuttered.

“You're a liar.”

“Oh my God, do you think this makes me a sex fiend or something?”

“No.”

“Don’t you dare say a word to them,” Chris begged.

“Me? What would I say to them?”

“I don’t know, but—”

An evil cackle filled the air and they both turned toward it. A man in a gorilla costume—must have been hotter than hell inside all that fur—ran after two small boys, alternately waving his arms and beating his chest. The kids screamed in delight as they scrambled away.

A heartbeat later one of them tripped, which sent him sprawling toward the bonfire. Chris gasped and grabbed hold of Aislinn’s forearm. They watched Kyle lunge from his seat and wrap his arms around the boy. Their combined momentum took them too close to the fire. Kyle’s elbow clipped the outer edge of the pyramid of stacked wood. He rolled, shielding the child with his bigger body, and came to a stop not three feet from the collapsing fire.

Ash and hot sparks spit into the dark night, landing on and around the bare skin of Kyle’s back and legs. A woman screamed, then sobbed, her frantic voice muffled by the hand she held over her mouth.

Aislinn was frozen in place. People rushed around her, aiding in stamping out the small fires igniting in the dry grassy patches surrounding them, and helping Kyle to his feet. He cradled the crying boy against his chest and tucked his head under his chin. With a big hand, Kyle soothed the boy by rubbing circles on his back.

Fighting to catch her breath, Aislinn willed her heartbeat back to normal and wondered if her vision had somehow been all wrong. Maybe this is the struggle she’d seen. She quickly shook off the notion. Her dreams had never been wrong before, they wouldn’t be wrong this time.

Deep inside, Aislinn had a strong suspicion the night wasn’t over yet. Kyle still had another battle to overcome.

Kyle handed the shaking-like-a-leaf boy over to his mother, Turner Industries' Human Resource Manager.

"Thank you, Mr. Turner, thank you so much," she sobbed, swiping at the twin tracks of tears running down her cheeks.

"You're welcome, Barb. I think he's fine, just shook up a bit." He ruffled the kid's hair.

A tingly ache spread across his back. He knew he'd been burned. Not bad enough to need a doctor, but a couple of spots might blister. It needed to be cleaned. And he needed to find out who the monkey was. He hadn't hired entertainment involving gorilla costumes and he sure hoped some fun-loving dad hadn't been stupidly chasing kids around a massive fire. Kyle turned in a circle but monkey man had disappeared.

Searching the crowd for Aislinn, Kyle signaled one of the security team who was helping put out tiny fires. He'd had one eye on her the entire night, making sure for one, she stayed where he'd put her, and two, that her ex didn't show his weaselly face.

"Locate the furbutt and find out who the hell he is," he told the guard.

"Yes, sir."

The ass hadn't necessarily caused the kid to trip but he'd unknowingly given David the perfect opportunity to make an appearance. It would have been easy for him to slip past the guards with all of them focused on the main event. Unless David was the furb—

*Fuck!* Kyle swung around, only releasing an anxious breath when he saw Aislinn walking toward him. There wasn't anyone around he didn't recognize but there was also no brown fur in sight. He waited until Aislinn was within reach before turning back to the boy. "If he needs a doctor, give me the bill, Barb."

"Oh no, Mr. Turner. I couldn't do that. I think he's fine, just a few scrapes."

Kyle nodded. "Do you have any idea who the gorilla was?"

"No, sir." She shook her head and carried her son away.

“Mr. Turner, fabulous catch. You saved his life.” Joe Archer, one of his computer experts stepped up and slapped Kyle on the back, unaware of the burns.

Kyle gritted his teeth against the flare of pain and took the good-natured pat on the back with stoic resolve. Aislinn did not.

“Stupid moron, can’t you see he’s hurt?” she hissed.

“Sorry, Mr. Turner.” Joe hung his head, his face red with embarrassment.

“It’s fine, Joe. Go, enjoy the party.”

“If you’re sure,” Joe confirmed, looking more and more contrite.

Kyle turned and faced Aislinn. “I knew you cared,” he murmured sensually.

She glared at him and curled her hands into fists. “I’ll show you care.”

He smiled. “You plan on using those?”

“You really want to find out?”

“Not right now, swee...air to God, my back is killing me,” he dodged. Shit. He’d almost called her sweetheart in front of his entire staff. Wouldn’t that go over well? He didn’t give a shit how many people knew, but Aislinn would. He grasped her elbow and tugged her along. “If you’ll excuse us, I’m going to steal my PA and have her look at the damage.”

“Nice recovery, stud,” she mumbled under her breath.

“Stud, huh? I think I like you calling me stud.”

Aislinn snorted. “Don’t get any ideas.”

“Christ, Kyle, you’re fried crispy.” TJ joined them on their march up the hill.

“Oh my God, are you okay, Mr. Turner? Can I help with anything?” Chris practically ran alongside to keep up too. They were attracting people like flies.

The way Chris was already out of breath made him realize Aislinn had to jog too. He slowed his strides for the ladies.

“I know what you can help with,” TJ’s baritone voice growled.



“Eew. Do you mind, Mr. McFee?” Chris snapped.

Kyle noticed Aislinn purse her lips, trying to hold back a smile.

“Oh, I mind all right,” TJ injected smoothly. “I mind a whole lot.” He moved closer to Chris, trapping her between himself and Aislinn.

It was the first time Kyle had seen TJ or Jon make a move on the woman he knew they both wanted. They’d been biding their time, waiting for the right moment to introduce her to their lifestyle of sharing a woman. Apparently they were done waiting.

“Move over, brute,” Chris grunted, shoving TJ in the ribs with an elbow.

“Children,” Aislinn chided as they walked along, “I believe there are more important things to do right now. Like clean your boss’s burns.”

“Boss?” Kyle and TJ echoed.

TJ pretended to choke. “Boss? Never has been, never will be. Doesn’t look like he’s Aislinn’s boss anymore either.”

“What?” Chris stammered. “Are you leaving Turner, Ais? Please, please tell me you’re not leaving. I can’t go back there without anyone to talk to,” she gritted out, her gaze cutting to TJ.

“You can talk to me, doll,” TJ crowed.

She elbowed him again, hard enough the big ex-Special Forces team leader doubled over with an oof.

“I’m not your doll, Neanderthal.”

“Yet,” TJ croaked.

“Never,” she retorted.

“Mark my words, brown eyes, you will be.” When he raised from his bent-at-the-waist position, his eyes glowed with heat and promise. There was no way Christina missed it.

“Good Lord, I feel like I’m back in high school.” Aislinn shook her head and looped her arm through Kyle’s. “Let’s leave the lovers to quarrel on their own and put some cream on these burns, shall we?”

Chris gasped. “We are *not* lovers, Aislinn Campbell.” She practically stamped her feet and Kyle had to smile.

You will be soon, he thought. Jonathan met them as they hit the door. He pulled Kyle aside and spoke in a low voice so no one else would hear. "Couldn't find anything out about Gorilla Guy, Kyle. I've got people questioning witnesses but no one seems to know anything. Teej and I are gonna stay on the property tonight. We're two minutes if you need anything."

Kyle nodded. His buddies wouldn't let him down and he welcomed the extra protection. Especially when he might get a tad preoccupied in just a little while.

Jonathan sucked in an exaggerated breath to dispel their conversation. "Jesus, Kyle, didn't we teach you anything on the team? Like maybe how to roll?"

"I did roll. If I hadn't, it'd be my face Aislinn's about to cream up right now, not my back."

"Hot damn. It isn't every day you get to tell a pretty lady to cream up your face."

"Jon, for you, it probably is every day."

The man's grin said it all. He and TJ were rumored to have pleased at least one woman into unconsciousness. There was no doubt in Kyle's mind that both his friends' faces got creamed more than most men.

"I am so glad you guys don't talk like this at the office." Aislinn's face flushed.

She was turned on. Kyle's cock came to life, hardening and pressing uncomfortably against his zipper. If anything could take his mind off the throbbing of his back it would be picturing Aislinn's pussy lips hugging his cock, holding on for dear life as he thrust between her legs.

He moved closer and whispered in her ear. "Why? Would it make you want me more, Aislinn?" Kyle wanted to rub his hands together. But first he had to get the burns cleaned up.

Then he'd make love to her.

He was through waiting for his woman too.

## Chapter Eight

Aislinn followed Kyle into the stunning two-story log cabin—who was she kidding, the place was a freaking log mansion, for crying out loud—and cringed at the angry red marks marring the tanned skin of his back and shoulders. The embers had done a number on him. Thankfully it didn't look as bad as it could have. Maybe a blister here or there.

Replaying the scene in her head, she shivered.

The least little bit more momentum and they would have landed smack dab in the middle of the fire. If he'd been one second later, the same result. She wondered if what she'd seen tonight paled in comparison to some of the things he'd done as a SEAL. Had it seemed like child's play to him, being a hero? Did he see himself the same way?

They moved through the mudroom where Kyle gingerly leaned against the washing machine and kicked off his shoes before trudging on. She hadn't had much time earlier to see the monstrosity of his house. Most of the day she'd been asleep, and the rest of the time she'd been ordered to stay in bed.

After the notorious bath, the one time she'd gotten up to use the toilet Kyle had barged in looking ready to swat her butt as if she were a kid who'd broken a neighbor's window. Not even her argument that she'd had to go to the bathroom had eased his demeanor.

"When I didn't see you in bed, I thought something had happened to you," he'd barked, breathing heavily.

It should have pissed her off. How many times had David treated her like an object he owned? She was over being treated like dirt.

But something about the wild look in Kyle's eyes told her his hysteria was different. Laced with actual fear, not anger. Kyle had been *afraid* something had happened to her. He'd said so, it had just taken a few seconds to realize she wasn't still in the past and that he hadn't been angry with her for defying his order.

Instead he'd requested. He'd *asked* her to stay in bed for the day so she wouldn't be too tired to attend the party. And her heart had melted over his concern for her wellbeing. She probably would have stayed curled up under his covers anyway, since even now she didn't fully trust her tummy not to start revolting again.

Aislinn barely glanced through the doorway to the kitchen when they passed it on their right. What she did glimpse was an oversized stainless-steel fridge and a center island complete with hanging copper pots and pans any chef would swoon to be near.

For someone who said they didn't cook, Kyle sure had a dream kitchen. She wouldn't mind moving around in there herself for a minute or two.

She came to a jerking halt three feet past the door and swallowed around the lump in her throat.

"Where's your med box, Kyle?" Jonathan's question flowed around her, buzzing in her ears, and the floor threatened to rise up and slap her. She swayed, brushing the wall with her shoulder.

One hand on his hip, Kyle arched his back and winced. "In the hall closet. Top shelf."

Aislinn closed her eyes and put her hand on the wall to keep from falling. She massaged her temples trying to relieve the pounding taking up residence in her head.

"Aislinn?"

Kyle's voice called out from far away. His hand gently gripped her forearm. What had he said? What had caused this? Something she'd seen... Bile rose in her throat. She choked it back and bolted for the bathroom. Thank God she remembered there being one off this hallway.

"Christ, baby. What the hell happened?"

Make him go away, she prayed, hanging onto the toilet seat and begging her stomach into submission.

“Nothing. I’m fine.” *A liar, but fine.* At least she knew which kitchen she’d seen in her vision. His own.

“I’m good,” she said more convincingly. She hoped. “Residual from last night I guess.” She wasn’t about to bring it up in front of Jonathan.

“Here you go.” Jon returned and handed the typical white box with a red cross imprint to Kyle. “You okay, Aislinn? You look a little pale.”

She nodded. Kyle didn’t take his semi-narrowed gaze off her. “She’s fine. More of what happened last night.”

His tone said he didn’t believe her for a second but would go along with her until they were alone.

“Good. I’m outta here then. Teej and I gotta get Christina home.” Jon wiggled his eyebrows, dispelling the tension in the small bathroom.

Aislinn inhaled and broke the staring contest with Kyle.

“I don’t think she likes you. How on Earth did you get her to let you take her home?” She laughed.

Jon feigned a wounded look. “Not like me? What’s not to like?” He lifted an arm and flexed his muscles. “Me strong,” he grunted. “Besides, she likes me.” His nostrils flared and a serious tone replaced the teasing. “She just doesn’t know it yet.”

Aislinn sobered. “I think there’s a reason she doesn’t like men, Jonathan.”

“And it’s my job to ferret out what the reason is and change her mind, ma’am.”

She wrinkled her nose at his formality. “I think you could.”

Jon nodded sharply once. “Teej and I both,” he promised.

Unsurprised by his announcement, Aislinn returned his nod. They wouldn’t hurt her. Both of them were big, tall and a bit overpowering but in the last six months she’d seen enough of the way they treated her best friend to know the worst they could do was break her heart.

She sighed. A broken heart was something both she and Chris might be handed on a silver platter with these three men involved. Kyle must have somehow sensed her turn of thoughts. He shoved Jonathan out the door.

“Get the hell out of here. I’m injured in case you hadn’t noticed.”

Jon snorted. “Right.” He winked at Aislinn over Kyle’s shoulder. “Make sure you get plenty of rest tonight then.”

Kyle growled. Jon dodged the fist thrown in his direction and jogged off.

Aislinn cleared her throat. “Turn around.”

He spun around, catching her upper arms to keep her from falling since they were so close. “What’d you see, sweetheart? And don’t even attempt to lie to me, I’ll see through it.”

Of course he would.

“The kitchen is yours.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. I saw the refrigerator as we passed. It’s the same one.”

“All right then.”

“That’s it? That’s all you’re gonna say?” she snapped. Damn infuriating man. They should be leaving the house. Getting away from the scene of the future crime.

God. How lame did she sound?

“What do you want me to say?”

“I want you to leave, Kyle.”

“Do you know when this is supposed to happen, sweetheart?”

No, damn it, which made the whole damn thing shittier.

“I didn’t think so.”

“I haven’t said anything.” She slapped the antibiotic cream on a red spot on his back. He hissed and arched. “Shit. I’m sorry, Kyle.”

“It’s fine.”

The way he had to grind the words out between clenched teeth made it anything but fine, and made her feel like a big heel. She rubbed the cream softly around the slightly burned areas, enjoying the feel of taut, smooth skin beneath her fingertips. Muscles rippled, his breathing grew faster, and he bent over the sink, supporting himself with his hands on either side of the bowl.

“Aislinn?”

“Hmm?”

“If you don’t want this to go any further, you better stop now.”

Stop? Did she want to stop? She added a second hand to the first, smearing the cream and running her palms up to his shoulders. Could she do this?

“Last chance,” he offered, sounding guttural. She glanced at his face in the mirror and gasped. He looked like a man starved. For her.

“That’s it.” Kyle spun around and faced the woman tying his dick in a knot and took hold of her face with both hands. “No more waiting.” He descended on her lips, spreading them and coercing her into kissing him back. Coercion wasn’t necessary.

Her arms went around his waist and she tilted her head to give him better access. Their tongues tangled. Fuck she was sweet.

Kyle turned them, lifted her onto the counter and insinuated himself between her thighs. He needed to get closer, as close as physically possible. Inside her. Now. Easing his thumbs into the waistband of her shorts, he tugged them over her hips. She helped, raising up and allowing him to remove them completely. Kyle dropped to his knees and dragged her hips forward until her pussy begged for his mouth.

Fire red curls shielded her entrance, a testament to her natural color.

“You smell so fucking amazing.” Starting at her knee, he nibbled and kissed his way to her pussy, shiny with her juices. He spread her labia with his thumbs and licked her slit, pausing at the top to swirl his tongue around her beaded clit.

Her hips shot upward, smashing her wet heat into his face. Kyle took advantage and filled her with his tongue, thrusting deep. She moaned and threaded her fingers through his hair, alternately tugging him toward her and pushing him away like she didn't know if she wanted him closer or not.

No way was he moving. Not when he was finally where he most wanted to be. Aislinn made this tiny squeak, a subtle moan, and he knew she was biting her damn lip again. On his haunches, he retreated and stared up at her. Her head was thrown back. She caught herself after his abrupt departure by placing her hands behind her on the counter. The action pushed out her breasts. Her nipples poked through the cotton, demanding attention.

"Take the shirt off," he growled.

Aislinn lifted her head and gazed at him through lowered eyelids.

"Wha—?"

"The shirt, Aislinn, take it off."

She swallowed, crossed her arms and lifted the hem, revealing inch by beautiful inch of tummy and then breasts. With her hands high above her, her breasts rose. Kyle reached for a nipple while she was caught up in the fabric and twisted it between his fingers. Aislinn groaned and her elbows dropped, shirt still covering her head.

"Off."

She flung it across the room.

"Better." He continued manipulating the tight bud with one hand and returned his attention to her pussy. He swiped her gleaming wet slit again with his tongue. "Put your hands on the counter behind you and don't move them."

Aislinn whimpered when he sucked her clit into his mouth. She squirmed and dug her heels into the cabinet below. He could eat her all day and never get tired of it.

Switching to the other nipple, he gave it some love too, pinching and rolling until her hands came forward to grip his forearm. Long nails dug



into his skin leaving tiny crescent marks. Kyle stopped altogether until she looked at him again.

“Please don’t stop,” she begged, her eyes wide, her hips fidgeting.

“Then put your hands back, sweetheart. I love you touching me, but right now I’m too close.”

Aislinn gasped and jerked her gaze to where her fingers pressed into his arm. She let go of him like he’d burned her and that sweet little lip went between her teeth.

“Uh-uh.” He rubbed it with his thumb and watched the tip of her tongue dart out to capture the digit.

“Taste yourself on me, baby?”

She nodded, her face full of desire and heat.

“Fuck.” Kyle stood and yanked at the button of his fly while backing up a step. The zipper rasped as he carefully tugged it down over his hard-on. His cock sprang free, thick and long. It captured Aislinn’s scrutiny immediately. He gripped the length and rubbed it from root to tip with a fist, imagining it was her pussy wrapped around him.

A puff of air escaped Aislinn’s lips.

“It’ll fit.”

Never taking her eyes off his groin, she nodded again. Kyle smiled and slowly moved between her spread thighs, placing his hands at her waist. His cock bobbed against her outer lips. Aislinn laid her forehead against his chest.

“I know it will,” she whispered.

Damn, she would kill him for sure. He slid his hands up her sides and lifted the weight of her breasts. Soft and small and perfect. He flicked at the nubs with his thumbs, drawing them into tighter points.

His cock head shifted amongst her slippery folds, finding its way inside. Grinding his teeth together, Kyle slammed his eyes shut and fought not to start pounding into her sheath. It would be so easy.

“Fuck me, Kyle.”

Three little words.

Three little words that shattered his sanity. He gripped her hips and thrust to the hilt, mindless of the fact he hadn't donned protection. Nothing would tear him away from her. Especially now, when he felt every one of her inner muscles clinging to his cock, dragging him deeper.

She clung to him with her legs, grasping his waist by hooking her heels at the small of his back. The movement sucked him closer. Not even a millimeter separated them.

He gave what she wanted, withdrawing and slamming back into her, and captured her cries in his mouth.

"God, Aislinn." He palmed her ass and held her still for his thrusts. Sweat helped her glide on the marble top. Her grunts filled the small space, mingling with his. She lifted her hands, placing them on his shoulders.

Kyle hissed at the contact of her touch on his burns. He couldn't care less. She could touch him anytime she wanted to.

"Shit," she cried.

"No. Leave 'em. Hold on to me." He slipped his thumb between them and circled her clit. The tension built in her pussy and the inner walls contracted on him.

He slammed home with a shout and came inside her. Her cries echoed his and every vibration in her pussy wrung another surge from his cock.

Breathing heavily, Kyle hugged the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with. He wiped the sweaty hair from her neck and nuzzled the column of her throat, laving it with kisses and love bites.

"Oh my God," she whispered, shivering with the cool air on her heated skin.

He needed more. Still embedded deep in her vagina, Kyle scooped her up and carried her to his first-floor bedroom.

"Let's do it again," he growled in her ear.

A tiny part of her brain screamed, “Nooooo.” The vast majority said, “Yes, yes, yes.” Kyle had shown her how wonderful sex could be. It wasn’t supposed to be painful, but a meshing of flesh and souls and pleasure. And suddenly she found herself wanting more instead of cringing at the mere thought.

Something about the way Kyle touched her and moved in her made their joining special. Did he see it the same way? Was she simply another conquest for him? Her feet hit the mattress a second before her butt did. The action pulled his cock free and for the first time she got a good look at one aspect of the male body she’d thought was meant for pain.

She’d glimpsed it for a few seconds when he’d first freed himself. An instant flare of panic had surged to the surface when she’d seen the size of it. It was bigger than David’s in both circumference and length and should have cut her in two. Kyle had guessed her anxiety and settled her with two words. “It’ll fit.”

Boy had it. Aislinn squirmed on his comforter, crazily thinking about the wet spot she was surely leaving on its surface. She licked her lips as his penis bobbed before her and found herself wanting to reach out and touch. She saw it in a whole new light. Such a contrast of textures. Soft and velvet skin over steel. The purpled head wept a drop of pre-come from its slit. Would it taste different from her previous experiences?

“Touch if you want, sweetheart.”

Aislinn sucked in a breath. “How did you...?”

“It’s written all over your face.” He palmed her cheek and smoothed his thumb over her skin. The tender caress was nearly her undoing. What had she done to deserve this man?

*Because you’ve already been through hell.*

“My body is yours to play with.”

Could she?

“Yes.”

“Stop reading my mind, damn it.” She couldn’t help but smile.

Kyle laughed. “It easy to do when you’re broadcasting with every wanting look you give me.” He grasped her hand and giving her time to pull away, slowly guided it to his cock.

Aislinn wrapped her fingers around the base, marveling at how her fingertips and thumb didn’t meet. She had cradled this in her body and wanted to again. Now.

She glanced up at him, expecting to see a grin of domination on his face. What she saw stopped her heart. His eyes were closed, his nostrils flared, and he appeared to be having trouble breathing. She pumped him once and marveled at the tiny jump of muscle along his jaw.

Twice more she moved her gripped fist on his shaft. Kyle snagged her wrist on the third pass.

“I can’t take any more.”

Not, “Harder, Aisly, you know how I like it.” No pulling her hair until tears ran down her cheeks and barking at her to, “Take me in your mouth.”

“I want to be inside you when I come,” Kyle groaned.

Oh God. She wanted to cry. She wanted to laugh. She wanted Kyle inside her.

“Please,” she whispered and moved to lie back.

He stopped her. “No.” After crawling onto the bed, Kyle stretched out on his back, like he’d never been burned, his hands folded beneath his head, his feet spread about a foot apart. Standing at a proud full mast, his cock begged for her. “You’re in charge, baby. Do whatever you want.”

She did cry then, as she straddled his thighs. Her pussy grazed the head of his penis, making it jump in anticipation. She had her own fair share of that.

Kyle’s eyes glittered and his muscles bunched along his chest and abdomen. Aislinn trailed her fingertips over his tan, sweat-slicked skin.

“I’m not sure what to do,” she admitted.

He smiled. “Whatever you do turns me on so don’t worry about making it good for me. Do what you like.”

“But I—”

He shushed her with a finger over her lips. “Do what feels good, Aislinn.”

Her gaze wandered over his upper body from his eyes to the point where her mound rubbed against the tip of his erection. She must have subconsciously sunk lower. Shifting her hips, she nudged her clit against him. Tiny sparks shot through the raw bundle of nerves. It felt fantastic. She closed her eyes and did it again. And again.

Still blind, she took his cock in hand and slid it between her labia, moaning at the sensation.

“Aislinn. Honey.” Kyle panted below her. “Unh.”

She opened her eyes to see his head thrown back. His hips lifted, pressing his cock into her sheath, while he dug his heels into the mattress. She lowered herself onto his cock, wincing a tiny bit at the stretching of abused muscles from their countertop session.

Kyle hissed as she rose and fell in a lazy rhythm. “Remind me never to give you control again,” he ground out.

She purred. Aislinn Campbell purred and sank all the way down, impaling herself on him. She rolled her hips, dragging her clit on the thick hair covering his groin. Her belly tingled, her nipples throbbed. With her finger and thumb, she alternately pinched them, tugging on them until they hardened. The other hand went to her clit, slippery with their combined juices.

“Ride me, Aislinn. Please.”

An exhilarating thrill flowed through her. For the first time in her life she had made a man beg.

Up, down, up, down. She was so close. Kyle’s thighs bunched beneath her, yet his hands remained behind his head. His iron control looked shaky but he held onto it somehow.

The pressure built, swelling her clit. She tapped it with one finger and exploded, screaming out her pleasure.

Kyle's hands gripped her hips while her orgasm continued to roll through her. He pistoned his cock inside her, reaching a depth she hadn't accomplished on her own. Three, four, five strokes and he embedded himself deep inside her and shouted his own release. She felt every spurt of his come splashing her womb.

Later—she had no idea how long—his fingers loosened on her skin and she fell forward, tucking her head beneath his chin. His lungs heaved the same as hers. Their hearts pounded together. Kyle wrapped his arms around her and held her tight, his cock still buried in her pussy.

She fell asleep hugged close to his body and surrounded by his protection.

## Chapter Nine

Aislinn sighed and tried to roll over. Kyle's arm draped across her belly held her captive, but he'd be sorry if she didn't get out soon. She wiggled, doing her best not to wake him, and cringed as the movement jarred seldom used, sore muscles.

Insatiable man. She couldn't even remember how many times he'd made love to her. Or how many mind-blowing orgasms he'd caused her to have.

Kyle mumbled something in his sleep and his hand moved on the sheets as if searching for her. For her? Or for whatever temporary woman normally graced his bed?

*Stop*, she scolded herself. For some inexplicable reason, she trusted his word. Probably had a lot to do with what her mother had told her on the phone last night at the restaurant. She shivered and clutched her still sore belly at the mere thought of the place.

Kyle had also told her he hadn't been with anyone since she'd come to work at Turner Industries. Rumor had it a different woman every weekend paraded through his office. Aislinn had yet to see any evidence of this which could only mean two things—either she was really blind and the rumor was true, or Kyle had stopped seeing other women when he said he had.

Her stomach grumbled, reminding her the last time she'd eaten had been at the party. After their second round of unbelievable, wild monkey sex, he'd tried to get her to the kitchen to eat.

“Are you nuts?” she'd asked. “Or just stupid?”

Sure, she didn't have any idea when her vision would come to fruition, but no way would she purposefully offer him up on a silver platter.

He'd raised an eyebrow over one of those beautiful blue eyes and said sarcastically, "Shall I move out?"

Kyle was right, the bastard. Running from the problem wouldn't alter the eventual outcome. And if anyone was tired of running, it was Aislinn.

She curled her hands into fists and stared through the moonlit darkness at the obstinate man. Even in sleep he presented an overbearing ex-Special Forces he-man.

But he was *her* he-man and she wasn't about to allow him to walk into a trap. If he didn't want to protect himself, she'd do it for him.

Aislinn tiptoed to the bathroom. When she was done, she stood in the bedroom doorway. Kyle's room was on the first floor, one of a few. She hadn't been upstairs and she had to wonder how many guestrooms there actually were. What the hell did a man alone need with all this house anyway? Planning for the future? He would have to have twelve kids to fill it.

She wrinkled her nose and looked down at her flat tummy. Uh-uh. Absolutely not. One, two, maybe—

What was she thinking? She gave one last glance at the man in the bed. She just wanted a minute alone.

To the right was the kitchen, to the left, the sunken living room. Which door should she choose? Her stomach begged for the former, her brain easily chose the latter. If she never saw his kitchen it would be too soon.

A flat screen occupied one wall. The rest of the room was taken up by butter-soft leather couches and deep chairs. A typical man's choice for furniture but not completely overloaded by testosterone. Comfortable.

A creak alerted her to a second presence in the room. Smiling, Aislinn swung around, expecting to see Kyle. Panic swept through her.

"You stupid bitch." Spittle shot from her ex's mouth. He jumped at her, cutting her scream off with a thick meaty hand. His fingers squeezed



her jaw hard enough she thought for sure it would snap. His other hand swung her around and yanked her back to his front.

“Every fucking time I get close to you, you disappear,” he snarled in her ear. His breath smelled foul and full of alcohol.

David kicked at her feet to get her moving. His toes sent a shooting pain up her calf. She twisted in his crushing hold. Licking her ear, he hissed, “You didn’t actually think I’d let you go, did you?”

Her stomach turned, threatening to spill what little contents it contained. She barely had room to suck in air through nostrils closed off by his hand. Tears sprang to her eyes. She cried out, but the noise only came out as a muffled groan.

He moved, causing her to trip forward. David pinned his arm beneath her breasts, crushing her ribs. Much longer and she’d pass out from lack of oxygen.

David dragged her down the hall. “I’ll kill him for touching my cunt,” he spat.

“Mmm-mmm. Mmm-mmm,” she shouted. The words were drowned out behind his hand. Aislinn shook her head against him. He held fast even when she tumbled, nearly bringing both of them down.

“Did you like the gorilla get-up? Nice, huh? Hotter than fuck,” he rasped, “but it did the trick. Caused a nice scene and gained me entry to the house. Where I’ve been the whole fucking night waiting for you to fucking leave that cocksucker’s bed.” David wrenched her head toward his face so sharply, her vertebrae popped. Aislinn clawed at his hand, drawing blood with her fingernails. David never flinched.

“How’s your belly, baby? A tiny bit was all it took. That restaurant should be more careful who they let in. And you should have never fucking run from me. Consider this a punishment. Next time it’ll be worse.”

She shook from head to toe and tried to get her jaw open enough to bite the fleshy palm squeezing her face.

“Took me five and a half long fucking months to find you. A couple weeks planning time and now you’re mine again. You did well this time.

But not good enough. I've got you now and as soon as I stash you, I'm coming back for your little loverboy, Aisly." His tongue lapped at her cheek and she jerked. "I'm gonna cut his fucking dick off and shove it down his throat," he whispered raggedly.

She fought him like a wildcat, ignoring the pain it caused her and screaming for all she was worth. Surely Kyle's Special Forces background would kick in and her struggles would wake him. Her bare heel connected with his shin and he grunted but continued dragging her to the front door.

With two fingers she jabbed at his face.

"You fucking cunt," he howled, losing his grip.

Aislinn jerked free and stumbled away from him, choking and gasping for breath. She made it to the doorway before David snarled, "I don't think so, bitch." He stormed after her. Their momentum carried them further down the hall. Her shoulder slammed into the doorframe of the kitchen, bringing stars to her vision.

David shoved her all the way through the door.

"Hold it right there, David."

With a roar, David reversed their positions, using Aislinn as a shield. She heard a click and from nowhere, a knife appeared in his hand.

Aislinn gasped as the cold steel bit into her flesh between two ribs.

"I will stick her like a pig if you move one more inch," he hurled.

For the first time Aislinn noticed Kyle's lack of clothes. Only a pair of boxers and the gun he held in front of him. Even mostly naked, he resonated a deadly calm with his total lack of emotion. He looked bored. Only the telltale ticking of his jaw told her he was pissed.

If she didn't do something right now, his life would end here in this kitchen, in the dead of night. The same as her vision.

She had that on her side at least. David didn't have a clue she already knew the sequence of events about to unfold. For once in her life, she was in the position to change the outcome.

"Interesting," Kyle commented in a neutral tone.

Oh God. Aislinn swallowed the fear threatening to demolish her. Kyle wasn't bored at all, he was waiting for his opportunity. It was up to her to create one and trust that whatever happened, he wouldn't get himself killed. She wouldn't let him.

Her gaze met his. A blink later, and the tiniest downward nod of his head, she knew what to do.

Aislinn dropped like a sack of potatoes. The added weight threw David off guard. The motion should have given Kyle the space he needed. Instead, David pivoted and kicked out, connecting with Kyle's gun hand while still holding onto her. The opportunity for Kyle to fire was gone and so was his gun. She rammed two fingers over her shoulder and stabbed at David's face. She felt soft flesh but couldn't tell where she'd hit him. He screamed out and grabbed for his face.

Scrambling to her feet, she ran into Kyle's arms and buried her face against his chest.

David's scream had only been a diversion. With a guttural cry, he leaped at her and Kyle, knife high in the air. Kyle shoved Aislinn aside. She went down, smacking the back of her head on the tabletop, and had a hard time focusing as the two men grappled with each other in an obscene dance around the room. They locked onto each other's arms like wrestlers would, David still holding the knife, which glinted in the moonlight.

It suddenly clattered to the floor between their feet and David's hand broke loose from Kyle's hold. He threw a punch at Kyle's face. Flesh connected with a thud. Kyle returned the favor and blood splattered from David's mouth.

She wanted to help. She wanted to do something, but this wasn't her area of expertise, it was Kyle's. Aislinn shook her head and fought the cobwebs and the throbbing at the back of her skull.

A foot kicked the gun across the tile floor, drawing her attention. Sluggishly, she crawled to it, wincing at every grunt and groan and thump of fist on body.

She stood and cradled the foreign object in her hands like she'd seen on TV and prayed the safety was off and that she didn't hit Kyle.

A loud roar went up and Kyle flung them to the ground. They rolled, still kicking and punching. A second later David, with top advantage, held something in the air. It clicked open and moonlight glinted from the steel, exactly like it had happened in her vision.

"Look out!" Aislinn screamed. Her heart pounded in her ears, drowning everything else out.

Kyle reared up and twisted as the knife came down. It sliced into skin high up on his arm, spilling blood. With a vicious howl, Kyle took David's head in his hands and slammed it into the center island. The crack of bone and marble that followed made Aislinn go weak in the knees.

"I'll take that," a deep voice rumbled behind her.

Aislinn screamed and jumped as two strong hands descended over hers and relieved her of the gun she held in a death grip.

"Fuck, Teej," Kyle groaned, panting hard. He rolled out from beneath the unconscious David and held his shoulder. Blood oozed from between his fingers. "What the hell took you so long?"

TJ chuckled. "I was just watching, waiting to see if you needed me."

"You've been here this whole time and did nothing?" Aislinn shrieked.

Kyle dragged himself off the floor. He enveloped her in a bear hug, heedless of the blood he transferred. His hand twisted in her hair as if he'd never let her go and his lips kissed every part of her face he could get to.

"No, darlin'. Kyle pushed the panic button." TJ looked at his precision military watch. "Took me two minutes and twenty-eight seconds to get here."

Two minutes? God it seemed like they'd been fighting for hours. Two minutes?

"Police are on their way, Kyle."

He nodded over her head. "Get that fucker out of my sight."

"Will do."

## Chapter Ten

Kyle tossed the butter knife from Aislinn's fingers into the sink and wrapped his arms around her. She leaned back into his chest. "Happy Fourth of July birthday, sweetheart."

Aislinn laughed. "Thank you. Why are you out of bed?" They'd gone to the hospital in the early hours of the morning and gotten Kyle's arm practically stitched back on, then she'd spent the day with him, making sure he did what he'd been told.

"Mmm." He nuzzled the back of her neck. "I'm tired of laying down, Mommy."

She laughed and slapped at his hands as he raised them to her breasts. A second later she stilled.

"He's never going to leave me alone, is he?" she murmured, staring out the kitchen window at nothing.

Wrapping her long red hair in his fist, Kyle turned her and hugged her tight. He hated seeing her like this. He should have killed the little prick. Snapped his neck instead of knocking him out.

"He can't hurt you anymore. Not behind bars where he belongs, sweetheart." Kyle would make sure the bastard never saw the light of day to bother Aislinn again.

She shook her head.

He straightened and took her face in his hands. Raising an eyebrow, he said, "You doubt me? I make the most sophisticated security equipment known to man. I employ the best agents to use that equipment. There's nothing he can do without us knowing it."

“Do you think so? He got in your house, Kyle.”

Kyle’s initial laugh sobered instantly. “I’m not happy about that either.” He could have told her he’d be looking into what the fuck had happened, but it wouldn’t change things. Security was tight but there had been about a hundred people on the grounds.

“I’m not blaming you,” she said.

“I know.” He blamed himself though. It had been his job to protect her. Instead he’d almost gotten her killed. He’d have to live with that the rest of his life.

He took a deep breath and kissed her forehead. Her scent washed over him, headed straight for his groin. “I want to fuck you, baby.”

“No.”

“Excuse me?”

“You know what the doctor said. No physical activity.”

“I won’t be physical.”

Aislinn snorted. “Right.”

“I won’t,” he swore, groaning when she pulled away and shook her finger at him.

“No.”

“Please.”

“Ahh, he’s resorted to begging.” She chuckled and backed slowly out of the kitchen. One foot and then the other, her hips swayed with each step, and her pebbled nipples taunted him. He followed, stalking her just as slowly.

She’d brought him breakfast in bed this morning after forcing him not to get up. Literally. She’d tied his ass to the bed with the silk tie of his robe, only letting him up to take care of nature. His nostrils flared remembering the scene.

Naked as the day he was born, he’d eaten, giving her time to think she’d won. Then he’d slipped out of his confines—he was a Special Forces team member for fuck’s sake, there wasn’t any situation he couldn’t get out of—and hunted her down. She’d been in the kitchen,

standing at the center island in only his T-shirt. Yeah, it hung almost to mid-thigh, but damn he'd never seen anything sexier.

Her butt was bare beneath the shirt too, enticing him with the smell of her pussy, begging for him to lay her out and fuck her senseless. He could do it with minimal movement on his part and if she couldn't feel the way his raging hard-on tented his boxers she was just plain mean.

"He also said you should keep me comfortable." He took another step, stalking her out the door. Wouldn't be much longer before he had her knees hitting the edge of his bed. A little push on her shoulders and she'd be eye, no, *mouth* level with what needed the most comforting right now. If his dick got any harder it might break off.

"Comfortable is lying in bed, reading a book." Her back hit the wall in the hallway and she turned to continue backpedaling, never taking her gaze off him.

She bit her lip which only fueled his hunger to have those teeth nibbling on his cock.

"Your idea of resting and mine are two different things."

"I can see that," she breathed, her glance wandering to his erection. He watched her swallow as her eyes widened.

A second later he swallowed. Her wide-eyed look transformed into a calculated narrowed-eyed glare of intent. Kyle didn't know whether he liked that look or not.

The corners of her mouth turned up and he knew he was in trouble. Aislinn stopped moving and put her hands on her hips.

"Why, Mr. Turner, are you happy to see me, or is that a—"

"Don't say it," he growled. "You know damn well there is no banana in my non-existent pockets."

"Hmm." Her tongue poked out to wet her lips. "So I guess there's no reason I should fish out the piece of fruit making you so uncomfortable there, huh?"

Kyle groaned and closed his eyes. The little witch would kill him.

"Okay, here's the deal," she articulated.

He already didn't like the sound of her "deal".

She raised an eyebrow and sucked in her cheeks, further exasperating him. One more movement out of that mouth and he'd end up fucking her against the wall. He took another step until not more than a foot stood between them. She held her ground.

"If you promise..." She hesitated and he felt every thump of his heart against his breastbone.

"Oh, I promise," he whispered.

Aislinn cocked her head and gave him an annoyed look. "You don't even know what I was going to say."

"Doesn't matter."

"So if I say, if you promise to take a nap right now, I'll let you fuck me *tonight*, you'll go along with it."

Kyle hung his head, lamenting her shitty deal.

"Thought so."

"It's not nice to tease your boss."

"And that, dear Kyle, is your problem. You're not my boss right now, you're my lover."

"Mmm." He snuck closer and gripped her waist with both hands, ignoring the twinge in his upper arm. "I do like the sound of lover on your lips." He leaned back at the waist so he could see her face. "Now give me a better deal."

She deflated on a sigh, placing her hands on his chest and patting him. "Fine. If you promise to stay absolutely still I will..." The rest of her sentence trailed off.

"What? What was the rest of that?" He bent at the knees and lifted her chin with a thumb. "You were mumbling, sweetheart."

She cleared her throat. "I said, if you promise to stay very still I will...kiss you."

"I can kiss you anytime I want, Aislinn." Kyle proved it by settling his mouth on hers and catching her gasp. She sagged against him and threaded her arms beneath his and around him.



“See?” he breathed, sweeping his lips across her cheek and up to her ear, where he sucked the lobe into his mouth. “Where exactly are you going to kiss me that I’d have to work on keeping still?”

“Ugh.” Aislinn tilted her head and he took advantage of her barred neck and throat. “You’re going to make me say it, aren’t you?”

“Absolutely.”

“Then I guess you don’t get anything.” Her blush deepened.

“Then I guess I can fuck you right here on this wall.” Kyle grabbed the hem of her shirt. He slid it up and over her hips before cupping the cheeks of her ass and lifting her.

Aislinn shrieked and heedful of his bad arm slapped at his chest and other arm. “Put me down, Kyle Turner.”

“No.” Fuck what the doctor had said. He needed her.

“Fine,” she yelled, her body tense. “I’ll give you a blow job. Are you satisfied?”

“Not yet. But I will be as soon as you give me that...kiss,” he mocked. He marched her, still backward, into the bedroom, only stopping when they reached the bed. Every step he punctuated with a kiss. When they could go no further, he slipped his hands beneath the shirt and covered her breasts. He pinched her nipples for a brief moment before yanking the shirt over her head.

“I want to see you.” His chest rumbled when he spoke.

“And now you can.” She reversed their positions and pushed at his chest until he sat on the edge of the bed. “Oops,” she giggled. “Forgot these.” Aislinn tugged at the waistband of his boxers.

He obliged, lifting his hips to help her strip them off. His cock jutted out, the slit seeping with pre-come. Aislinn’s tiny hand wrapped around its circumference at the base and he nearly jumped out of his skin. She didn’t say a word as her lips descended. The head of his cock disappeared and she sucked him like a lollipop.

Holy fuck, his eyes rolled back and his elbows gave out. She took him deeper, swallowing half his cock.

Kyle watched her take him in. The rubbery tip tentatively touched the back of her throat. For a second she gagged and retreated. Her tongue tasted him, lapping along the vein underneath and flicking at the broad head. Kyle's balls drew up tight and he felt ready to explode and fill her hot mouth with his come.

Red curls sifted across his thighs, adding to the sensations already seizing his entire body. Her head bobbed up and down, drawing on his cock, literally sucking the come from his balls. Kyle inhaled sharply.

"Sweetheart," he ground out, trying to lift her head off him, "I'm going to come." He was surprised at the croak in his voice.

"I know," she hummed.

His toes curled into the carpet and if his thigh muscles got any tighter, they'd likely snap.

"Then finish it," he snarled, twisting his fist in her hair. She smiled. It was a devil's smile.

"Mmm." Her lips closed over him again, and her hand joined her mouth in working his cock.

Throwing his head back, Kyle shouted with his release. Long hot spurts shot from his cock and Aislinn swallowed him over and over, milking him.

When he was finally wrung dry, he collapsed back on the bed. He hardly felt the sting of the burns on his back, but a sharp pain singed his arm. He winced but otherwise ignored the flash. Aislinn crawled onto the bed beside him and straddled his body. If he hadn't just had an explosive orgasm, leaving him drained and fighting for a breath, he could have slipped inside her and gone again.

One thing was for sure, their sex life wouldn't be boring.

He felt like lead. Couldn't even lift his hand to wipe the hair falling over her eyes away. She smiled down at him and purred with contentment.

"Ready for a nap now?"

Nap? “No fucking way, baby.” Kyle forced his eyelids open and fought his way across the bed so his feet were no longer dangling off. In a minute he’d have her under him, thighs spread so he could taste her the way she had him.

She chuckled. “Is that why you can’t keep your eyes open?”

“They are.” Were they? “I think you drained me.”

“And you were so still for me,” she teased.

“I’ll be still for you any time,” he mumbled. Maybe she was right. Maybe he did need a tiny little rest. Hell, he’d slept in some of the worst situations on the planet with one eye and ear open. He could do it again.

“I love you, Kyle Turner III.”

He thought his hand went to her waist and pulled her closer. At least, he thought he felt her weight sink onto his good side, wrapping him in her heat.

No way would he let her get away with thinking he hadn’t heard her though.

He kissed her forehead and murmured, “I love you too, Aislinn Campbell. Forever.”

## About the Author

Between being a wife, mommy, cleaning woman, chauffer, coach and leader, there are a few minutes left to sneak in some writing time. Annmarie McKenna loves to hear from readers. You can visit her website at [www.annmariamckenna.com](http://www.annmariamckenna.com) or her blog at [www.annmariamckenna.blogspot.com](http://www.annmariamckenna.blogspot.com). Send an email to [annmarmck@yahoo.com](mailto:annmarmck@yahoo.com).

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*Sara believed Tristan died while stationed overseas. The last thing she expected on the eve of her engagement to another man was to be attacked by a monster...and have Tristan come to her rescue.*

## Missing in Action

© 2007 Amanda Young

*Available now from Samhain Publishing*

To everyone who knew him, Tristan McKade is dead. Only the SCS (Supernatural Control Squad), a top secret division of the military know differently. Sent back to his hometown, Tristan is on the hunt for the serial killer.

Sara McCoy is just beginning to move on with her life without Tristan. Ready to let go of the past, Sara is celebrating her recent engagement. The night is going well—until she notices a man lingering at the back of the room. His resemblance to Tristan too strong to ignore, she follows him outside, where he vanishes.

Unable to concentrate on his assignment, Tristan is determined to let go of the past before more innocent women die. In a bid for closure, he pays a clandestine late night visit to Sara's house to say a final goodbye to the woman he loves—and the son he never knew he had.

Learning the shocking truth, Tristan and Sara are drawn into a bizarre triangle that pits them against The Mangler, an entity determined to possess Sara at any cost. A bloody battle of mind, body and soul ensues. Only one man will walk away alive—with Sara as his prize.

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Missing in Action*:

Tristan had just signed into the secure server when Shame waltzed back into the room. "We're almost in. Get over here behind me so the webcam can pick your ugly ass up on it."

"That's not what you were saying the other night."

"Whatever, now shut the hell up," Tristan replied shortly.

"Excuse me," a loud voice boomed out of the computer speakers.

Tristan jerked around and stared at the visage of his boss over the seventeen-inch monitor. "Sorry, sir, I wasn't speaking to you, sir." Shame snorted from behind him and Tristan wished he could elbow the bastard in the ribs. The little fuck was going to get them in trouble, again.

"No, I don't imagine you were. Now down to business. What new information do you have?"

"I'm sorry to say, not much, sir. I had no choice but to abort tonight's rendezvous before I could meet with the informant."

"Why is that? This mission should be your one and only concern."

"It is, sir. I assure you it is, but there were unforeseen complications."

"How so?" Ramsey's face began to turn a very unattractive shade of red. Of all the virtues their boss possessed, patience was not one of them. Tristan wondered what would happen if he told the old man that red really wasn't his best color.

"As I'm sure you know, sir, the city you currently have us stationed in happens to be my hometown. Tonight, while I was waiting at the location our informant designated, I noticed a woman who would've recognized me, had she been aware of my presence."

Although Tristan regretted the small lie to his boss, he felt that it was justified. The man simply didn't need to know everything all the time. Especially that he was chased and damn near caught by the one person he'd been forbidden contact with.

"Rather than risk exposure, I left."

"Very well. Who was the person who may have seen you?"

"No one important, sir." *\_Please drop it.\_*

"Soldier, I insist you give me the name of the person you abandoned your post for."

"I'd rather not say, sir." Damn it, why couldn't the old man just let the matter drop? He didn't know why he expected any different. The bastard was relentless when it came to something he wanted.

"The name. Now. That's an order, soldier."

Shit.

"Sara. Sara McCoy."

Shame sucked in a deep breath behind Tristan. Ramsey's mouth stretched into a grim line, the corners turning white with tension.

Lowering his head, Tristan looked directly into the camera, pleading with his boss to read in his eyes what he dared not say with words. "She didn't see me, sir."

"Fine, soldier, we'll let the matter go, for now. We have more important matters at hand."

The rest of the transmission went smoothly. With a killer on the loose, there was little time to spare discussing other issues. For which Tristan was thankful. He knew the matter would be revisited as soon as their assignment concluded, but he would cross that bridge once he got there. While he could care less about what happened to him, he refused to let any harm come to Sara simply because she'd been in the wrong place at the right time.

As soon as the monitor went blank Shame pulled Tristan's chair around to face him. "Jesus. When were you going to tell me?"

He could see the concern for him etched into his partner's face. "It's not important. Let's just forget it happened."

"Don't bullshit a bullshitter. I know you, man. There's more to this than what you told the old man. Now out with it."

"It's not a big deal."

"It's not a big deal my ass, bro."

"Will you shut the hell up about it if I tell you?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, but you're going to be disappointed. Nothing happened. I was in the club, where we'd scheduled to meet the informant. I stood in the back, waiting for the SOB to show up and the next thing I know, Sara's headed right for me. I went out the back and hid until she left. It was all very manly. I felt like a damn pussy."

"I bet you did."

"Mmm-hmm," Tristan murmured.

"At least you got to see her, man. I would give my left nut to see my Maria one more time."



Tristan wasn't surprised Shame understood him so well. They were friends, team members, even before their change in circumstance. Since then, they'd been practically joined at the hip, partnered together on every assignment that came their way. While he wouldn't admit it out loud, it was comforting to have someone there who could understand him and know what he was going through.

It had been good to see Sara again. Too good.

The what ifs that plagued him constantly after he'd first started with the company were coming back to bite him in the ass now. Once again he found himself playing the old game in his head. What if none of this fucked-up shit had ever happened? What if he went to Sara and told her the truth about him? What if they both just disappeared one day? Would anyone bother to search for them? What if. What if. It was going to drive him out of his ever-loving mind.

Tristan patted Shame on the back. "I know you would, man." Unlike Tristan, who'd only lost the woman he loved, Shame had lost a wife and a daughter. Though he couldn't contact them, Shame kept discreet tabs on them through channels Tristan felt better not knowing anything about. The less he knew, the less he could be forced to tell under interrogation.

Shame offered to look in on Sara for him a few times over the years, but Tristan declined. While he prayed she was happy, he didn't want to know the details. It was selfish, he knew, but he didn't think he'd survive hearing about how she'd moved on without him. That she was married to some other man, having that man's children instead of his.

"Listen, dude, it's been a long-ass day. My entertainment for the night is waiting on me."

"Go on then, you don't need to baby-sit me."

"No, I don't. I thought you might like to join us though. Have a little fun for a change."

"No. You know I'm not..."

A roguish smile spread across Shame's face. "Yeah. Yeah. I know you don't fuck women anymore. I'll do her. You can do me."

Tristan laughed at his friend's bawdy comment. Shame's idea wasn't such a bad one. If Tristan didn't find something to occupy his time, he

would spend the rest of the night awake, thinking forbidden thoughts. Thoughts about Sara. “Sure. Why the hell not.”

“Good.” Shame slapped him on the back. “Go grab us a couple of beers out of the fridge, will you?”

“Yeah. You go on up and do your thing. I’ll be there in a few.”

Shame strode down the hall. He stopped at his bedroom door, his hand on the knob, and looked back at Tristan over his shoulder. “You’re coming, right?”

Tristan smirked. “Hopefully not too fast.” He tried to joke about the whole situation as if it were no big thing. When Shame didn’t respond, only stared back at him, his deep green eyes reading more into the situation than Tristan wanted him to, Tristan dropped the act. “I said I would, didn’t I?”

Shame nodded and entered his bedroom without another word, leaving the door ajar behind him.

Half an hour later, Tristan leaned against the wall, near the foot of Shame’s bed. Dressed solely in a pair of unbuttoned jeans, Tristan focused his attention on the couple writhing atop the bed. The blonde lay supine, her arms restrained to the headboard with handcuffs. Her eyes squeezed shut, the woman’s head flailed from side to side in passion. Pitiful wailing moans of ecstasy spilled from her mouth.

His partner’s head was buried between her thighs, his tongue immersed in the wet folds of her sex, ravenously devouring every drop of cream his attentions brought forth.

To say Tristan was turned-on would have been an understatement. With each breath, the heady smell of aroused bodies and clean sweat, of sex incarnate cloyed the air around them. Young and healthy, his body responded as nature intended, his cock rising proud and stubborn against the inside of his pants.

Absentmindedly, Tristan kneaded his crotch, his fingers smoothing over the rigid outline of his cock, trying to appease the beast inside.

Not for the first time that night, Tristan wished he wasn’t there. While his body craved sexual gratification, his heart lay cold and dead in his chest.

That didn't mean he was going to walk away from what Shame offered. Though raw sex was hardly succor for his soul, it was steps above his own clammy hand and the painfully cherished memories he harbored of being with Sara.

Shame's low moan of pleasure added to the slurping sounds already coming from between the blonde's firm thighs. Tristan's cock twitched within its denim prison, demanding its share of attention. Tristan pushed his thoughts away, shucked his jeans and approached the bed.

*Boxers or briefs?*

## Kiss and Tell

© 2007 Sandy Lynn

*Available now at Samhain Publishing*

Willow is having a bad day. To get her sister to stop harassing her, she agrees to play a silly game—but only once. When a muscular hunk walks past her, Willow's mouth waters and she knows she's found the perfect man to ask her embarrassing question.

Seth is shocked when a beautiful woman sits on his lap. He's amused when she begins asking him questions. But he's aroused when she kisses him. Taking her back to his home, he sinks his teeth into her—and is addicted. Imagine his surprise when he finds out she holds his life in the palm of her hands.

What's a vampire to do when the woman he needs for his survival runs screaming from him?

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Kiss and Tell*:

Willow watched in shock as Seth knelt on the elevator floor in front of her. Lifting her shirt, he kissed one erect nipple before shifting to the other, circling it with his tongue. Sucking the already tight bud into his mouth, he looked up into her face.

She knew desire was written all over her expression. How could it not be with the things he had done—was doing to her body?

A very low moan escaped her throat as he teased first one breast then the other. Her breasts ached with desire. She wasn't sure how much longer she could wait to feel him inside of her. Back and forth he altered his focus, making certain each breast received equally lavish attention.

After what felt like an eternity, the elevator finally stopped, bringing Willow back to reality once again. How was he able to make her lose herself so completely? Never before had she become so wrapped up in what was happening to her that she'd forgotten completely about her

surroundings. Yet Seth had managed to make her forget everything but him twice that evening. What if there had been another stop, and another person—or couple—had joined them inside the small car?

Seth stood quickly and, without warning, picked her up. The feel of his arms so strong around her forced her to forget her previous embarrassment. He carried her through the apartment, not pausing to show her anything, but she didn't mind. She was too entranced with this man who wove such a spell on her that she didn't bother to look around and see what his home was like.

In what felt like a few short seconds, she was standing on her own again. Glancing around, she saw she was inside of his bedroom, by a bed that—when she turned to look at it—she noticed was decadently huge.

Watching him avidly, Willow felt her mouth water as Seth pulled off his shirt, revealing a well-muscled chest with just the right amount of hair covering it. She wouldn't feel as though she were in bed with a bear, but there was plenty for her to twist her fingers in as she enjoyed nibbling on his nipples. Sitting on the bed, Seth removed his shoes next. Willow looked back up at his face, desire still coursing through her. She was surprised to find his steady gaze on her, as though he were gauging her reaction to him.

Reason once again tried to intrude on her pleasure. *How did things get this far this fast? Is this really what I want?* Questions assailed her as she pondered the wisdom of allowing things to move so quickly. She wasn't used to jumping into one-night stands.

After the unbelievable orgasm he'd given her in the bar, surrounded by people, Willow was sure he was a talented lover. No one had ever made her feel that way while in a crowded room before. Never before had she been even remotely tempted to leave a bar with a man she had just met.

Her gaze feasted on what she could see of his bare body as he stood, and the sensible side of her wondered if she should put a stop to things before his mouth made her forget everything but him once more.

Her gaze followed the trail of soft brown hair leading down to the waistband of his jeans and she licked her lips. Seth paused, grasping the

button, ready to open his pants or possibly to stop if she were to give the slightest protest.

Sensing his hesitation made her decision easier. Tonight she would forget she was the mature sister. Tonight she would be immature and selfish, taking what she wanted. And she wanted Seth. She gave herself permission to have fun and not to question every minor action, to do things that she would typically be entirely too embarrassed to try. Walking over to him, she eased his hands away from their position then unbuttoned his jeans herself as she rose to her tiptoes to place a tender kiss on his lips.

Pulling slightly away from him, she easily played the part of temptress when he tried to coax her into a deeper kiss. Tugging his jeans low, she felt them fall off of his hips. Taking a single step back, Willow admired the body now bared completely to her.

Her eyes widened as she stared at him. Having him beneath her, erect but still fully dressed, had not prepared her for just how blessed he was down there. He was huge! His cock was long, thick and hard, and it looked as if it were ready to attack.

*His body is truly amazing. To let a body like this go to waste is shameful.*

Stepping closer, she allowed her fingers to skim down his hard body. She was unable to feel so much as an ounce of spare fat on him. His muscles tensed beneath her light touch. Finally taking his erection into her hand, she stroked the velvety flesh while he looked down at her.

She felt powerful and seductive. A smile tilted Willow's lips. Lowering herself to her knees on the hardwood floor, she licked the single fat drop of moisture from the silky tip.

Seth's groan of pleasure encouraged her to continue. Guiding his cock to her lips, she traced the head with her tongue before sucking him into her mouth. She stroked him that way for a few moments, her tongue moving against the soft underside as he withdrew from her. Willow was careful to savor any moisture that escaped him. She whimpered when his hands stopped her ministrations.

“Ah, sweetheart, if you keep that up we’ll both be disappointed,” he told her. His voice was husky with desire as he pulled himself from her mouth while she pouted.

Pulling her up his body, Seth kissed Willow’s bottom lip, taking it into his mouth, ruining her pout. When the kiss ended, her shirt was off and thrown somewhere—she believed it was across the room. Her shoes and miniskirt soon followed. She wasn’t sure exactly how he managed to strip her so quickly, unable to process much of anything other than the assault on her senses. She wondered if the pleasure portion of her brain was being overloaded.

Seth picked her up once again, and crossed the remaining slight distance to his sinful bed. Seconds after he lowered her to the mattress, he joined her, his body pressing hers deeper into the soft bedding. He resumed his earlier teasing of her breasts, palming them as he kissed her deeply. Her hips arched against him and this time he was the one with a wicked grin. His mouth set a trail of fire coursing down her body everywhere it touched. She raised her hips, inviting him closer when he nipped her flesh. When she arched up, he winked at her before continuing his delicious torture. Willow was ready to end all games, to pin him to the bed, as her pussy ached to feel him buried deep inside of her.

Unmindful of how badly she wanted him at the moment, Seth seemed content to take his time. He slid his hand slowly up her leg, caressing her flesh before teasing and stroking her sex. Biting down on her lip, she closed her eyes and arched her hips as he slid his finger deep inside of her, and thrust gently.

“Oh, sweetheart, you’re so wet. I want to taste you,” he murmured, his head close to her pussy. The second the words left his mouth, his finger was replaced by his tongue.

He parted her folds, and allowed his thumb to circle her straining clit. Raising his mouth slightly, he pressed two fingers deep within her as he suckled the small bud into his mouth.

“You taste like honey.” His breath wreaked havoc on her as it met her damp flesh.

She wasn't sure what exactly turned her on more; his words, his mouth or his fingers. What was it about him that made her lose control so completely? Never before had talking dirty made her this wet, but then everything Seth did to her—everything he said—made her want him more.

“Oh God.” The moan escaped her as she felt herself straining, her muscles tensing when she felt another orgasm approaching.

“What would you like, sweetheart?” Seth sucked on her swollen bud once before continuing. “What do you want?”

“I want to feel you,” she pleaded. “All of you inside of me. Please.”



*A bizarre connection between a werewolf and a woman reveals the truth behind a pack's discarded magic lore.*

## Half Moon Rising

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*Available now at Samhain Publishing*

Private Investigator CJ Duncan can track a scent better than a bloodhound. Lately, unsettling visions of a wolf prevent her from doing her job. She sets out for Seattle to find her unknown birth father, but her quest leads her instead to a mysterious man who claims to be a werewolf.

Werewolf Trey Nolan has a secret weakness—one which leaves him powerless to protect his pack from a danger threatening to destroy their last shred of humanity. When he discovers a way to reclaim his full powers, he must act—even if it means betraying the woman he loves.

Caught up in Trey's struggle to save his pack, CJ discovers that her special powers come at a much greater cost than she ever imagined.

Enjoy the following excerpt for *Half Moon Rising*:

They sat in silence.

She watched him as he was lost in thought. Her eyes had adjusted to the darkness of the tree house enough to see the contours of his face. The devilish dimple in his chin. The straight nose. The narrow eyes with their thick eyelashes.

She had seen handsome men before. Even ones with the same dimpled chins and straight noses.

She had past lovers as handsome as Trey. Bodies as perfect. Lovers who left her unsatisfied. Left her wanting more.

Trey wasn't like them. He made her heart race and her belly heat. His scent was different.

He didn't smell like other men. Human men.

*Was Trey a werewolf?*

Even now, stuck in a wood box like a pair of sardines, she wondered what having those long legs wrapped around her would feel like. His large hand on her waist. His long fingers between her legs. Insane or a werewolf...she wanted him.

CJ inwardly cursed herself.

She was on one of the most important surveillance missions of her life. Still, she got lost in Trey's scent.

She was being an idiot.

After the second elbow to her ribs, CJ wanted him gone. Not only for her body's comfort, but also for her peace of mind. "Go wait in the Jeep. I can watch for Mario and make sure he leaves by the alley."

"No, he'd smell you. He'd run again."

Mario did have her ability. "So this strong sense of smell is a dominant trait in my family. Does my dad have it, too?" She waited for Trey to give her a clue about her old man.

He scrunched his eyebrows and snorted. "Of course he does, they...we all have it. It's a werewolf thing."

The werewolves. Again. CJ's tolerance for his fairytale was at its end.

So he smelled a little off. There had to be a rational reason for his strange scent. CJ had dealt with real monsters. They weren't werewolves. They were sick, perverted human beings.

She had to call his bluff. See if this story was insanity or his sick sense of humor. "Okay, I've decided. You're really a werewolf? Show me some proof."

Calling his bluff should make him sweat. She analyzed the smells floating across the night air.

Nothing. No anxiety spike. No salty sweat thread. Just like in the office.

"I told you. You're not going to catch me lying with your nose." He actually sounded annoyed with her.

*The nerve of him.* She wasn't the one talking nonsense. She glanced past Trey at the night sky. A half moon peeked out in the gray suburban night. "Let me guess, no full moon, right?"

Trey crossed his arms and bored into her with his glowing gold eyes. “Actually, the moon has nothing to do with shape-shifting. If it once meant something to us, we’ve forgotten.”

“Forgotten? Doesn’t seem a proper *werewolf* thing to do.” She couldn’t keep the sarcasm out of her voice. This stuff just couldn’t be true. He was too damn normal. He had to be pulling some kind of twisted joke on her.

Trey’s tongue came out and licked his full lower lip. He looked out the window, his brows furrowed in thought.

CJ’s heart skipped a beat when he turned his stare on her.

With a surprising speed, his face came down inches away from hers. “As for a proper *werewolf* thing to do, I could change form for you, but”—Trey paused and spoke the words over her lips—“the space is fairly cramped. Plus, I’d have to get naked first. I think it’s too early in our relationship for that step, don’t you?”

She stopped listening after the word naked fell from his lips.

CJ couldn’t answer him. She was too overwhelmed by his breath pouring over her face. Her resistance to his smell seeped away in his moist warm essence. She wanted to be in it, touch it, though it had no form. Lick it up and take it into her body. Her womb ached in physical pain from the desire she felt, even if he was a lunatic.

She couldn’t take his scent, but she could take him.

CJ was never coy with men. Since they usually turned out to be disappointments, she had found it better to get her sexual curiosity out of the way.

How could Trey be different? His scent was new, but take that oddity away and he was still just a man. A distraction.

In one awkward movement, she tumbled over him until she straddled his legs, pinning his shoulders to the rough board wall of the tree house. Her breasts pressed flat against his arms crossed in front of his chest.

Trey’s brows arched in surprise, but she gave him no chance to ruin this moment with any more talk of werewolves.

She pressed his lips hard with her own. Digging her fingers around his solid shoulders she ground against his jeans, the rigid zipper rough against her crotch.

Damn. He tasted like he smelled. Musky and spicy. His flavor poured across her tongue and she pushed it between his lips to savor more. He groaned under her assault, opening his lips to her penetration.

Her palms kept him pinned but he uncrossed his arms and grabbed onto her waist. His thumbs dug under her ribcage as he pulled her closer during the kiss.

She let go of his shoulders. Pushed her hands under his jacket across the thin cotton of his Henley. She could feel the heat of him. He was blazing. Heat for her. Heat from her.

He pulled away from her lips. "I want your hair down." The gravelly tone was low and urgent.

She did as he asked, reaching back to remove the black band holding her hair at the nape of her neck.

Trey moved his hands from her waist, then across the slick fabric over her breasts, weaving around her neck and finally entwining his fingers in her hair.

He grabbed it hard and yanked her face down to him, claiming her mouth. He captured her tongue. Sucked it. Stinging desire lit up her clit. She tilted her hips, driven to appease the need with the friction of their hips.

All this fabric and hard wood maddened her. The silence of the tree house was broken by the rip of the Henley's buttons being torn apart. Warning bells rang in her head, but the promise of sexual satisfaction in Trey's kiss kept her going.

Trey let her tongue slide back into her mouth. His hands slipped away from her hair. She jerked away from his embrace. "What—"

She smelled another.

They weren't alone anymore.

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