



DEFROSTING MS. BLAKE

By

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Dedication

To Apollo, without your help and support I would never have come this far. I love you.

I would like to thank Dan, a friend that is proving to be very inspiring to me. Thank you for helping me with some of the terminology.

I would also like to thank Raven, my wonderful CP, thanks for all the late night conversations! And Rose, for helping me rework a scene! I couldn't have done it without you.

To Maggie and Gail, you guys are the best, and it was a pleasure working with both of you!

Chapter 1

Nicole's back stiffened as the elevators opened. With a stern look on her face she began to walk through the maze of cubicles to her office.

"Excuse me, Ms. Blake, Conner Matthews called again to set up an appointment," her secretary told her haltingly when she reached her office.

"Ms. Grey, I have neither the time nor the patience to deal with him. You did tell him "no" didn't you?" The remark came out more of a demand than a question.

"Yes ma'am."

"Good," Nicole said without giving the woman a chance to say anything else. She opened her door, looking back at her secretary. "See that I am not disturbed before lunch."

The secretary nodded her head and Nicole entered her office, closing the door behind her. Then she froze.

"What are you doing here?" she asked the man sitting behind her desk, reclining in her chair.

She had to fight her attraction to him. He was nothing more than a pretty boy, the kind that used her to do their homework for them back in high school. Her eyes narrowed and her expression tightened.

"Well, after the eighth time your secretary refused to give me an appointment, saying you were far too busy, of course, I decided to make one myself."

Nicole turned toward the door, ready to scream at her secretary for the intrusion, and for not warning her that the man was in her office.

"Don't take it out on her. Poor Pam will probably have a heart attack if you scream at her. She didn't know I was in here." He smiled, "Or that I called for the appointment from your phone. You really should lighten up."

"Get out of my chair." Nicole waited for him to stand and walk away from her desk before moving to sit behind it. "If you have gone through..."

"I didn't. But that chair is quite comfortable. I might have to get one..."

Instantly an unwanted image came to her of him reclining in her chair, with her riding him. Her hands tangled in his beautiful red hair holding his mouth close to her breast while he...

Nicole jerked out of the fantasy without any visible signs of her lapse. As she stared at him, she was thankful that she had learned to control her blushing long ago.

“Is there a reason for this intrusion, Mr. Matthews, or did you simply wish to annoy me?” she asked, her voice chilly, as always,.

“At least now I can tell everyone that the problem isn’t your chair,” he told her with a smile.

“Problem?” she asked cocking her eyebrow.

“Yes. The “stick-up-your-ass” problem that makes you such a bitch.” His smile never wavered.

“No, actually, I have that inserted at home. I have a professional come in to assist me, otherwise it doesn’t go up far enough. Now, if there really is nothing else of any importance that you have to say, I will say good day to you.”

“Actually,” he began as he leaned on her desk, clearly ignoring her. “I was told to come by your office. You haven’t allowed security to update your systems yet.”

She simply stared at him in annoyance.

“Can I tell the guys they can update your systems? Or would you prefer that I take a hands on approach?” he asked with a grin. “I’m sure I could clear my morning, and fix any problems you may be having.”

“You can tell the guys to stay away from my computer. And if your hands get anywhere near me or my system, I’ll have you thrown out of this building faster than you can say sexual harassment.”

Conner sighed. “You really do need those updates, I heard they are important.” He got up and began to stroll to the door. “Oh, and Ms. Blake, give me a call if you ever want help removing that stick. I promise to be gentle, and it would be my pleasure to help you.” He winked and exited before she had a chance to respond.

Nicole took a moment to collect herself. Acting on her attraction to him would be nothing but trouble. She would just have to continue to tell herself that he was like every other ‘pretty boy’ she had ever met, who would only use her until he got whatever it was he was after.

Once she was once again fully in control, she buzzed her secretary. “Ms. Grey, would you please come into my office.”

When the woman entered her office, Nicole sat back in her chair. “Is there any reason you failed to mention that Mr. Matthews was waiting inside my office?”

Nicole felt the weight lift from her shoulders as she closed the door to her house. She placed her briefcase beside the door, and headed straight for the comfort of a hot shower.

Twenty minutes later, wrapped in her favorite pajamas, she booted up her computer. She sighed contentedly as she checked her email and signed into her instant message program.

Ding. She received an instant message.

tchnogk527: hey Kitty, what's up?

Smiling she typed her response.

*netktn39: not much. Just settling down. About to watch last week's Stargate.
Am sooo ready for the weekend!*

Ding.

tchnogk527: yeah, know what you mean. You're a girl right? Would you mind giving me some advice?

netktn39: hmmm... brb, let me go check.

Nicole waited a moment before typing her second response, laughing the entire time.

netktn39: yup still got breasts ;-) though, I do know a few guys that have some as well....hmmm.... guess you'll have to take my word for it. :-) What's on your mind?

tchnogk527: I know you don't talk about work, but there's this chick I work with. She is so HOT!!!! But she won't even give me the time of day...

Nicole stared at the screen, what kind of advice could she give? Hesitantly she typed.

netktn39: not sure what advice I can give you T.

tchnogk527: well, what can a guy do to get your attention? ;-)

netktn39: LOL. A sense of humor is always good. Have you tried making her laugh?

tchnogk527: yup. But I can't even make her smile.

netktn39: well, I know I'm not her, but, :-D

tchnogk527: lol.

tchnogk527: to tell the truth I don't even think she likes me... :-(

netktn39: then that's her bad. Why waste your time on someone who won't appreciate you...

netktn39: I need to start taking my own advice...LOL

tchnogk527: want to talk about it?

netktn39: thanks but nah, I'd rather just relax and have fun.

tchnogk527: cool. Will you be on later?

netktn39: :-) yup. Catch you later!

tchnogk527: sweet...tell me what you think about the ep!

netktn39: :-)

Nicole smiled as she closed the instant message box and continued checking her email.

She could still remember her first chat with T. They met in a chat room she had stumbled into. And like a white knight he had saved her from the thirty-odd requests for cybersex. They had ended up chatting until the early morning. She had given him her IM name, telling herself she wouldn't hold her breath.

But the next night he messaged her. They've been 'talking' for almost two months now.

Nicole sighed happily. She loved the internet. There, she wasn't some husky businesswoman who had to be tough. She was free to be herself. She basked in the glow that anonymity provided. No one knew who she was, or rather, they didn't know her name. No one cared what she looked like. She was simply the fun and quirky 'netkitten'.

She smiled happily as she jumped from message board to message board, reading all the new posts, spoilers for her favorite shows, and searching for suitably hot hunks to use for her desktop wallpaper.

Stretching, she got up and walked into the kitchen and fixed herself some nachos to snack on while she watched Stargate.

She settled down in her huge comfy desk chair just as the opening scenes began. *My timing is almost perfect*, she thought proudly.

She munched on her popcorn as she watched Jack O'Neill and his team save the day on a planet in a distant galaxy.

Ding.

Nicole chuckled.

tchnogk527: still there?

netktn39: of course ;-)

tchnogk527: how was the show?

netktn39: good. A bit predictable though.

tchnogk527: sorry

netktn39: n/p. what's up?

tchnogk527: I was bad... a very bad boy...

tchnogk527: Wanna come punish me? ;-)

netktn39: LOL... what did you do?

tchnogk527: shhhh... I bought a new photo program at the store.

netktn39: that's all? That doesn't sound so bad...

tchnogk527: well that isn't....

tchnogk527: but I sort of bought a new digital camera to go with it....

Nicole laughed. He certainly did live up to his name.

netktn39: LOL T.

tchnogk527: so Kitty, when are you going to let me tell you my name, so you can stop calling me T?

netktn39: I'm not. :-P

tchnogk527: why not? Where's the harm?

Nicole sighed. They'd had this same conversation three times. She smiled, shaking her head as she typed.

tchnogk527: still there?

netktn39: still here. I just like it better this way...

tchnogk527: alright....

tchnogk527: but I'm not going to give up! ;-)

netktn39: LOL. Thanks, for making me laugh. I needed that.

tchnogk527: no prob. How's that new hard drive working out for you?

*netktn39: *big smile* beautifully! I can't thank you enough for your tips!*

**sending T a cyber kiss on cheek* :-D*

tchnogk527: lol! Glad I could help.

netktn39: so what are the plans for the new camera?

tchnogk527: well, I can think of someone whose picture I would like to take...

tchnogk527: why don't you come over and let me practice my photography skills on you? We'll start on the bed, with you under a sheet, and work our way up from there... ;-)

netktn39: ROFL, sweetie, we wouldn't want to break your new camera!!

tchnogk527: lol. You're right; I have ugly sheets. We'll skip straight to the ones without the sheet...

netktn39: lol! You are outrageous!

tchnogk527: but you like that about me :-)

netktn39: :-) I must admit you certainly know how to make me smile...

netktn39: and blush!

tchnogk527: cool.

netktn39: well, I'm gonna go try to get some sleep. Thank goodness tomorrow is Friday!!

tchnogk527: ok. I'll catch you later!

netktn39: later.

Nicole signed off the program with a huge smile still on her face. Why couldn't she meet a guy like T in the real world? She wondered what he looked like.

An image of Conner Matthews popped into her head as she settled into her bed. She closed her eyes and began to imagine a man with his good looks and with T's personality.

"Yup, that would be the perfect man," she told the cat curled up beside her on the bed. "Then again," she said opening one eye and looking at her pet. "Any man that looks like Conner would never be interested in a girl like me. They're too busy dating the supermodels of the world."

She chuckled as her cat stretched and climbed up to lay down on her chest. Nicole began to rub the feline's head. "To you, Candy, I'm a giant fluffy pillow. To the rest of the world, I'm just another woman that needs to lose weight."

She sighed as she began to fall asleep.

Conner exited out of the program, and closed his laptop.

"Whether she likes it or not, her security system needs to be updated," he grumbled to the empty office.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Her perfume was light, but it lingered on her chair. He had been unable to resist sitting in it earlier, couldn't resist being surrounded by her smell. It was also the only personal touch in her office. If not for her lingering perfume, he would wonder if anyone actually worked in the room.

Conner sighed as he looked over at the screen. It would be another long night of updating her system. He wasn't sure why, but someone kept trying to break into her files...

"And as the head of security, I can't allow that to happen can I?" he asked the room.

He quickly reinforced the firewall and leaned back as he waited for his newest program to search for any back doors into the program.

He opened his laptop and smiled as he watched the feline screensaver roll across his screen.

Ok, not very masculine, he thought. But it's probably the closest I'm going to get to Kitty. He wondered what he would have done if she had agreed to let him take her picture.

Easy, after I picked my jaw up off the floor, I would have waited until tomorrow night to fix Ms. Blake's computer. No, he shook his head. Ms. Blake's computer would have come first. Ice Queen or not, she doesn't deserve to have her computer broken into.

Conner smiled as he thought of his online flirtation. Someday he would find out who Kitty was. He would meet her and at the very least give her a big hug for helping to make these late nights of programming and updating a little easier.

Chapter 2

Fighting her sigh of exasperation, Nicole stood for a moment, cool and impersonal as her coworkers joked around. Finally, their boss walked into the door.

“Alright people, quiet down. I know you’re all excited about tomorrow night. But we still have work to do today,” he teased them. “The faster we get this meeting over with, the quicker we can go back to pretending to do our jobs,” he winked broadly at the people sitting around the table.

Each person gave his or her monthly report on the progress of their department. The only person that did not attend was the head of security, but no one questioned it any longer. When it was Nicole’s turn, she gave a professional smile. “Our department has been working hard this month, we’ve managed to process practically all of the claims sent to us,” she told them, pride filling her voice. “Including all the reports we were unable to sort through last month.”

“That’s excellent news Ms. Blake, excellent! You have managed to work wonders in that department, which is why from now on Roger Hill will be working with you. Roger,” Mr. Brooks shifted his attention temporarily onto the man, “you will now report to Ms. Blake. Now that that is through, I want to thank you all very much for your hard work and effort. And,” he said his gaze turning to Nicole, “I expect to see each and every one of you at the Thomas Pharmaceuticals Anniversary celebration tomorrow night.”

As Nicole began to collect her paperwork to return to her office, Mr. Brooks stopped her. “Ms. Blake, I’d like to speak with you for just one moment, if you don’t mind.”

Nicole remained in her seat as her coworkers filed out of the room chattering happily. “Yes Mr. Brooks?” she asked politely.

“Ms. Blake I wanted to compliment you again on the way you’ve been running your department. I want you to train Roger, make progress reports and send them up to me every couple of weeks. I’m afraid the lad has been skating by with every other manager he has worked under. I trust you will see to it that he is actually trained for his job.”

“Yes Mr. Brooks,” she told him calmly. She stood up and began to head for the door.

“Oh, and Nicole,” he waited until she turned and looked back at him. “I expect to see you at the celebration as well. No excuses this year,” he told her sternly.

“I’ll be there sir,” she promised, giving no sign of her irritation, before walking out the door.

Just before she entered her office her secretary stopped her.

“Ms. Blake,” she began hesitantly.

Nicole wanted to cringe. She hadn’t wanted to scold the woman for Conner being in her office the previous morning, but at the same time she could not allow one incident to destroy the reputation she had worked so hard to achieve.

“Yes?” she asked coolly.

“Mr. Hill is waiting in your office. He insisted that you were expecting him.”

“Thank you, Ms. Grey. Please, hold all of my calls.” Nicole walked into her office and stood with her arms crossed over her chest.

She stood there for a moment her eyes narrowed as she watched him shifting her papers.

“Find what you’re looking for?” she asked finally, startling the man from his snooping.

He smiled. “I was just looking for a sheet of paper and a pen.

With a chilling look, Nicole walked behind her desk then tore off the top three sheets of paper handed him a legal pad and then, reaching inside the cup on her desk handed him a pen.

She stared at him unwaveringly as she waited for him to sit in the chair on the opposite side of her desk.

“Rule number one, Do not ever touch anything on my desk,” she told him icily as he sat down.

“Don’t touch the desk, got it,” he repeated. “So Uncle John has you training me,” he asked casually. “Why don’t we skip all the formalities? I’ll show up and you just give him a glowing report.” He winked at her conspiringly.

Nicole merely blinked. “Rule number two, I give no special treatment, no matter if your uncle is Mr. Brooks or your daddy is the president. If you show up, you will do your work. If you don’t...well, either way Mr. Brooks is going to get a factual report from me.”

“Jeez, lighten up. I heard you were a ball-buster, but this is ridiculous.”

“No, this is me on a good day. The ‘ball-busting’, as you call it, hasn’t even begun yet. You will be allowed today to move your things into the cubicle in front of my office and to familiarize yourself with what we do. Monday morning you will report to my office at exactly nine thirty and then I will give you your assignments.”

“What am I, back in school?” he grumbled.

“Exactly nine thirty, Mr. Hill,” she stood up and motioned for the door.

Roger followed her, hesitating just outside the door. “About that cubicle...”

“Yes?”

“There’s already someone working in it...”

“She will be gone in a half hour. Good day.”

Nicole watched from her door as Roger headed for the elevator. She watched until he was out of sight then walked over to the cubicle.

“Mrs. Taylor, would you please come to my office in ten minutes?”

The woman nodded and Nicole entered her office and sat down, quickly calling her boss, Mr. Brooks.

“Yes,” he answered the phone.

“Mr. Brooks, I would like you to send an authorization for two of my employees to be promoted.”

“Which two?”

“I would like Ms. Pamela Grey to be promoted from Executive Assistant to Senior Executive Assistant,” she told him, her fingers flying over her keyboard as she made the request. “And I would like Mrs. Violet Taylor promoted from Senior Assistant to Executive Assistant, reporting to Ms. Grey, then myself. With the increase in claims and our department’s resources, I feel this would be beneficial to everyone.”

“And their performance reviews?”

“Were glowing, sir. Both ladies have been a true asset to my department.”

“I’m not sure...”

“Sir, both ladies are overdue for both a raise and a promotion.” She maneuvered her mouse and with a few short clicks sent Mr. Brooks a copy of each one’s latest performance report attached to an email. “I’ve just forwarded you a copy of my evaluations of them.”

Nicole waited impatiently as she awaited his decision.

“I don’t see any problems then. When would you like the promotions to become effective?”

“Immediately, sir.”

“Very well. Your authorization code is...” Nicole typed as Mr. Brooks gave her the necessary code, pressing the send button on the email she typed during the conversation.

“Thank you very much, Mr. Brooks.” Sighing with relief, Nicole hung up the phone. She allowed herself a small smile, a rarity while she was at work. Both women truly had earned it. And despite her occasional mistakes, Nicole found herself growing fond of Pam Grey. She would never admit it, nor would she ever allow it to grow into more than a simple fondness, but the woman had definitely begun to grow on her.

Straightening her face and removing all traces of a smile, she buzzed her secretary. "Please come into my office immediately."

"Yes, Ms. Blake?" she asked once she was inside the office.

"Effective today, you will no longer be my executive assistant..."

The woman's face fell, she grew pale and looked almost as if she were about to pass out.

"Oh, good grief woman, sit down," she scolded.

Mechanically, the woman sat down and reached for a tissue from the box that sat on the edge of Nicole's desk. "I understand, Ms. Blake. I will have my things cleared out of my desk by the end of today."

"Why would you do that? If you would allow me to finish speaking," she shot an annoyed look to her secretary, "you would find out that I have just been informed that you have been promoted. You are now my Senior Executive Assistant, and Mrs. Taylor will now be reporting directly to you. She will now be in charge of the senior staff, allowing you to concentrate on other important duties."

Pam Grey's mouth dropped open. "Yes Ms. Blake. Thank you Ms. Blake..."

"Please don't thank me. You will have to remove your personal belongings from the second desk out front, and I expect you to show Mrs. Taylor what will be expected of her."

Pam nodded her head, taking notes. "When shall I start Ms. Blake?"

"I expect Mrs. Taylor in my office momentarily. I will be giving her the news and then she will begin to clear out her cubicle and move to the other desk immediately."

Pam nodded her head and exited the office. Almost immediately she opened the door once again for Mrs. Taylor, a smile curving her lips.

Nicole completed her speech again with Mrs. Taylor, thankfully uninterrupted this time.

By the end of the day, she was more than ready to go home. She would take a shower, then run to the movie store and have a nice relaxing night.

As always, the farther she got from her office the less rigid her spine seemed to grow. She was nearly at her car when it happened.

"Nicole, I hear you will be attending the celebration tomorrow night."

"Yes, I am Mr. Weiser. Now if you will excuse me..."

"Really, Nicole," he shook his head. "Must we play these games? Call me Phillip. This will be the first time you've come to one of these functions, won't it? Well, the first since we broke up," he smirked.

Nicole wanted to smack the irritating smirk off of his face. What had she ever seen in him?

“The first time in several years, yes.”

“Good, good. I’ll make sure to say hello, introduce you to my new fiancé,” he told her smugly.

“I look forward to meeting her,” she told him, showing him nothing more than the cool exterior she always wore at work.

Deflated by her lack of interest, Phillip quickly said goodbye and hurried to his car.

Nicole sighed when she finally arrived home.

Seething from Phillip’s words, she decided to go shopping. If she had to go to the celebration, she at least wanted a nice dress to wear, something Phillip had not already seen her in. She collapsed into her desk chair. *Does every single sales woman have to suggest I invest in some torture device to make me look thinner?*

She hated shopping and had been forced to deal with petite woman trying to show her some of the ugliest dresses she had seen in a very long time.

Her patience was near its end, she allowed her computer to sign her into all the various programs as she fixed herself a calming glass of wine.

She took a sip, smiling as she read her screen.

tchnogk527: Hey Kitty.

tchnogk527: Kitty?

technogeek27: Here Kitty, Kitty...Here Kitty, Kitty, Kitty....

She laughed as she typed her response.

netktn39: LOL!! Sorry, was getting wine...

tchnogk527: Cool...My next line was gonna be: Cat got your tongue? ;-)

netktn39: LOL. Thanks for that. I needed to smile.

tchnogk527: another long day?

netktn39: Very. But I’d rather not talk about it...

Nicole felt her tension drain away as T made her laugh. Times like this she was tempted to ask him to meet her. She smiled as she imagined how much fun it would be to spend the night laughing with him at what she was sure was going to be a very boring function.

She laughed until her ribs hurt as she imagined the look on her coworkers faces if they ever saw her laughing and having fun. She knew what they said about her, what they called her.

netktn39: I need to get off of here...Gotta get up early...

tchnogk527: Got a big date? And here I thought I was special... :-(;-)

netktn39: I wish! No got to go shopping

tchnogk527: Cool... gonna buy a cute skimpy nightie for me to take pics of you in? ;-)

netktn39: LOL...You don't give up do you?

tchnogk527: nope. :-D

netktn39: good night T.

tchnogk527: Night Kitty.

Finally, Nicole thought exasperated. After having to spend half her day off looking, she finally found a dress. More importantly, it was a dress that didn't make her look like a tacky sofa.

She showered and pulled her hair back in a French Roll and added just a touch of make up to complete her look. Finally, she put on her dress and heels.

Forty minutes later, she was standing around the decorated room. There was a huge banner proclaiming Thomas Pharmaceuticals over the entry, silver and white balloons and crepe decorations hanging everywhere. Nicole wanted desperately to leave, but knew she had to stay, at least until her boss arrived. She had to fight the urge to sigh.

"Nicole, there you are. I don't believe you've met Brigit, my fiancé," Phillip told her with a smile. "Brigit, this is one of my co-workers, Nicole."

"Is she one of the people that work under you?" Brigit asked. Her voice reminded Nicole of the tone most people used when talking to babies.

Phillip nodded as his smile grew larger.

Nicole looked at the woman on her ex's arm while they spoke as if she weren't there. Could he have picked a woman that was more different from her? The woman's stylishly cut blonde hair looked perfect on top of her super-thin body. She looked as if she could easily be a magazine cover model.

Which of course, was the reason he wanted you to meet her you idiot, she told herself.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," Nicole said, civilly.

"I thought you said she was a jealous bit..." she stopped abruptly.

"Ms. Blake, what a pleasant surprise to see you tonight," Conner said as he quickly approached the trio. "You look beautiful, if I may say so," he smiled.

Conner Matthews, almost irresistible on any given day at work in his jeans, should be illegal dressed in a fine suit, Nicole decided then. His beautiful red hair was brushed back out of his face and

his chocolate eyes sparkled with mischief. She wanted to step over to him and find out if his lips tasted as soft and delicious as they looked.

“Thank you,” she told him as she noticed the petite Brigit smiling brightly at Conner.

“Ms. Blake?” Phillip asked with a chuckle.

Nicole closed her eyes and began counting backwards. *This is why I do not come to these functions*, she reminded herself. As soon as she was back in control, she opened her eyes to see everyone staring at her.

“Some people know how to show respect,” she responded cattily.

Phillip was annoyed. Brigit was confused. Conner looked amused.

“Well then, *Nicole*, why don’t you show some and introduce us?”

“You’re the *boss* Phillip, I would think you would know one of your own employees,” she threw back.

“Ms...Nicole, why don’t I take you to get a drink,” Conner smiled as he began to guide her towards the bar and away from the couple.

“Mr. Matthews...” she began coolly then froze. “Thank you,” she told him sincerely.

“Did you just thank me? Aren’t you afraid you’ll lose your tough gal image if you go around thanking people,” he teased.

Nicole wanted to chuckle at his joke. *At least he hadn’t asked if her face had cracked from the effort to be nice...* “I thank people...I just don’t let it go to their heads. And believe me this will change nothing at work.”

“I would be disappointed if it did,” he winked at her as he sat down beside her at the bar.

Nicole felt the impact of the wink through her entire body. *Why oh why had she come tonight?*

She needed to stop his flirtation once and for all.

“What would you like to drink?” the bartender asked.

“Red wine,” she responded automatically.

“I’ll have the same, thanks,” Conner told the bartender.

“Well, since I just saved you over there, do you think you can call me Conner? You know, just for tonight,” he added playfully.

“Mr. Matthews...” Nicole began as her fingers absentmindedly stroked the stem of her wineglass.

“Conner,” he corrected.

“Fine. Conner, I’m sure you have other people you would prefer to spend this evening with. I plan on leaving just as soon as Mr. Brooks arrives.”

“Actually, I’m fine where I am,” he smiled.

Nicole stalled her answer with a sip from her glass.

“Dance with me,” Conner said standing up.

“I don’t dance,” she replied.

“You do tonight.” He pulled her onto the floor as a slow song began to play.

“Mr. Matthews....”

He pulled her closer. “Conner,” he corrected gently.

“Conner, this is not appropriate. I do not...fraternize with my coworkers.”

“Then this is fine, because this, Nicole, is dancing.”

Pull it together Nicole. That was just your imagination, no one can say a name and make it feel like a caress...

He pulled her close, and for a moment, she considered pushing him away and storming off the dance floor. But his arms felt so good wrapped around her, and she was growing tired of always being proper and rigid around him. Tired of denying herself even the simplest of pleasures whenever her coworkers were around.

This isn’t good, she told herself, feeling her cool exterior trying to melt. Unable to just walk away, she closed her eyes enjoying the smell of his cologne as he held her tight while the romantic song played. It was soft, subtle, expensive... Nicole wanted to bury her nose in his neck and allow him to become her main source of air.

When the song ended, she moved to walk off the floor but Conner wouldn’t allow it.

“Loosen up, you’re already out here. Have a little fun tonight, Nicole,” he told her still grasping her hand in his. “What’s the worst thing that could happen?”

As if his question jinxed her, Phillip walked up to them.

“Nicole, you really have changed. I don’t remember you being such an avid dancer,” he told her. “But hey, it has been a few years, right?”

“I still don’t dance,” she tugged her hand free from Conner’s grip. She stood there feeling like a fool when Brigit moved to stand between the two men. *She is the type of girl that a man like Conner has on his arm, not me*, she told herself firmly. *Look at them, they compliment each other so well...*

“Excuse me,” she said as she headed back to the bar and finished her glass of wine in one giant gulp.

“I didn’t mean to embarrass you out there, Nicole.” Phillip told her when she sat the glass down. She ignored him and ordered another glass.

“Let me make it up to you. Will you dance with me?” Phillip asked as another slow song began to fill the air. “This used to be our song,” he reminded her.

“What about Brigit?”

“Don’t worry about her. She’s dancing with that guy, Conner. What do you say?”

Nicole drank the entire contents of her second glass of wine and just sat her glass back on the bar as Mr. Brooks joined them.

“Ms. Blake, what a pleasure to see you here. I was wondering if you might have the chance...”

“I’m sorry to interrupt you, John,” Phillip broke in. “But Nicole and I were just about to have a friendly dance.”

“Please, don’t let me stop you. Ms. Blake deserves to have fun tonight, she works hard for us. Go on,” he encouraged.

Trapped in a dance with her ex, Nicole followed him back out on the floor. As he placed his arms around her, she couldn’t help comparing him to Conner. Conner had made her feel secure, and tingly, wanting to throw all caution aside and pull him down into a kiss. Phillip left her feeling cold.

“I do hope that we can still be friends, Nicole.”

“Phillip it’s been three years and this is the first time you’ve spoken to me, other than yesterday afternoon. What do you want?”

“What makes you think I want anything?” he asked, an obviously fake smile on his lips.

She didn’t even bother dignifying his question with a response.

“I simply wanted to make sure that you had enough time to get over our little breakup...”

“Phillip, I already have the exact relationship I want with you. None,” she pulled away from him as the song ended and walked back over to the bar. Nicole wanted to wipe herself off. She felt as though there were bugs crawling on her flesh in every spot that Phillip had touched her. It was only through sheer determination that she didn’t.

She typically would not drink more than two glasses of wine, especially when she wasn’t tucked safely into her own home, but tonight she would.

By the time Conner was beside her again, she finished her third glass.

Chapter 3

Conner wanted to punch Phillip. He wasn't sure why, maybe it was because the man seemed to take so much pleasure in making Nicole unhappy. Maybe it was because he flaunted the fact that she was his ex. He had been severely tempted when the man interrupted their dance.

She had just started to loosen up when that jerk walked up. *Or at least I think she was beginning to loosen up. After all, she had called me Conner...*

He had been even less pleased when he saw the man with his arms around Nicole as Phillip's fiancée, Betty, or whatever her name was, tried to paw him.

Finally, he had been able to make it back over to where she was sitting at the bar.

"Nicole?" he asked, concern filling his voice.

"Conner, what are you doing here? You're supposed to be off with Miss Blonde in a bottle."

He chuckled. She was tipsy. "I don't want to be with her, Nicole," he told her with a smile.

"Of course you do. She's thin and blonde and has the IQ of a," her face scrunched in concentration. "Of a...deer."

"Actually, I'm quite happy to stay right here with you."

"That's so sweet," she told him, tilting her head to the side.

"Why don't we get you out of here?" He cringed at the thought of anyone finding out she was on her way to being intoxicated. She wouldn't live it down at the office. And as much as he would like to see her loosen up and have fun, she didn't need to embarrass herself in front of everyone.

"But I just ordered another drink..." She tried to look sternly at him. "Don't try any funny business Mister," she warned him.

"I won't. Scout's honor." He helped her to stand up, and discreetly guiding her, managed to help her leave without anyone noticing her odd behavior.

"Give me your keys," he told her.

Without hesitation, she handed them over. "You're right, I shouldn't be driving," she said as he put his arm around her to guide her to his car.

"You can come get your car in the morning, I'll take you home. Let's get you inside," he told her as he helped her climb in the passenger seat of his SUV. "Where do you live?" he asked a moment later as he started the engine.

“I’m not going to tell you.”

“Nicole, how can I take you home if you don’t tell me?”

She turned to the driver’s side and leaned close to him. “You were flirting with me earlier,” she commented.

“Yes, I was,” he admitted. “Nicole, how much wine did you drink?” Saying her name had become almost an addiction that night.

“Three glasses, maybe four,” she said scooting a little closer to him.

Conner’s eyes dropped to her lips, she was so close...but the gentleman in him refused to take advantage of an intoxicated woman.

“You want to kiss me,” she commented again.

He hesitated wondering how much to admit to. “Yes,” he responded, deciding he preferred to be honest.

“Will you?”

He was in shock. Had she just asked him to kiss her? *Down boy, it’s just the wine...* “No.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t take advantage of women when they are drunk.”

Nicole leaned closer to him, over the console. “Then I guess it’s a good thing I’m not drunk. So now, we have a new question. Would you stop me if I kissed you?”

Again, he was stunned. He would never have believed this side of her existed. *She’s acting almost playful...*

Conner opened his mouth to answer when she swooped in. She didn’t wait to find out what he would do, what he wanted to say.

Her lips pressed against his and the world melted away. He groaned when she slid her tongue into his mouth, taking possession of him. She held his head, preventing him from pulling back just yet, teasing him until she lured his tongue into her own mouth where she sucked on it greedily.

When she finally released him from their kiss, he knew he wanted more. His body had never been so hard, so ready for a woman before.

“I really should take you home,” he finally managed to tell her. He hoped she didn’t notice how hard he had to grip the steering wheel to keep from pulling her over into his lap and continuing their kiss. And seeing just how far this fun version of Nicole would go.

“I told you. I’m not telling you where I live,” she said stubbornly, still leaning close to him.

“Then where can I take you?”

Nicole, who never smiled at work, flashed a brilliant smile. He almost forgot to listen to what she was saying as he stared at how much more beautiful her face became.

“It seems we have three options. One, I could drive myself home. But I don’t drive when I’ve been drinking, so that’s out. Two, you can take me to a nearby hotel and drop me off and I will come back in the morning. Or Three, we can go back to your place.”

Conner couldn’t breathe for a moment. Had she just said what he thought she did? “Did you just say we could go back to my place?” His mouth watered when she nodded her head. “And,” he stopped to clear his throat. “What exactly will we do when we get there?” he asked, amazed that he was able to keep his voice at a normal tone.

She smiled again, raising her finger to trace his lips. “We can figure that out when we get there,” she told him huskily.

“Nicole, I don’t want...”

She silenced him by pulling him toward her for another kiss. Just before her lips touched his, she whispered, “You’re thinking too much.”

He was amazed he didn’t get into an accident as he drove back to his apartment. All he was able to concentrate on was the beautiful woman sitting in his car, and the kisses they had shared.

He was annoyed that she climbed out of the vehicle before he had the chance to open her door for her, but decided not to grumble about it.

Ten long minutes and one too slow elevator ride later, they were standing inside his apartment.

“Nice place,” she complimented him sitting down on his burgundy sofa.

“Thank you.” Now that she was here, he felt awkward; like he was fifteen again.

“Why don’t you join me,” she invited.

Conner hesitated again. He should take her into the bedroom and do the gentlemanly thing, sleeping out on the couch.

Yeah, right, like I’d get any sleep knowing that she was tucked between my sheets...

“Nicole,” he started, but again she wouldn’t allow him to finish.

“You’re thinking too much again,” she stood up and glided over to where he still stood. “Let’s see if we can’t fix that, shall we?”

His breath caught in his throat as he felt her hands slide over his shirt to his shoulder, tugging his jacket off as they moved down his arms.

“Feeling better yet?” she asked playfully.

Conner could only nod as he watched her.

Nicole's eyes left his face as she began to slowly unbutton his shirt.

Conner's eyes drifted shut from the sheer pleasure of her touch as her lips began to kiss every new inch of flesh that she exposed. She pulled his shirt out of his pants and, this time teasing his nipples with her nails, before allowing his shirt to fall to the floor.

"You have the most beautiful chest, not too much hair, but not completely bare either. Just the way I like it," she told him, her palms flat against his chest, a second before she lightly bit his nipple.

He couldn't stop the half-gasp, half-moan that escaped his mouth.

"And your arms," her voice trailed off as she moved her hands to his shoulders, then slid them down the muscular biceps.

She continued to caress his body, as her hands made their way down to his pants. She quickly managed to unbutton them and had the zipper halfway down before he stopped her.

"What about you? Do I get to see you too?" he asked watching her face.

"You don't want to look at me..." she told him.

"Yes, I do," he quickly pulled his zipper back up and buttoned his pants. Then moving quickly so she wouldn't have time to stop him, he bent down and picked her up, gently cradling her close to his chest.

"Put me down, you're going to hurt yourself," she said squirming.

Conner walked as quickly as he could to his bedroom. He couldn't wait to have her on his bed, squirming underneath him as he removed every item of clothing, piece by delicious piece.

"I told you, you were going to hurt yourself," she said quickly sitting up when he placed her on his bed. "I'm too heavy to be carried around like that."

"No, Nicole, you're not. I couldn't wait any longer to get you on my bed." He sat down beside her, and then kissed her.

His hands slowly caressed every inch of her back. He ended the kiss and began to pull her zipper down.

"Don't," she told him, her voice shaking as she turned her face away from him.

Conner applied a gentle pressure on her chin until she was looking at him again. Then he lowered his mouth to hers. His kiss was gentle, persuasive. He traced her lower lip with his tongue, dipping it inside her mouth for only a second before retreating. He continued to tease her with his mouth until he was sure all she felt was her desire for him. His hands continued to stroke and caress, gently continuing their mission to unzip her dress as his lips held her complete attention.

When the kiss ended, he quickly got off the bed, pulling her up with him. He shifted his attention to her neck, nuzzling it before he began to kiss it and trace a trail up to her ear with his tongue. He gently bit her ear as he began to pull her dress off.

This time when he pulled away from her, she was standing in front of him dressed only in her bra, underwear, and thigh high stockings.

As soon as Nicole realized that she was no longer fully dressed she tried to cover her body with her hands, blushing all over.

“You are so beautiful,” he told her reverently. Her blush only made him want her more.

“You don’t have to say that,” she told him, refusing to look at him. “I know I’m too...big.”

“You are beautiful,” he insisted. She kept her face turned from him, so he began to nibble on her shoulder. “I wouldn’t lie to you about that. You have no idea what you do to me do you?” he asked as he began to unhook her bra. Prying her hands from her stomach where she tried to cover some imagined flaw, he tugged the straps down and dropped it onto the floor, cupping her generous breasts in his hand, his thumbs grazing her tight nipples.

Releasing one breast he guided her hand to the front of his pants, where his erection strained, trying to free itself from the confines of his clothing.

She gasped as she felt the extent of his desire.

“This is what you do to me. Tell me, is that lying? You are the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen,” he told her kissing a path down to the swell of her breast.

She gasped when he took her nipple into his mouth, once more setting her body on fire.

He kneeled, kissing her thigh as he pulled first one stocking then the other slowly off her body.

Nicole looked down at the man kneeling in front of her. She couldn’t believe how unbelievably hot she felt. She tried to pull him up. He didn’t stand, but he did pull slightly away.

“What’s wrong?” Conner asked her concerned.

Nicole smiled. She knew he was wondering if she had changed her mind. Just as she knew he would stop if she asked him to.

“Please get up,” she asked him.

“Do you want me to stop?” he asked seriously.

“No, it’s just...” she forgot her protest and her eyes closed when he kissed her inner thigh again, this time swirling his tongue on her flesh.

She felt him pulling her underwear down then felt his breath hot against her neatly trimmed mound.

Her fingers tangled in his hair as his tongue began to inch its way up her thigh to her waiting sex. She accidentally jerked his head back when his tongue slid warm and wet over her aching bud.

“I won’t do anything you don’t want me to do, Nicole,” he told her causing her to shiver. He said her name as if it were an endearment, it felt almost like a caress...

To her surprise, he gently untangled her hands from his thick hair and stood up. Before she could protest, he picked her up and placed her back on the bed.

“You’re going to hurt yourself if you keep doing that,” she insisted more self-conscious about her weight than being naked.

“No, I won’t. You aren’t heavy,” he told her.

“Conner...” He stopped her with a kiss.

“No arguing with me. You aren’t heavy.”

“Yes...” He stopped her again this time by swirling his tongue around her nipple.

The man should definitely be illegal, she thought as she fought back a moan.

He nibbled his way down her body until he was once more kneeling between her legs.

He leaned down sliding his tongue across her glistening folds.

“You’re already wet for me,” he said with a large smile on his face. Then he buried his face in her, his tongue exploring, caressing, teasing her body until Nicole thought she was going to explode from desire.

“Oh God, Conner,” she panted as he slid a finger inside of her while his tongue stroked her bud.

“Mmmmmmmm,” the sound vibrated against her already sensitive flesh and nearly made her come.

“Conner,” she pleaded, reaching for him, trying to tug him up to her. She wanted to feel him inside of her. And she wanted it now.

“Yes, Nicole?” he asked his breath chilling against her moist flesh only seemed to make her hotter, wetter.

“Conner...” she couldn’t think with his fingers pumping in and out of her like that. She couldn’t even remember feeling him add a second one, he was doing such wicked things to her body with his tongue.

“I love hearing you moan my name,” he told her with a wink. “You’re so tight, Nicole...” He dipped his head to continue torturing her, but she yanked on his hair purposefully this time.

“Conner!”

“So demanding,” he smiled. Then with a quick kiss to her bud he sat up and slowly pulled his fingers out of her.

Nicole wanted to cry from their loss. She was about to complain, to beg him to come back to her and not leave her stranded, so close to orgasm.

As she watched he quickly pulled off his shoes and remaining clothing, and opened the drawer of his nightstand. He ripped open the condom wrapper and slid one on his mammoth erection. As soon as he finished he climbed back on the bed beside her.

More than ready to feel him deep inside her, Nicole sighed as he shifted on top of her, and guided himself into her waiting pussy.

“Oh Jeez, Nicole,” he moaned, holding himself still. “Oh God...”

Before she could ask him what was wrong, he took her mouth in a savage kiss as his hips began thrusting.

“I wanted this to be special...to last...but...” his hips began to thrust harder, faster. “Oh God, Nicole. I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

But she barely heard his apology, his promise. He felt so good filling her over and over again that she didn’t care how long it lasted. Her eyes drifted shut as her body tensed with her impending orgasm.

Nicole didn’t even know what she screamed as the world shattered in an amazing burst of color behind her closed eyelids. Her entire body shuddered from the force of her pleasure.

Conner continued to pump hard and fast into her for another minute before he gave his own passionate cry and collapsed on top of her. He lay on top of her, their sweat mingling, his weight comforting her for a few minutes before he climbed off the bed to dispose of the used condom.

The woman in her roared with pride as she noticed his legs shaking slightly.

When he came back to the bed, he gathered her close to him, wrapping his arms around her. He kissed her shoulder then worked his way up her neck to her mouth.

“That was...” he began.

Nicole looked away from him. She couldn’t take it if he regretted what they had just done.

“Nicole, look at me.” He didn’t continue until she was once again looking into his eyes. “I’m at a loss for words. I don’t want to call it incredible, because it was so much more than that.”

He leaned down and captured her mouth. It was a gentle lingering kiss. When it ended, Nicole could feel him once again hot and hard against her hip.

“But we just finished...” she stammered.

“I’m sorry you’re right. You’re probably too sore. But what can I say? He has a mind of his own.” A lock of hair fell over Conner’s eyes, making him look even more boyishly handsome.

“A mind of his own? Then tell me, how do you know what he wants? He could be pissed, saying ‘Hey, quit shoving me around, you’re not the boss of me’. Maybe he doesn’t enjoy being wrapped in plastic and shoved in dark places. Maybe he’s afraid of the dark,” she teased.

Nicole couldn’t help but smile when he laughed at her comment.

“Trust me, he definitely was not afraid. And he is not pissed. That felt too good for him to feel anything but happy. I know what he wants, Nicole, because I want the same thing. And we both want more of you.”

“But are you sure you can handle it?” she asked feeling mischievous, as she came to a half-sitting position. “I mean, I’d be horribly disappointed if you promised to rise to the occasion, but halfway through the voyage, your buddy yelled, ‘abandon ship’.”

Conner lay down, completely on his back, raised his arms, closed his eyes and smiled broadly. “Do with me what you will...”

“And the condoms?” she asked.

“Top drawer,” his smile grew larger, “help yourself.”

Nicole took him up on his challenge. She leaned over him and pulled out the box of condoms. “Only a twelve pack?” she teased, straddling him, his erection just in front of her stomach.

“Didn’t know you were coming over,” he responded. “Or I’d have been better prepared.”

As she watched, Conner’s eyes flew open in surprise when she grasped his cock. Nicole’s fingers teased his cock, sliding up and down the length then circling the tip with her fingertip. He was still sticky from his semen. She quickly wiped of the drop of pre-cum, and lifted it to her lips.

She watched his eyes hungrily follow her finger and decided to tease him farther. She sucked on her finger, and made a small sound in her throat.

“Mmm, yummy.” She inched down his body until her head was level with his waist, careful to watch his face every minute.

“Nicole,” he said his voice strained.

“Yes, Conner?” she asked, her mouth close enough to flick across the tip and cause another drop of moisture to appear. “Would you like something?”

He nodded, but she didn’t wait to hear his answer. She didn’t want to hear, ‘turn out the lights’ so he could pretend she was someone else. Instead she took him in her mouth, teasing him mercilessly.

“Oh God,” he groaned as his hands clutched to find a grip on her and his hips began to thrust into her mouth.

He growled when she stopped. The sound was deep and sexy, causing a flash flood to run through her sex. She lifted up just enough to wrap her hands around him, and put the condom on.

Growling as she positioned herself above him, Conner pulled her down and buried himself inside her.

“Will you take your hair down? I want to see it loose,” he asked as she began to raise herself slightly.

Stilling her movements and causing him to groan as he tried unsuccessfully to thrust inside her, Nicole pulled the pins out of her hair until it was hanging down her back. She leaned forward and smiled as a few strands tickled his chest.

She watched as Conner wrapped a strand around his finger and tugged her head down for a kiss.

She kept their pace slow, teasing, as she began to ride him. She watched as his hands cupped her breasts, and smiled, bending lower, closer to him. Conner sucked one of her large nipples into his mouth.

Nicole moaned when he gently bit down. She felt himself rise to his elbows. Once in position he kissed her again. Somehow in that kiss he managed to lean her back until she was on her back and he was once again on top of her.

“Such a tease,” he said as his mouth sought out her neck.

Nicole was lost to everything but the pleasure she found in Conner’s arms. As his movements became more forceful, she felt his mouth pulling on her neck.

Her fingers formed into claws as she came closer and closer to orgasm. She moved them up and down his back, moaning her pleasure as he increased his thrusts. Digging the nails of both hands into his buttocks, she began to moan “oh God! Don’t stop!”

Thankfully he obeyed her. Conner continued increasing both the pressure and the speed until her world shattered from the intense pleasure.

He buried his head in her shoulder as he shouted his satisfaction, muffling the words he said as he came, but Nicole did not care.

This time when he came back to the bed Conner spooned tightly against her.

“Goodnight, Nicole,” he breathed into her hair.

“Goodnight, Conner,” she sighed as she fell asleep, his arm around her waist, keeping her close to him.

Chapter 4

Nicole smiled as she woke up. She didn't want to open her eyes yet, didn't want to lose the fantasy she had just had. Whatever she had eaten before bedtime, she needed to stock up on it. She had just had the most delicious dream. She dreamt that she spent the night in Conner's arms. She began to stretch, her neck was surprisingly stiff, and she froze when she felt warm skin beneath her fingertips, skin that did not belong to her.

Oh shit!

She opened one eye slightly, but both flew open when she saw the man lying on his side next to her, facing her and still fast asleep. His hair was tousled and even in sleep Conner had a smile on his face.

Her heart wanted to melt. *It wasn't a dream! He really did say all those wonderful things to me!*

Very gently she sat up in the bed, clutching the sheet to her chest. Inch by slow inch she slid to the side of the bed and eased her weight off, praying that he didn't wake up.

Finally free of the bed she looked around, and began putting on the discarded clothing from the night before. Her face grew hot when she saw the five opened condom packages on the table beside his bed. And beside them was a clock.

It's almost noon! I haven't slept this late since... When was the last time I've slept this late, she wondered.

Her heels in her hand, Nicole tiptoed into the living room, wincing slightly at the stiffness in her neck and legs. She picked up the phone to call a cab when she remembered she wasn't sure where she was. She had been too busy flirting with Conner to pay attention to where he lived. Looking around, she was thankful when she saw some unopened junk mail lying on the top of his kitchen counter.

Covering the mouthpiece of his phone so she wouldn't have to speak too loudly, she called a cab company and gave them the address. As quickly and quietly as she could, Nicole let herself out of his apartment and went downstairs to wait for her taxi.

An hour later she was back in the safety of her home. She looked at her computer, wanting more than anything to talk with her friend T about what happened last night, but she for some reason she just couldn't seem to log on.

I just need a hot soak, she told herself.

Nicole filled her large sunken tub with steaming water and submerged until the only parts of her above water were from her shoulders up. She felt the tension and stiffness melting away as the warm water cradled her.

What am I going to do? I've just made a huge mistake, she thought as the water relaxed her muscles. *How can I work with him every day and act as though nothing happened?*

Because you have to, a stronger voice inside her head said.

"How can I? All I have to do is just *think* about last night and I smile," she confessed to her empty bathroom.

"I'll just have to work twice as hard. Besides, it's not like it meant anything to him," she said out loud as she finally climbed out of the tub and wrapped herself in a robe. "And, I'm not going to let one night ruin what I've worked so hard for. If he thinks that just because we had incredible sex that I'm going to be nice to him and allow him to get away with anything he wants, he has another think coming."

She wiped off the fogged up mirror and flinching from her image tried to tame her hair.

"It's not like he knows it was the most incredible sex I've ever haaa...Ahhhhh!" Nicole screamed as she finally saw the dark purple mark on her neck. "What did he do? I'm going to kill him!"

She worked half the afternoon trying different combinations and amounts of concealer and foundation with no luck. Either there wasn't enough make-up to hide the mark, or there was too much, and it was obvious she was trying to cover something.

Grumbling she went into her closet and dug out her old turtlenecks, trying one on just to be sure it would be hidden.

"That'll hide it," Nicole smugly told her cat who lay on the bed watching her, disdainfully. "But I'm going to need more than three," she sighed. "Great, I have to waste another day out shopping. At least it's been chilly enough that I can get away with this. Candy, I swear the next time I get ordered to a company get together, I'm calling in dead."

She quickly finished getting dressed and went out on her mission.

Conner buried his face deeper in the pillow. He could almost smell Nicole's perfume on it. He smiled as he rolled onto his back, fully prepared to go back to sleep and continue his erotic dreams. He groaned as he felt a slight pain in his back.

Of all the luck..., he thought grumpily as he felt his dream pull farther and farther away.

As he attempted to sit on the edge of the bed he fell off. *What the...*, he wondered as he felt more pain in his ass. *What got into my bed this time?*

Grumbling, he walked into the bathroom to try to use the full length mirror to see what was on his back that was causing it to hurt so badly.

His mouth fell open as he twisted around and saw the long scratches.

“My ass looks like a pincushion! One, two, three...five...eight...ten,” he twisted even more to look at the other side, “eleven...thirteen...sixteen...twenty.” He winced again as his fingers brushed over one of the crescent shaped wounds. “She tore me up,” he absently admitted.

But what a way to go! He would trade a night with her for being able to sit down comfortably for a few days anytime. Sitting is definitely over-rated. He couldn’t help feeling disappointed that she wasn’t beside him when he woke up.

A smile crept to his face as he walked back into his bedroom and saw the five wrappers on the bedside table. She had been insatiable! *More beautiful and more passionate than I could have ever hoped for.*

Conner closed his eyes; he could see her, with her hair flowing over her breasts, trying to cover a shy nipple that was determined to peek out. He felt his body begin to stir and opened his eyes. He would never complain about her severe hairstyles at work again. The mere thought of her hair hanging loose was enough to make him hard even now.

It had been too long since his body had been so aware of a woman. He wasn’t sure he’d ever be able to get enough of her.

His stomach began to growl. *Maybe she had woken up hungry as well and just went to fix something to eat.* “Nicole?” he called walking through the apartment. Conner went through each room, calling her name, but she wasn’t there. He frowned when he noticed the cordless phone sitting beside the junk mail.

He pressed redial and was rewarded with “Tony’s Taxi Service, how can we help you?”

“Sorry, wrong number,” he mumbled. Part of him couldn’t believe that she had snuck out like that. His anger began to rise. “I would have taken you back to your car,” he grumbled as he fixed himself a bowl of cereal.

His pride stung. A night filled with passionate sex and she couldn’t even give him a kiss and say thanks, or leave her number. Well, he would just have something to say about that when he saw her at work on Monday.

“If she even shows up,” he muttered.

I need to talk to someone. Taking another look at the clock he nodded and booted up his laptop. *Kitty's usually on by now, I'm sure she'll be able to give me some advice.*

He waited all afternoon, making sure to turn the volume up so he would hear the alert if she logged on while he fixed himself a snack, and later, supper.

Frustrated, he sent her an email just before he climbed into bed, telling her he needed to talk to her when she had the chance

The next day, as Conner stood in the elevator he couldn't believe how nervous he was. It was worse than the first day of school, worse than wondering if Suzy, the first girl that let him go to third base, had laughed at him when he left.

The doors opened and he stepped out onto Nicole's floor. He made a beeline for her office.

"I'd like to see Ni...Ms. Blake please," he told Pam.

"What is this regarding?" she asked.

What could he say? Personal matters? *No, that would have the office gossips working full-time to find out what sort of personal matter.* Business? *No, too easy to find out it was a lie.* He was tempted to just say 'Look, we had sex and she left without a word and I want to find out why'. *But that would destroy her reputation.*

"Just ask her if she'll see me, I'm sure she's aware of the reason I wish to speak with her."

Pam Grey picked up the phone and buzzed her boss. "Ms. Blake, Conner Matthews is here to see you. Yes, ma'am." Putting the phone down, Pam turned her attention on him again. "I'm sorry she is much too busy at the moment, but you can try back later."

Try back later? Why? So she could just have her secretary give him another lame excuse?

"Please leave a message for her to contact me as soon as she has a moment," he told Pam politely.

"I'll see that she gets your message."

Feeling frustrated he walked away. The rest of his work day did not get better. Finally after what felt like a week rather than eight hours, he was able to go home.

He logged on and waited for Kitty to appear, but again, she didn't log on that night.

Nicole sighed as she adjusted her turtleneck. She hated the things; that's why she had so few of them. But what else could she do? She certainly wasn't going to call in sick, nor could she simply show up with a hickey the size of Delaware on the side of her neck. She would simply have to keep hoping the days remained cool. At least the weather was cooperating with her.

She sighed again, she would simply have to continue arriving at the office before Ms. Grey and Mrs. Taylor until the mark was gone. She unlocked her office door and turned on the light, tugging on her collar again.

“You’re here early, Nicole,” a voice said behind her, causing her to jump.

“What? What are you doing here? Why exactly are you in my office, Mr. Matthews,” she asked, her cool professionalism quickly recovering from the shock.

His hair was slightly rumpled and falling forward into his face; his eyes were richer than any chocolate pie. And just the sight of those wonderful, delicious lips made her want to kiss him until she didn’t care about her professional reputation.

She wanted to melt into his arms. She wanted to climb up on her desk and have him buried deep inside her. She could lock the door, no one would know; no one would begin arriving for another twenty minutes. That was plenty of time for a quickie to start the day off right.

“I wanted to see you. And since you aren’t willing to see me during business hours, I just...let myself in. Nice turtleneck,” he smiled.

Fighting the urge to raise her hand to tug on the collar, she said, “Thank you, Mr. Matthews. I assure you, if you have some business with me I will see you, simply make an appointment, and if not, you need to get out of my office before I call security.”

“Don’t play the Ice Queen with me. You forget, Nicole, I know what’s underneath.” Coming closer he asked, “Tell me, do you think of me when you change clothes?” His fingers began by her ear, sliding down the side of her face until he reached the long neck of her shirt. He smiled as he pulled down the collar and revealed the still dark purple mark he had left. “I didn’t mean to mark you. I hadn’t planned on it, but you drove me crazy, and once I started I just couldn’t get enough...”

“Mr. Matthews,” Nicole began coolly, but she knew the effect was ruined by the slight tremor in her voice as he began to stroke the mark with his thumb.

“Conner,” he corrected. “I like hearing you say my name. You don’t know what it does to me, what you do to me.”

“Mr. Matthews,” she said pulling away from him and readjusting her collar. “This is neither the time nor the place for this conversation.”

“Then tell me when and where we can have this conversation and I’ll be there, gladly.”

“There is nothing to discuss,” she insisted.

“Like hell there isn’t. We have a lot to discuss. For example the reason I woke up to find you gone. I would have taken you back to your car, Nicole.”

She wanted to hold him, to tell him that she wished she had stayed and spent the day with him, in his arms. But that would only make things more difficult.

“Mr. Matthews, there is nothing to discuss. We cannot change what happened, but we do not have to dwell on it either. I would rather forget it ever happened.”

“Forget that it happened? Woman, do you realize I think of you every time I sit down?”

She raised her eyebrow. “And why would you think of me when you sit down?”

“Because it still hurts like hell! You left a few marks on me too, you know. They’re just a bit easier to hide. But believe me, people are beginning to wonder why I suddenly enjoy standing up so much. And every time I do have to sit down, I can’t concentrate because all I can think about is being inside you, your legs wrapped around me, your nails digging into my ass. Of course that makes standing back up difficult.”

Nicole wanted to snicker. She fought the urge to offer to kiss his wounds to make them better.

“Was there anything else you wish to discuss with me?” she asked as she brushed past him, to sit behind her desk.

“Nicole you cannot act as if nothing happened between us...”

“You will refer to me as Ms. Blake,” she told him in her most commanding voice. “As far as I’m concerned nothing did happen. I do apologize for any inconvenience you may have been caused, but I can assure you that it will not happen again. Is there anything else that you feel the need to discuss with me?” She counted five heartbeats before she continued. “No? Well then, good day to you, Mr. Matthews. Please do not let yourself into my office again, or I will notify security.” Completely dismissing him, she turned on her computer and began to shift through the day’s paper work.

She didn’t look up until she was sure he was gone.

Her coworkers had all noticed the difference in her behavior. She heard them asking each other if anyone knew who was responsible for pissing her off so badly.

After another horrendously long day, finally she was able to go home. Today she didn’t worry about anything but kicking her shoes off before she logged onto the computer. She prayed that T would be online, that he could give her some advice about what to do.

She wanted to cheer. As soon as she was on he IM-ed her. He must have wanted to talk to her as well.

technogk527: long time no see.

Nicole winced as she read his email.

Without hesitation, Nicole began to type.

netktn39: I just got your email, I'm sorry it took so long to respond.

technogk527: No prob. Whatcha been up to?

netktn39: Long story. Got a question for you. Do you know anything about security?

Pause.

technogk527: Long story huh, why don't you start from the beginning? And yes, I do know about security, why?

netktn39: I have a guy that keeps breaking into my office...

Conner sat and stared at the screen. Someone kept breaking into her office? Ok, that had to be a coincidence, right?

technogk527: go on...

netktn39: The short version: I sortof went to this thing this weekend...

Conner's eyes began to widen as she continued to tell her story.

netktn39: And I ended up going back to this guy's apartment...

netktn39: Today, when I went in to work, he was waiting for me in my office...T, the door was locked.

Conner shook his head. This was just one huge coincidence, it had to be.

technogk527: what happened when you found him in your office?

He needed to hear this, there was no way that Nicole and Kitty could be... *No, it was just a huge cosmic coincidence*, he told himself firmly. *They are so different. Or were they*, he wondered remembering Nicole's passionate nature.

netktn39: he wanted to talk about what happened. I didn't. I told him to get out before I called security.

That was a normal enough, common enough reaction, he told himself. *Most women would threaten to call security if they walked into their locked office and found someone waiting for them.*

technogk527: Out of curiosity, why?

netktn39: jeez, that's complicated.

netktn39: it's bad enough that I have to cover a mark he made – he smirked about it T! - I don't need to deal with everything else too. I've worked hard for my reputation. I won't have some pretty boy ruin it to salve his pride.

Conner's mouth hung open. Kitty had never spoken that way before. That was something that Nicole would say. *No*, he corrected himself. *It's something Ms. Blake would say.*

netktn39: Great, now I'm snapping at you. I'm sorry T. This man is just driving me crazy!

netktn39: So, any advice for how to prevent him from coming back into my office uninvited?

Conner laughed. He found it almost poetic that the sweet, charming, funny Kitty was asking him, Conner, how to keep himself out of Ms. Nicole Blake's office. It took him a few minutes to be able to type again.

tchnogk527: Sorry, had to do something. Not sure what to tell you. First step is to consult the security department about changing locks.

netktn39: But I really don't want to get him into trouble.

netktn39: At least, not if he stops waltzing in there whenever he pleases.

tchnogk527: Kitty, honey, you don't have to tell them who is coming in, just tell them that you wish your locks to be updated.

Conner nodded. It was always an inconvenience when they left out that detail, the 'who is trying to break in' but common enough that no one would pry.

tchnogk527: they may not be happy, but I'm pretty sure they'll still change the locks.

And give me a copy of the key, he thought with a smile.

netktn39: thank you so much, I owe you a huge kiss on the cheek for that! I wasn't sure what I was going to do.

tchnogk527: Just on the cheek?

netktn39: LOL!

Now, time for some answers, he thought.

tchnogk527: is he really that bad?

Pause. He wasn't sure she would answer him when he heard the ding that signaled her answer.

netktn39: no. He was really sweet and great the other night.

Conner couldn't resist having his pride stroked a bit after her earlier behavior. And since Nicole was determined to shut him out, he would just have to get the stroking from Kitty.

tchnogk527: Great? Great how?

netktn39: well, this is probably TMI but he's an incredible lover...

tchnogk527: then why do you want him out of your life so badly?

*netktn39: *sigh* I've seen guys like him before, dated guys like him before. Sure, they start off great...*

netktn39: but then, once you do their homework, and make sure they'll pass the test or class, or get that promotion, you're left picking up whatever pieces of your heart you can still find...

Conner stared at the screen. She really thought he was just using her? That he would break her heart? He was about to type something but she responded first.

netktn39: enough about me. How was your weekend?

tchnogk527: well, you didn't come over to my place and let me take those pictures of you. That pretty much sums my weekend up.

netktn39: LOL. Thanks for making me laugh T.

"Anytime Nicole, anytime," he told the empty room.

Chapter 5

Everyday it grew harder to separate Nicole and Kitty. More and more Conner noticed her wry sense of humor in the workplace. People merely stared at her when she made a witty comment. If the same comments had been made by Kitty, people would have laughed.

Keeping Conner and T separate was growing difficult as well. As T he could almost feel anger towards Conner as Kitty confided in him. But as Conner he was determined to try to show Nicole that he wasn't the guy she believed him to be.

I'm going to have to go to the store and stock up on more headache medicine, he grumbled to himself after another long day.

Despite that, he was looking forward to the weekend. T was going to ask Kitty out on a cyber date for Saturday night. Both would watch the same movie, at the same time and discuss it over IM.

He was almost at his SUV when he heard Nicole's voice.

"Phillip, I told you to stay away from me."

"I just want to know why you're wearing the turtle neck. Last I heard you hated the things. What are you trying to hide?"

"If you touch me make sure you say hi," she told him coolly.

Conner stepped closer, confused by her remark. He wasn't the only one.

"Hi? Why would I say hi?"

"Because your testicles will be instantly introduced to my knee."

Conner couldn't hold back his laughter as the man paled slightly and took a step backwards.

"May I help you, Mr. Matthews?" Nicole asked in the same cool tone without turning away from Phillip.

"I'm fine thank you."

She began to continue on to her car.

"Nicole," Phillip began.

"The answer is no."

"I haven't even asked you the question yet."

"I don't care. The answer is no. Whatever you want to know, whatever you want to ask me to do, save your breath. Go play with your fiancé and leave me alone."

“I’ll try again when you are in a better mood.” Phillip began to walk towards Conner. “Watch your back,” he said pausing. “She’s covered in thorns and an even bigger bitch than usual.”

Fighting the urge to hit the man, Conner balled his fist up as he watched Nicole’s shoulders slump then straighten. It happened so quickly anyone else would have thought he imagined it.

He waited until her ex was long gone then slowly approached Nicole where she fumbled slightly for her keys.

If he had needed proof that he truly had not imagined the scene there it was. Nicole was the most organized woman he knew.

“Ms. Blake...Nicole,” his voice softened.

“Mr. Matthews it has been a rather long day. Unless this is an emergency, I would appreciate it if you would simply allow me to go home.”

Did needing to hold her in his arms, kiss her lips and bury himself inside her count as an emergency? What if he wanted to do them more than he needed to breathe?

It counted if not doing said things resulted in his death. *And boy am I close to dying right now.*

He stood there and watched as she climbed into her car.

“You’re going to need to pop your trunk,” he told her suddenly.

“Excuse me?”

“Your trunk. Spare tires are usually kept there.”

“Yes, I know where my spare tire is.” She stepped back out of the car and looked at the front tire. “Why?”

“The back one,” Conner added helpfully.

“Oh good grief,” she sighed.

Conner walked around the car on a hunch to see if any of the other tires were flat as well.

Both tires on the passenger side were also flat.

“Never mind,” he called as she walked to her unlocked trunk.

“What do you mean never mind? I have to fix this thing before I can drive home.”

“Unless you have three spare tires in that trunk, it won’t help.”

He watched her carefully as Nicole walked around and groaned as she saw the other two tires.

“Great, now what am I going to do?”

“We’ll go call the police and a tow truck.”

“We?” she asked coolly.

“We. Unless you don’t want a ride home.”

“I’ll call a taxi thank you.”

“Nicole, get over yourself. I’m only trying to help.”

“Oh. Well, thank you,” she told him.

Conner turned around and headed for the building once more.

An hour later a policeman left, promising to file a report and her car was being hooked up to a tow truck.

Conner tried to act as though he didn’t remember what happened the last time she was inside his SUV. Without a word, he pulled out of the parking lot and onto the street. Whenever he glanced over at Nicole she was always sitting rigidly, her face pointed stubbornly forward.

He pulled into a parking lot and shut the engine off.

“What do you think you are doing?” she asked.

“I, Ms. Blake, am going to get something to eat. I’m hungry. They have a mean roast beef sandwich here. You are welcome to join me, or to wait in the car.” He opened his door and climbed out.

Halfway to across the lot he heard her shut her door and run to join him.

“This is not a date,” she told him stubbornly.

“Of course not. I won’t even insult you by holding the door open for you.”

Nicole sniffed.

“What?”

“Nothing,” she told him as she opened the door and quickly walked through it leaving it to almost hit Conner.

“You know for a woman that prides herself on her professionalism, your manners are downright atrocious at times.”

He smiled as she ignored him and placed her order. As soon as she had her food she walked over to a booth. Shaking his head in amusement he placed his order then quickly followed her, sliding into the seat across from her.

“May I help you with something?” she asked, her food paused on its journey to her mouth.

“No, thank you,” he told her before taking a bite of his sandwich. “Didn’t I tell you they had good food?”

“Yes.”

“For future reference, how does one go about removing that stick from your ass, Ms. Blake? It was definitely MIA last weekend and Nicole was a lot of fun.”

She snorted. “Mr. Matthews, I can assure you that I have no intentions of jumping back into your bed.”

“Good.”

“Excuse me?”

“I said ‘good’. I’m glad we got that cleared up. You still haven’t told me where you live, so I was beginning to wonder if you simply expected to go back to my apartment again.” Conner had to resist the urge to smile. *She definitely hadn’t been expecting that!* “Don’t get me wrong, it was really fun that night, but, I wouldn’t want you to get the wrong idea about me.” He took another bite of his food.

“Mr. Matthews...” she began but he cut her off.

“You’re a wonderful business woman, but as just a woman...Well I don’t want to say you’re cold, but...Ok, yes I do. Inside the bedroom you may be a fiery, passionate woman, a true credit to the women of Risa, but outside, well, a man could get frostbite sitting next to you.”

As he spoke, Conner watched her eyes grow wider until he was amazed that they weren’t bulging from her head in a classic cartoon style.

“How dare you! You don’t know anything about me, Mr. Matthews. I find it horribly distasteful that you take every opportunity to rub my nose in the fact that I made a mistake last weekend. If you will excuse me, I believe I’ll go call that cab now.” Nicole stood up and walked toward the payphones.

Conner swore and quickly followed her, catching up to her easily. “I’m sorry Nicole. I had no right to speak to you like that. Please come back and finish your food.”

She merely crossed her arms over her chest and glared at him.

At least she isn’t still walking to the payphones.

“I am sorry. I’m just so confused. A couple weeks ago you were this cool, distant coworker. Now when I look at you I can’t help myself, I see the woman I took back to my place. I don’t see Ms. Blake, the woman that terrorizes half the building and can make half the security staff cry, I see Nicole, a beautiful woman with a wonderful sense of humor.

“I just can’t seem to separate the two women and I feel sorry for everyone else that has never gotten to see this side of you. I promise I won’t insult you again.”

Nicole still looked annoyed but she allowed herself to be guided back to the table.

“What do you do for fun?” Conner asked trying to steer the conversation onto safer ground.

“This was a mistake, another one,” she said with a humorless chuckle.

“So now we can’t even have a conversation?” Conner was growing angry.

“I do not mix my private life and my professional life. That’s the mistake I made last weekend, Conner,” Nicole told him, her voice soft. “That night with you was amazing, but I’m not going to change my mind about this. I learned the hard way not to mix the two, it only causes pain and trouble. I’ve worked too hard to get where I am to throw it all away on a fling.”

He wanted to scream. Who said he wanted a fling? He had been attracted to her from the moment he laid eyes on her, mega-bitch attitude and all. For almost a year he had been thinking about her, trying to figure out some way, any way, to get beneath her armor.

But Conner had to give her some credit. She didn’t look like dancing happily around the room with the confession either. Was she even aware that she called him by his first name instead of her usual distant use of Mr. Matthews?

“I won’t say I understand. But I can accept it. Can we at least be friends?”

Nicole shook her head. “It would be best if we simply forgot all about this last week and resumed our previous relationship.”

“I can’t see you as that woman any longer.”

“Why not? I’m still her, only now it’s worse because you know I’m not always like that. Conner, please don’t come to my office any more. Thank you for the offer of a ride home, for your company tonight at supper, and especially for last weekend. I’m going to call a taxi now. First thing Monday morning I’m going to file a request for someone else to deliver any messages to me. Good night Mr. Matthews, I hope you have a pleasant weekend.”

“You can’t do that. Who tells a man thank you for last weekend when they plan on never seeing him again?” Conner had to force himself to lower his voice. “And stop calling me ‘Mr. Matthews’ like we are perfect strangers.”

“We are strangers! Don’t think you’re special, Mr. Matthews. I tried to save your pride, but you wouldn’t sit there and allow it, so allow me to be blunt. You could have been anyone. I didn’t go home with you because I secretly harbor feelings for you. The fact is, I drank too much wine. Yes, I knew what I was doing, but I had enough that I didn’t care at the time. I take responsibility for my actions, but let’s get one thing straight. I would have gone home with any man that night. *Any Man*. Good Night, Mr. Matthews.”

“You really are one cold bitch,” he told her retreating back.

Nicole turned around, a cold smile on her face. “I’m glad you finally realized that. I did, after all, earn my reputation for a reason.” Without looking back she turned continued toward the pay phones.

Conner sat stunned. He couldn't believe how wrong he had been. There was no way Nicole and Kitty could be the same person. His Kitty would never have said anything like that to him.

He picked up their uneaten food and threw it away. Without looking at her, Conner walked back to his vehicle and left the parking lot as quickly as he could.

When he got home he wanted to get online, praying that Kitty was there, that she couldn't be Nicole. But something inside of him wouldn't let him. He wasn't really in the mood to talk with her, especially if she and Nicole really were one and the same.

Conner laid his laptop on the table and walked past it to his bed. He threw the pillow that still carried a faint trace of her perfume across the room.

Nicole was thankful for the years she spent perfecting her cold routine. Between that and sheer force of will, she was able to step inside her house before she collapsed.

She couldn't believe she had been able to say such horrible things to Conner. She wasn't such a cold, uncaring person to go home with the first guy that came along. But she couldn't continue to see him, to be given messages by him. Each time she had to struggle with herself not to pull him to her, not to kiss him.

And she had noticed the way he looked at her now. They weren't the teasing looks of a man that was poking fun at the Ice Queen. They were hungry looks, as if he were starving for her. No man had ever looked at her that way before.

If only we weren't co-workers, she thought wistfully. Then we would have been free to explore whatever there is, whatever there could be between us...

"Get a grip on yourself woman. You swore you would never waste your wishes, your dreams on another man again, so stop. He's just like every other guy and you're only seeing what you want to see when he looks at you."

But he had seemed to really want to spend time with me tonight...

"No," Nicole shook her head as she put her hands over her ears. "Shut up. The only disappointment he felt was that the fat girl wasn't going to let him use her. He's no different from Shayne Turner, and you know it."

She waited a few seconds, but in the room there was nothing but silence.

"Ok, I really need to get some friends. It's just not healthy for me to expect an empty room to answer me..."

Nicole turned on her computer after she called the repair shop her car had been towed to. The mechanic promised to do a full inspection to make sure whoever slashed her tires had not tampered with anything else.

She was disappointed when she didn't see T online. Nicole tried to surf the net, to play a little, but her heart wasn't in it. All she could think about was the look on Conner's face when she told him she had simply been using him.

Turning her computer off, Nicole slowly made her way to her bedroom.

In the bathroom, she felt a mixture of gratitude and remorse that the mark on her neck was almost gone. She shrugged on her pajamas mechanically.

In her cold bed she couldn't stop the tears as she remembered the feeling of Conner's arms wrapped around her and the caressing tone of his voice as he said her name.

Chapter 6

“What is it now, Ms. Grey?” Nicole asked irritably as her secretary buzzed her yet again.

T never came online that weekend. He hadn’t been on all week. Add that to a weekend of crying and she was in one pissy mood, had been all week. Everyone in the office tried to avoid her at almost any cost. Thank God she only had to make it through twelve more hours of work before she could sulk and eat her weight in ice cream over the weekend.

“Ms. Blake, you asked me to tell you when Roger Hill was at his desk. He’s there now, ma’am.”

“Send him to my office immediately,” she barked. Part of her was jumping up and down with glee at finally having a way to vent some of her anger.

“You wanted to see me, Ms. Blake?”

Nicole froze when she saw what the man was wearing.

“I’m sorry, I don’t believe you finished getting dressed this morning, Mr. Hill. In the future you will dress professionally when you come in to work. Shorts and a Hawaiian shirt are not appropriate even on business casual days. Am I clear?”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever.” He said as he sat down in front of her desk and propped his feet up.

“Mr. Hill you are beginning to seriously annoy me. Is there any particular reason you have seen fit to ignore my instructions? That you have not been in to work since you moved your personal belongings into my department?”

“I was busy,” he told her simply.

“Excuse me?”

“Hey, no problem. We all make mistakes. There is something I wanted to discuss with you while I’m here.”

“Indeed? Please, continue.”

“Well, I’ve been thinking about the progress report you have to file with Uncle John. I’ve been thinking that you should start off with ‘He’s a good worker, shows interest and has learned quickly’. We’ll move to the glowing, ‘We would be lost without him’ reports after a few reports.”

“And is that how you feel you deserve to be reported?”

“Of course. Uncle John is just being old fashioned. I don’t really need any training. I’m guaranteed to become a partner. After all, my dad is CEO.”

Nicole shifted in her chair behind the desk, moving her mouse and rapidly typing on her keyboard.

“I sent your progress report to Mr. Brooks just before lunch. He should receive it any moment. I have it on my screen if you would like me to read it to you.”

“Sure,” Roger said with a big smile, relaxing more in the chair.

After a few more clicks, the printer began to hum and Nicole began to read.

“Mr. Brooks, I regret to inform you that Mr. Roger Hill’s training has not been as successful as we hoped. I must also inform you that he has neglected to even show up and has caused my entire department to work harder to complete his forms as well as their own. I respectfully request that his paycheck indicate how much his absence is affecting those working with him, even though he is a salaried employee.

“I am requesting that you find him another placement. While neither myself nor my staff have any qualms about training a new member, he or she must be present before we are able to do so. Thank you so much for your time and concern, I regret that I had to be the one to give such an unappealing progress report. Sincerely, Ms. N. Blake, Claims Department Manager.

“If there are any questions, you may read the email for yourself, I sent a copy to your staff email address, and,” she handed him a sheet of paper, “printed it out for you.”

Opening his mouth to say something, Roger was interrupted when Mr. Brooks stormed into the office. Much to Nicole’s dismay Conner walked in right behind him.

“Is this true?” Mr. Brooks asked, his face a horrible shade of red.

“Uncle John...”

“Is this report accurate?”

“I take no pleasure in it, sir. But yes, it is accurate,” Nicole calmly informed her boss, trying her best to keep her eyes from straying to Conner. Thankfully he remained near the door and out of the impromptu meeting, his face unreadable.

“Maybe I should leave,” Conner offered.

“No, this will only take a moment and I need to speak with you in a moment.” Mr. Brooks turned his attention back to Roger, a look of utter distaste on his face. “What in God’s name do you think you are wearing? When did he get here?” he asked Nicole.

“To the best of my knowledge he arrived fifteen minutes ago, sir. I just finished giving him a copy of the report I sent you.”

“How dare you embarrass your father and I like this?” Mr. Brooks roared.

“It’s all her fault, Uncle John!”

“Why? Because she wouldn’t lie for you like the others did?”

Roger began to nod his head then quickly stopped himself.

“That’s why I asked *her* to train you. Ms. Blake will not sit around while you do whatever you wish, twiddling her thumbs and kissing your spoiled behind.” Mr. Brooks turned to Nicole and closed his eyes.

It was obvious he had to make an effort to lower his voice and calm down.

“Ms. Blake, would you be kind enough to give this...Roger a second chance?”

“You’re asking her?” Roger asked clearly stunned. “You’re her boss! She has to do whatever you tell her to do.”

“No, she doesn’t. Not in this instance.”

“And if she won’t give me another chance? What department will I be sent to then?” Roger asked in a bored tone.

“None,” Mr. Brooks barked. “If Ms. Blake refuses to train you, and she has every right to refuse make no mistake about that, you won’t be trained.”

“What does that mean exactly?” Roger asked confused.

Nicole shook her head as she listened to the two men. She would not interrupt them. But it was amazing that the young man didn’t realize he would be fired.

“It means that you will be fired. You will no longer work here at Thomas Pharmaceuticals.”

“You can’t do that to me! My father won’t allow it!”

“Your father can and will. I suggest you shut your mouth and pray that this woman gives you a second chance.”

“Why do I have to work under that fat bitch?” Roger complained.

Conner’s fist balled up. *How dare that spoiled brat say something so horrible about Nicole?* True, she wasn’t on his “favorite people” list at the moment, but she didn’t deserve to be called names. He wanted to kick Roger’s ass when he saw her face pale slightly.

He wanted to push his way through the two men and hold her, comfort her when she looked at him just after the comment was made. Her beautiful eyes held a trace of sadness. Her expression seemed to taunt him. Saying ‘see, I told you this is what people say about me. I told you we could never be together.’

“You will apologize to Ms. Blake this instant or so help me...”

“That is not necessary, Mr. Brooks,” she told him in a calm voice, ignoring Conner once again.

“It damn well is. His mother would have a stroke if she knew he spoke to a lady that way!”

Nicole stood up and did the unthinkable. She walked around her desk and guided the older Mr. Brooks to her chair. “Please sit down before you have a heart attack, Mr. Brooks.” She waited until he complied before turning her attention once more to Roger. “And again, I do not require an apology. He did state a fact after all.”

Nicole hurried on before Mr. Brooks could interrupt her again. “Ask any person on this floor,” her eyes darted to Conner. “Ask *anyone* on this floor, anyone that has been called into my office and they will assure you that I am indeed a cold, heartless bitch.” She looked at Roger. “I’m not here to make friends or allies, Mr. Hill. I am here to do my job and I am very good at it.

“And before you can say anything about his comment on my weight, Mr. Brooks, let me continue. While I do not condone the term, I am not skinny. I don’t care. I am not here to win a beauty pageant any more than I am here to be popular. People may not like me, but they do respect me and the work that I do.

“I will give Mr. Hill a second chance, but it is conditional.”

“Name them,” Mr. Brooks said from behind the desk as Roger propped his feet on top of her desk, his ankles crossed in a bored fashion.

Without looking back at her boss, Nicole nodded once and continued. “First, he will never come in to work in anything other than a suit. Given his...taste in attire he gives up the right to arrive in any casual clothing. At least, until he can prove to me that he has earned the right to once again dress more casually.

“Second, he will arrive promptly at eight every morning. Another extended vacation and the next time you walk into this building your personal items will be waiting for you in a cardboard box at the front desk.

“Third, you will wear a watch. I expect you to be in my office every morning at exactly nine thirty. You will do your work and you will not push it on my other employees. You will refer to me as Ms. Blake. I stopped answering to ‘fat bitch’ many years ago. You are not required to like me Mr. Hill, but you will respect me in my department. Say whatever you wish to say about me, but you will follow my rules or you will leave. And keep your feet off of my desk.” Nicole grabbed the top leg and threw it off her desk.

“Fine,” Roger said sulkily. He looked in her face and as he pulled his other leg back, intentionally hitting the ceramic holder she had on her desk to hold her pens, knocking it off her desk with enough force that it shattered on the floor. Pens were scattered everywhere among broken glass.

Nicole held her tongue, refusing to be provoked. Everyone in the office knew he was only trying to annoy her. Thankfully, she simply ignored his tantrum.

“Good. There is one final requirement, but this one is for you, Mr. Brooks. Mr. Hill is to be given tomorrow off.”

Conner knew his expression mirrored the confusion on John Brooks face.

Roger smiled and said, “Cool.” Without waiting to hear another word, Roger walked out of the office, closing it behind him.

“His paycheck for the last two weeks will be divided up equally and given to the members of my department that have had to do his work during his absence. My Senior Staff deserve to be rewarded for their hard work as much as he deserves to be punished for his absence.”

“Done. Do you mind?” Mr. Brooks asked as he picked up Nicole’s phone, a smile plastered on his face. Nicole shook her head and he immediately began dialing. “That’ll teach the little bastard a lesson. Hello...”

Conner tuned the older gentleman out, studying Nicole instead.

“You handled that well,” he complimented.

She shrugged. “I’ve been called worse.”

“He still had no right to say what he did.”

Nicole shrugged again. “It’s true.”

“No it’s not. You are not fat Ni...Ms. Blake.”

Nicole was about to respond when Mr. Brooks hung up the phone.

“It’s all taken care of Nicole. Do you have any other requests before we get back to business?”

“No sir.”

“Good. I’m sure you’re wondering why Conner followed me to this meeting.”

She’s good, Conner thought as he watched Nicole closely. Her face never registered anything other than a professional curiosity.

“I am sure you have your reasons.”

“I do. Security has informed me that you have filed a request that Conner be kept away from your office.”

“I did,” she answered still standing in front of her desk.

“Why?” Mr. Brooks asked leaning on her desk.

“I do not wish to discuss my reasons, Mr. Brooks.”

“I understand that but I’m afraid I must insist. In order to grant your request I must know why you wish him to stay away from you. I promise you that whatever you say will remain in this office.”

Nicole stood there in silence.

After a few minutes, Mr. Brooks sighed and explained. “You understand I have no other choice than to deny your request if you will not give me your reasons?”

“I do.”

“And you still refuse to explain them?”

Nicole nodded her head once.

Conner wanted to shout at the woman; to shake her and tell her to answer the man’s questions. He wanted her to admit to someone that they had sex, that she was just as uncomfortable around him as he was around her, that she still felt an attraction to him.

“Would you feel more comfortable discussing this without Conner in the room?” Mr. Brooks offered.

“No sir. Mr. Matthews is well aware of my reasons.”

“Conner?” John Brooks asked looking at him.

Conner shrugged. “If Ms. Blake refuses to tell you, it isn’t my place to say anything, sir. But yes, I am aware of her reasons.”

“You leave me no choice,” the older man sighed. “I must deny your request.”

“As you wish, Mr. Brooks.”

“You have a very nice chair Nicole. Thank you for allowing me to use it.”

She nodded her head.

“Let’s go Conner. There are a few things we need to discuss before my meeting with my brother-in-law.”

Conner took one final look at Nicole, her back was still stiff as she walked behind her desk and sat in the vacated chair before following John out of the office.

“Mr. Brooks, may I have a moment of your time?” A woman asked stopping them just outside Nicole’s office.

“What do you need Ms...”

“Mrs. Taylor. I wanted to thank you for my promotion sir. I promise you won’t regret it.”

“Why are you thanking Mr. Brooks,” Conner asked curiously.

“He gave me a promotion. Ms. Blake made it clear that her boss, Mr. Brooks,” she tilted her head toward the older gentleman, “informed her that I was to be promoted about a week ago,” she explained confused.

“You are certainly welcome. I’m sure you will do a wonderful job,” Mr. Brooks complimented the woman then walked to the elevator.

Conner waited until they were in the privacy of John’s office before he said anything.

“That’s odd. I was sitting right here when Ms. Blake requested that promotion. I heard the entire conversation on your speakerphone...”

John shrugged. “She’s always been like that. Nicole hates her co-workers thanking her, so she tells them I ordered their raise, their promotion, whatever.”

Conner sat down stunned. Such a cold-blooded woman as Nicole tried to portray herself was one who would never think of anyone else. She would never try to give her employees anything and would surely take the credit for it when her requests were granted.

He could almost feel the familiar headache coming on. It hit him whenever he tried to figure Nicole out. One of these days he was just going to have to tie her down to a chair and find out what was really going on inside her head.

Conner sighed. It looked as if T was going to come out of hiding tonight...

Ding. No sooner had he logged on than a box from Kitty appeared.

netktn39: Hey T. Long time no see.

netktn39: whatcha been up to?

Conner stared at the screen wondering what he could say, how he could respond.

tchnogk527: sorry. Been working on a project.

netktn39: want to talk about it?

tchnogk527: nah. Still got a few kinks to work out before I’ll be ready to talk about it.

netktn39: ok.

tchnogk527: what about you my little Kitty? Anyone had you purring lately?

netktn39: ROFL. Nope.

netktn39: but it has been a slow week. And the only guy that seems to want to scratch my belly has been offline. ;-)

Conner laughed. He would love to do more than scratch her belly! He had to shake his head to clear the image of her lying naked and welcoming on his bed.

tchnogk527: maybe you haven't been twitching your tail enough then. ;-)

tchnogk527: or have you been showing your claws?

netktn39: This week? Definitely the claws.

tchnogk527: I have a question for you, if you don't mind. I'm trying to figure out a weird friend of mine.

netktn39: glad to help if I can. Shoot.

Conner thought for a moment. He knew he'd have to be careful with his wording so Kitty/Nicole wouldn't get suspicious. He began to type slowly.

tchnogk527: my friend, is a bone fide puzzle. He fights for some of his coworkers to get the recognition they deserve, an award, a bit of praise, promotion, raise, that sort of thing...

netktn39: go on...

tchnogk527: but he refuses to take any credit for his efforts. He always lets them think someone else recognized their potential. I can't understand it. I mean, if he's going to the bat for them, why not get some of the well-deserved praise and thanks?

He forced himself to be patient, to wait for her answer or her change of subject. Conner finally relaxed slightly when he heard the ding from her reply as he was getting a soda.

netktn39: that's a hard one since I don't know your friend...

netktn39: but I can make a guess?

netktn39: If I had to guess, I'd say maybe he doesn't want the praise or the thanks. Maybe he realizes that the people worked hard and deserved what they earned without trying to steal any of their thunder.

netktn39: Maybe he doesn't want them to feel indebted to him for something they earned. Maybe he really doesn't want them to treat him a certain way because they think they have to...

tchnogk527: wow. Sounds like you've had a little experience with something like that.

netktn39: Maybe. But I know that's how I would feel. I don't like people thanking me for praise or rewards that they have earned with their own hard work.

tchnogk527: why Kitty, I do believe you are just a big ol' cuddly ball of fur.

netktn39: LOL. Let's just say I know when to use my sharp teeth and claws when I have to.

Laughing Conner couldn't help remembering the last two times she stuck her claws into him. The theoretical ones definitely hurt more than the real ones digging into his ass.

netktn39: after all, in this day and age, if you're seen as weak, they try to kick you out of the pack or make you do all the work.

tchnogk527: I don't doubt that.

*netktn39: so....no hints to what the project is? *batting eyelashes* Not even for me?*

tchnogk527: well...

*netktn39: please? *big smile**

tchnogk527: not on that one. But there is one you can help me with...

tchnogk527: you could drop everything you're doing, race over to my apartment, change into a skimpy red baby doll nightie, and let me finally put my camera to good use. ;-D

netktn39: LOL

tchnogk527: what do you say? I could use a beautiful model?

tchnogk527: and I promise they won't end up all over the net...

tchnogk527: well, at least not the naked ones...those will stay safely locked up on my computer for only my greedy eyes. And I promise to air brush your nipples out of the pictures I do post. ;-)

Chapter 7

Nicole laughed as she read T's outrageous comments. She was relieved to finally be joking around with him again. During his absence she had begun to worry that she had done something wrong, somehow annoyed him or made him angry.

tchnogk527: What do you say? Will you come be my beautiful model?

netktn39: I'm going to pass this week. :-)

netktn39: Already been having car troubles.

tchnogk527: yikes. What kind of troubles?

She sat there wondering if she should tell T, or if she should blow it off as unimportant.

netktn39: It's no big deal. Someone slashed my tires, that's all.

tchnogk527: that is a very big deal!

netktn39: no it isn't T. No one got hurt – tires can be replaced!

tchnogk527: true.

tchnogk527: so how did you get home? If you don't mind me asking...

netktn39: that's something I try not to dwell on.

tchnogk527: that bad? Come on, tell me about it...you know it'll make you feel better!

technogk527: I'll give you a kiss ;-)

netktn39: lol

tchnogk527: I'll turn you into my own personal sundae! With sprinkles on top! (woohoo! :-D)

netktn39: LOL!

tchnogk527: I'll give you a cookie?

netktn39: LOL. Fine, I'll tell you.

tchnogk527: hmmm...should I be insulted you would rather have a cookie than me?

netktn39: lol. Do you want to hear the story or not?

*tchnogk527: I'll be good... *mumbling* I'd rather be a bad boy but stinky Kitty won't let me :-)*

netktn39: LOL! Just let me grab something to drink and I'll tell you. BRB

Nicole stood up and stretched then grabbed herself a glass of water.

She sat down and almost spewed her sip of water all over the screen when she saw the messages that T had posted while she was out of the room.

*tchnogk527: *sigh* can't even compete with a drink now...*

tchnogk527: you aren't very good for my ego Kitty...

tchnogk527: still can't believe you'd rather have a cookie...

tchnogk527: maybe next time I'll offer to be turned into your sundae...maybe that would work better than a cookie...

She carefully put her cup down, and typed.

netktn39: lol! You know, that might have worked ;-) I do love a guy covered in whipped cream... :-D

tchnogk527: =-O damn! Remind me to remember that one!

netktn39: rofl. ok, settle down, don't make me pull out my cuffs ;-)

tchnogk527: :-D what if I want ya to cuff me... I've been a bad boy ;-)

netktn39: LOL! Do you want to hear the story or not?

*tchnogk527: party pooper! Just when it was getting fun too... covering me in whipped cream, cuffing me... *sigh* yes Mistress Kitty, I would love to hear your story.*

Shaking her head, Nicole laughed as she began to type. T most certainly knew how to make her feel better!

netktn39: well, after I found out my tires got slashed a guy at work,

netktn39: the one I told you about (the one I slept with) offered to take me home.

tchnogk527: and he wanted to get you in bed again?

netktn39: no. It was pleasant enough, until he compared me to a woman from Risa!

tchnogk527: ok....

netktn39: yeah!

netktn39: Denobulan – I wouldn't have minded so much. But Risa! I am NOT a slut!!!

tchnogk527: maybe he didn't mean it that way...

netktn39: it doesn't matter. If that's how he sees me, it's best that we don't hang out any more anyway, you know?

Conner sat frozen in front of his screen. *That* was what pissed her off? He didn't want to know the answer, but had to ask the question.

tchnogk527: were you tempted to give him another chance? Before the Risa comment?

He held his breath waiting for her response. If that one comment had ruined it for him he was throwing his Trek collection in the trash! Every last piece of it.

netktn39: I'm not sure, honestly. Part of me was screaming to just go back to his place and spend all weekend in bed...

DAMN!

Another ding stopped him from beginning to trash his collection.

netktn39: but another part told me to just pretend it didn't happen. Convince him to just forget about it.

Conner stood up and paced the room. *Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn! If I had kept my big mouth shut, I could have convinced her I wasn't some asshole just like everyone else.*

He didn't even want to begin to consider the part about her spending the entire weekend in his bed. That would just be too cruel...

He had to think of something really quick to rectify this situation...

tchnogk527: so...let me get this straight...you thought him saying you were from Risa was a crack on you?

netktn39: hey, I watch the show!

tchnogk527: Kitty....

netktn39: T...

tchnogk527: Kitty...

netktn39: but T...

tchnogk527: no buts... He was probably only trying to tell you what a hot lady he thinks you are, and trying to encourage you to indulge in your sensual side more.

netktn39: how do you figure that? Risa is a slutty planet...

Conner shook his head. *Ok, now to pretend like I really don't know what happened... Of course, this definitely cleared up any doubts about Nicole being Kitty...* The thought wasn't as comforting as he had hoped.

*tchnogk527: *sigh* what did you do after he made the Risa comment?*

netktn39: I just sortof stormed off...

tchnogk527: But it wasn't a bad thing Kitty. Denobulan's have sex more for love. Do you love this guy?

tchnogk527: Risa is more about sensual pleasures. The women there aren't prudes or whores. They aren't sluts. They just aren't afraid to express themselves. They freely give and receive pleasure.

netktn39: Wow...I guess I just got a different interpretation...

Conner walked away from the computer. Would that explanation help? Would it help change whatever perceived insults she'd thought he had made?

Well, that doesn't help much. After all you did flat out call her a bitch...sorry, a cold bitch... Conner groaned. He walked to his bedroom and took a couple of the headache pills he kept on hand ever since he and Nicole/Kitty had begun having the three-way conversations...

netktn39: T? Still there?

tchnogk527: yes Kitty, I'm still here. Just thinking...

netktn39: about?

tchnogk527: looks like I might have screwed up on my project...

tchnogk527: tell me, why won't you even give this guy a chance?

He could almost hear her sigh over the ding.

netktn39: he's a pretty boy T. And pretty boys have only had one reason for ever looking at me...

Conner stared at the screen. That wasn't the first time she had referred to him that way.

tchnogk527: because you're beautiful?

tchnogk527: you're witty and full of charm?

tchnogk527: I know! I know! Because you're a total wildcat in the sack?

netktn39: ROFLMAO!!

netktn39: because...

netktn39: they wanted something from me. To do their homework or their project or help them get a promotion...you name it...they wanted to use me to get to it.

tchnogk527: I'm so sorry to hear that

Conner only barely stopped himself from calling her by her name. Talk about enough to freak her out!

netktn39: can we change the subject now?

tchnogk527: Sure, sweetheart, what would you prefer to talk about?

*netktn39: *mischievous smile* T...Tell me a story...*

He laughed out loud.

tchnogk527: did I ever tell you about the time I almost got expelled and arrested?

Nicole laughed as T told her about his brush with the law. Hacking had almost cost him his freedom. Thankfully the principal had a much better sense of humor than several of his teachers...

Once he replaced his altered records with the real ones, he'd only had to do community service. And create a firewall so that no one could hack into the school's systems again. Well, no one but him, but they were watching him closely after that. His parents had even threatened to take away his computer if he didn't start behaving.

netktn39: sounds to me like you were a little hell-raiser.

tchnogk527: I was. :-)

netktn39: I'm going to go to bed. One of these days T, I'm going to have to find a way to repay you for all the smiles you've given me.

Nicole logged off quickly before he had a chance to respond.

As she walked away from her computer she was amazed at the two very different men she had spent so much time thinking about over the last week.

Conner was handsome, he was sexy. He was a wet dream come to life and she didn't think she'd ever be able to forget the things he had done to her body. The way he had looked at her – or rather hadn't looked at her. He hadn't looked at her with revulsion as she lay naked on his bed. His every action had betrayed no feeling other than desire...

But T was a man she could feel at ease with. He made her laugh, told her horribly personal stories – stories that were as embarrassing as they were hilarious – just to make her feel better.

But he didn't know anything about her. Would he run away from her when he realized she wasn't some thin woman? Would he think of her, still call her his kitty cat and request her as his 'beautiful model' for naughty photos? Or would he begin to refer to her as his 'fat friend' like so many others had?

Conner stared at the screen. Nicole/Kitty had signed off too quickly for him to send a comeback.

Would she still want to thank him when she found out who he was? Would she still sparkle as brightly through the screen, full of laughter and wit?

“Maybe I should just tell her who I am?” he asked his computer as his screensaver came on.

What do you think she'll do? How do you think she'd react?

Easy. Ms. Blake would instantly think I had somehow managed to track her down online and would become furious.

Kitty would be shocked, but I'm pretty sure she would get over it quickly, after all, she would at least admit there was no way I could have known who she was.

But the tricky part was Nicole. What would she say? It was strange the way he was able to separate the one woman into three people inside his head. Ms. Blake was the businesswoman, Kitty the fun-loving temptress. But what was Nicole? Was she the woman that he brought home, or was she someone else, someone a little more like Kitty, yet somehow more passionate?

Groaning, Conner headed for his bed. The more he tried to figure her out, the worse his headaches became. Sometimes he longed for the simplicity of her knowing who he was.

How would she react if she knew the truth about him? What would she have done in my place?

That answer was frighteningly simple. She would have ended all conversations with me.

Fridays were always hectic at work. There was so much to do to get ready for the weekend. Conner sighed as he read his email. He'd have to stay late to go through Nicole's computer once again. No matter what he tried, someone was still trying to access her information.

Inserting a command to alert him whenever someone tried to access Nicole's computer without typing the correct password the first time was a stroke of genius. So far, whatever the person was looking for had been protected. But Conner wouldn't take any chances.

He sighed. It was time for the required trip to Nicole's office to see if she would voluntarily allow the updates to be made. He packed up his laptop and all his personal belongings and shuffled to the elevator, not looking forward to their meeting.

“Hi, Pam,” he greeted the secretary as he tried to walk past her, straight into the office.

“Conner...”

“Pam, it's been a long day” he told her his voice echoing the statement. “Hell, it's been a long week. Why don't we skip the ‘Will you please tell Ms. Blake I need to speak to her,’ - ‘I'm sorry she's

too busy at the moment,' song and dance. Go, get a coffee or something, so I can honestly say you were away from your desk when I just barge in."

"That won't be necessary, Conner. Ms. Blake told me to tell you to go straight in the next time you needed to speak to her."

He had to fight to keep his jaw from hitting the floor.

"I can buzz her and let her know you're out here if you like," she said when he still hadn't moved after a couple seconds.

"No, sorry, I'm just...shocked."

"Don't tell anyone," Pam said leaning close to Conner and whispering. "But today she's in a better mood than she has been in the last few weeks."

Conner smiled. Though it was good to have the information, he could understand perfectly why Nicole tried to keep such a strict separation between work and play. No one needed the office to know intimate details of their personal life.

He knocked on the door once then entered before Nicole had the chance to change her mind.

"Mr. Matthews, what can I help you with today?"

Though Pam had warned him of her improved mood, and that she would allow him into her office, Conner couldn't help but stand rooted to the spot in the doorway, at her greeting.

"Mr. Matthews?"

"Sorry. I'm just trying to get over the fact that you allowed me to just walk in here."

"I assume you have something you need to tell me?" she said, a hint of laughter in her voice.

"You are so beautiful."

"That's what you came in my office to say? I believe the last time we spoke you called me a 'cold bitch,' if I'm not mistaken."

"Yeah, about that, I had no right..." But Nicole cut him off.

"Yes, you did. I was acting like a stuck up...well, witch would be a considerate term. I want to apologize for that. I was out of line."

"You apologize too?" he couldn't stop himself from saying.

"Yes, Mr. Matthews, when I'm wrong I will admit it." Nicole smiled, not the kind that lit up her face, but a smile none the less. "What? Do I have something stuck in my teeth?" she asked when Conner continued to just stare at her.

"Would you mind if I lock the door, throw everything off your desk and have my wicked way with you right here?"

Shit. He hadn't meant to say that out loud.

"I don't think that would be appropriate, Mr. Matthews." Her voice hinted at amusement once again.

"You're right." He sat his stuff down on the chair in front of her desk. "But you didn't answer my question," he said with a smile.

"Mr. Matthews, if you cannot keep this conversation professional, I will have to ask you to leave."

Damn, I am getting to her! A few weeks ago Nicole would have threatened to have me fired for sexual harassment!

Conner couldn't keep the smile off his face at that thought.

"Now, was there something you actually wished to speak with me about? Since my desk is currently unavailable?"

He chuckled at her wit. "I came to tell you that you still need security updates."

"Mr. Matthews..."

"We're alone in your office, don't you think it would be alright if you just called me Conner?" He sat on the edge of her desk, close to her.

"That would not be very professional, Mr. Matthews. Would you kindly get off of my desk?"

"Why? Am I bothering you?" he asked playfully.

"I do not like it when people sit on my desk. And, as I told you earlier, I have no desire to have my security updated. My security systems are running just fine, thank you."

"As you wish," he sighed, knowing it was going to be another long night.

This time, he would have to set up alerts for anyone trying to access her computer through the network from a remote location, and possibly even have to rewrite a program that will log any entries made or accessed on her computer, and tack them onto the files as well. If he wrote the program just right, it should be able to log the individual address that is trying to get into her files.

Building a firewall didn't seem to work. Now he would just have to look at setting up a few Trojans and some tracking info. Now, he would simply set traps.

Nicole fought the urge to smile as Conner sat on her desk. She had to resist the impulse to walk over, lock the door, then pull that beautiful cock of his out and taste it again. Thinking that way would get her nowhere. She had to learn to control her hormones!

She stood up. Her work was done for the day. Maybe she would just leave work a little early stop by the new lingerie store that opened near her. A new nightie and maybe a few toys might make her feel better. Or at least it would be fun being able to fantasize how she would use them on Conner.

“Have a nice weekend, Mr. Matthews,” she said suddenly, ushering him out of her office.

“You’re leaving?” he asked confused. The same confusion was mirrored on the face of both her secretaries.

“Yes, I am. I have a few errands to run. Please make sure any necessary documents are on my desk before you leave Ms. Grey. Ms Grey, Mrs. Taylor, Mr. Matthews, have a wonderful weekend.”

For the first time in three years, Nicole left her office early. As she climbed in the elevator, she could imagine the whispers.

She would bet money that at least three people would try to explain her good mood with “she must have finally gotten laid.”

Chapter 8

Conner was in a good mood. Though his night could have been better, it helped that Nicole had left early. That made getting into her office before dark to set the necessary traps so much easier. Four hours later, he was just outside his apartment, and couldn't get her off his mind.

With a smile, he wondered if T could get her to confide what she had done when she left the office.

Before he went online though, he finished working on a new program. He had recorded their conversation on a whim, and, while he was setting the traps, had also worked on a program that would simulate her voice. He wanted to try it out now.

He logged onto his Instant Message Program, glad to see that Nicole/Kitty was online.

tchnogk527: Hello Kitty

"Hello T," his computer replied in Nicole's voice.

Conner smiled. He would need a much larger sample than the one he took today to make the voice less 'canned'. He turned the program off, promising himself to work on it more later.

tchnogk527: Anything exciting happen today?

netktn39: Yes. I was a very bad girl.

tchnogk527: Really?

netktn39: yup, I was naughty.

tchnogk527: well then, tell me all about it. :-D

netktn39: LOL. You sure you want to know?

tchnogk527: yup.

netktn39: ok. I left work early today...

tchnogk527: that's not naughty! I'm disappointed Kitty... :-(

netktn39: then let me finish ;-)

netktn39: I left work early today and went to a new lingerie shop near my house.

Conner sat up, his attention held captive by Nicole/Kitty.

tchnogk527: what did you buy?

netktn39: well, I went in there to buy a new nighty... was thinking maybe a red one like you suggested...and maybe a few toys...

Conner's tongue super glued itself to the roof of his mouth.

netktn39: but instead of buying a red nighty and some toys, I ended up getting...

He was surprised he could actually type, considering his body felt as if it were on overload.

tchnogk527: oh, Kitty, don't leave me hanging baby!

netktn39: LOL... but maybe I'm feeling like a tease tonight... ;-)

tchnogk527: Kitty, you can tease me all you want after you tell me what you bought!

netktn39: LOL. I bought a red nightie, and a black one, and well the cutest sheer white one...

Conner couldn't breathe. He was going to suffocate as the delicious images of her dressed in each outfit danced across his imagination. His cock came roaring to life, and it took all his control to not use his security clearance to look up Nicole's address and go over there for his own personal viewing.

netktn39: And I bought a cute garter to wear the next time I wear a skirt. And well... a few toys...

tchnogk527: toys?

Conner was glad this wasn't a phone conversation. At this point his voice would have been squeaking.

netktn39: nothing too exotic. Some massage oil, some fur trimmed handcuffs... some nipple jewelry...

He was going to die. Good God in heaven, she may as well stab him and get it over with! His beautiful goddess of a woman was killing him slowly...teasing him until he was sure he would come from just seeing her beautiful body laying on his bed once again.

Note to self, must get a faux fur blanket for my bed, just in case Nicole decides to ever come over again! His mouth instantly watered at the thought of her lying on top of the fur blanket, on her stomach, in the red nightie, twirling the fur trimmed handcuffs from a finger.

That settled it. He was going out tomorrow and buying that blanket!

netktn39: T? Are you still there?

tchnogk527: I'm still here...sorry, all the blood rushed to my lower body. Kitty promise you'll wear one of those outfits for me?

netktn39: when?

tchnogk527: what about now?

netktn39: Are you asking what I think you're asking?

tchnogk527: If you don't mind, yes.

netktn39: give me a few minutes to go change...

Alone in his apartment, Conner's jaw dropped as he read her final line.

He knew he had to find some way to get her to open up, to trust him so that he would once again be able to feel her beneath him, instead of only remembering it.

netktn39: Ok, I feel pretty silly, but I'm changed...

tchnogk527: Which one?

netktn39: the red one.

tchnogk527: I bet it looks incredible on you.

netktn39: how do you want to do this? Do you want an interaction thing, or would you like me to tell you what I would do?

tchnogk527: Ladies Choice :-D I'm easy ;-)

netktn39: then sit back and relax...

netktn39: and be gentle...it's my first time with cyber-sex...

tchnogk527: we don't have to do this if you don't want to...

netktn39: I'll stop if I get uncomfortable...honest.

netktn39: I want you to sit back, recline as far as you can and still be comfortable.

Conner decided to add a line he would have said before he knew Kitty's true identity. Otherwise, things might look suspicious. Though at this point he didn't care very much about her finding out who he was, as long as she continued to tease him like this...

tchnogk527: it would be easier to imagine you if you told me what you look like...

netktn39: T.... Ladies Choice remember? Besides, you know my rule!

tchnogk527: can't blame a guy for trying... ;-)

netktn39: now where were we... oh yes, you were reclining in your chair, or wherever you're sitting.

netktn39: Spread your legs ...nice and wide...

Conner automatically complied. As he finished he decided to unbutton his jeans and pull them open. *If she's half as good at this as she is at teasing, I'm gonna need all the space I can get.*

netktn39: Imagine me coming up, kneeling between your legs in my skimpy red nightie. You can see almost all of my body through the lace and sheer materials, my nipples are barely concealed by the top edge.

netktn39: I rest my arms on your thighs, leaning forward, my breasts nearly popping out of the top, as they rest against your cock.

netktn39: I smile up at you. I unbutton your jeans, moving away only far enough so that I can pull them off with your boxers. You raise your hips from the chair to help me as I slide then down off your legs, leaving them carelessly in a pile on the floor at your feet.

netktn39: I lick my lips as I stare at your huge cock. Then being the tease that I am tonight, I lick only the tip, tracing a path over the head of your cock before slowly sucking it into my mouth...

Reading her words, Conner's already hard cock grew painfully harder. She may never have done this before, but she was a natural. He could see her acting out each detail. He could practically feel her mouth on him. Stroking his hard length, he easily imagined Nicole between his legs, smiling up at him as she teased him mercilessly, making him love every minute of it.

netktn39: Ever so slowly I trace my tongue down the bottom of your cock, and gently nibble on your balls, careful not to hurt you...

Nicole closed her eyes as she typed. In her mind's eye, she was torturing not T, but Conner. It was his cock she wanted to feel in her mouth, that she wanted to taste.

She continued typing.

netktn39: My breasts stroke you as I lick a path back up your hard cock, and I then take you into my mouth, swallowing as much as I can of your length.

Ok, been reading too many romance novels, she thought wryly to herself at that last comment. Still she continued.

netktn39: I pull back I slowly, then I begin to suck in. I allow you to slide out until just the tip of your cock is still inside my mouth before I greedily take you fully into my mouth again.

netktn39: I keep my pace slow. Up

netktn39: down

netktn39: up

netktn39: down, my tongue teasing you the entire time, playing with the sensitive head and swirling down the base as you fill my mouth completely

Nicole heard a ding and forced herself to open her eyes.

tchnogk527: damn Kitty! Are you sure you've never done this before??!

netktn39: I'm positive. Why am I doing alright?

tchnogk527: Kitty, if you were doing any better, you would physically be kneeling in front of me right now!!

tchnogk527: I'll even give you my address if you want!

netktn39: LOL. Thanks but I'll pass.

tchnogk527: Damn! The phone just rang... hold that thought for just one minute I'll be right back! I swear!

Nicole smiled as she stood up to fix herself a relaxing glass of wine. That little cyber-foreplay had certainly turned her on more than she thought it would. She would love nothing more than to go see Conner and reenact it for him. As she poured, she imagined his chocolate eyes growing darker, turning black as she teased him, slowly sucking his cock into her mouth again and again.

Nicole looked down at herself in the red nightie. She had to admit, it made her feel incredibly sexy.

She sighed, leaving her wine untouched on the counter, when she heard the ding, more than ready to finish teasing T. Of course, if her body continued to react this way, she would need to break in that new vibrator she had just bought as well...

Just as she sat down to read his message, her phone rang. Swearing as she looked at the caller id she answered the phone coolly when she recognized her work phone number.

"Hello?" she asked annoyed that anyone would be calling her so late.

"Ms. Blake, I'm afraid we need you to come into the office immediately."

"Why?" she asked not bothering to hide her irritation.

"Someone just tried to break into your office. We need to know if anything is missing."

"I'll be there as soon as I can."

With a sigh, Nicole read her screen. *So much for being Naughty Kitty tonight...*

tchnogk527: Back. Sorry.

tchnogk527: Where were we?

netktn39: I was sucking you into my mouth, but I'm afraid Mr. Lefty or Mr. Righty are gonna have to take over from here...

tchnogk527: What happened?

netktn39: Have to go. Something really important just came up. Really wish I could stay and tease you more but gotta go :-(

netktn39: Raincheck?

tchnogk527: definitely!! And next time, you're gonna have to let me reciprocate.

;-D

Nicole signed off, then slowly walked to her bedroom to get dressed once again.

Conner was both happy and disappointed that she had to stop. He was happy, because he was expected to be at the office if not before then shortly after Nicole arrived. Disappointed because, well, that was one of the best cyber-blowjobs he had ever had, and she hadn't even finished yet! Wincing as he quickly buttoned his pants back up, he pulled on his shoes and gathered his bag together. He hoped his hard-on would ease before he got to the office, otherwise he might find himself making another inappropriate proposal to Nicole. Inappropriate only because they would still be inside the office building and technically at work.

Conner had to leave his SUV carefully, thanks to the instant reappearance of his former erection when he imaged being able to just lay her on her desk. Nicole pulled into the parking area just a few short minutes after he did. Thankfully he was able to get his body to cooperate. Sort of.

"What are you doing here?" she asked clearly surprised to see him.

"I just come when they call me," he told her. He looked at her body and discreetly adjusted his jeans as he wondered if she still wore the red nightie under her pants suit. She was definitely killing him slowly! Her hair was only halfway up, for the first time in his memory it looked messy, and made her even more incredibly sexy.

"Do you know what's going on?"

"I probably know just as much as you do at this point." Conner was surprised he was able to hold a normal conversation considering the images in his head. He was also very proud of the fact that his voice wasn't squeaking from his desire quite yet.

Together they walked in to the building.

When they reached Nicole's office, the security guard and Conner stayed by the door unwilling to disturb anything and waiting to hear if anything had been stolen.

"Nothing appears to be missing. I'll go through my desk a bit more in depth on Monday, but nothing appears out of place," she told them finally.

"I'm sorry we had to call you so late, Ms. Blake. We know how much you hate to be disturbed, but we had to report the break-in," the security guard explained nervously.

It seemed that Nicole even had a reputation with the overnight security staff that never saw her.

“That’s fine, I understand. Thank you.”

She began to walk down the hall, with Conner and the guard close behind her. She signed the sheet saying she had been notified and had done a preliminary inspection.

“Your locks will be changed first thing Monday morning,” Conner told her as she signed the reports.

As she left the building Conner caught up with her.

“Since we seem to be on slightly better speaking terms, would you like to go grab something to eat? Maybe a sundae?”

Nicole just watched him for a moment before finally nodding her head. “A sundae sounds wonderful, thank you Mr. Matthews.”

“Nicole...”

“Fine, Conner,” she corrected.

“Would you like to ride with me?”

“No, I’ll follow you. I don’t need anyone wondering why my car is still parked here. I *will* follow you, Conner,” she assured him.

Conner could do nothing but nod his head. He climbed in, and as soon as her car started and her headlights were on, started his own vehicle and pulled away. He drove slowly, making sure he didn’t lose sight of Nicole. When he pulled into the parking lot, he felt his hopes die.

“It seems they’re closed,” he said grudgingly.

“What do we do now?” she asked.

“Well, I do know an all night grocery store. We could always go there and get our supplies. Then go back to either my place or your place and fix our own sundaes...”

“We’ll go to your place. But don’t think I’m just going to jump back into your bed. I only want to talk about your thoughts on the break in.”

“Understood,” he told her, but couldn’t keep the smile off his face.

Again she followed him, parking beside him when they arrived. In the store he couldn’t keep from grinning as they walked side-by-side up and down the aisles, picking up bananas, caramelized nuts, cherries, whipped cream, and anything else they could think of to put on top of ice cream. Both agreed on plain vanilla ice cream.

At the checkout, Nicole insisted on paying for half the ingredients and wouldn’t allow Conner to refuse. She helped him put the bags in the back of his SUV.

“Are you sure you don’t mind going back to my place?”

Nicole nodded. "I'm sure."

He lived only a few miles from the grocery store, but somehow they seemed to stretch out indefinitely that night.

Conner could barely contain his excitement when her car was parked beside his outside his building. He handed her two of the bags of sundae ingredients, then grabbed the other two before heading for the building after carefully locking his SUV and setting the alarm.

He led her inside, to the elevator. Neither said a word until he unlocked his door and stepped aside to allow her to enter first.

Nicole immediately went to his kitchen and began pulling out the ingredients. She went through his cabinets and drawers until she found two bowls and spoons for the various ingredients.

As she began to set up their own personal buffet, she heard Conner in the other room.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Straightening up a bit."

"Why?"

"Well, I've been told it's polite to have a clean apartment when a lady comes for a visit."

"Conner, it's almost midnight and we're about to have ice cream, do you really think I care if you have a few clothes on the floor?"

"Point taken," he said and slid behind her. He nuzzled her neck as he looked at what she was setting up. Then placed a quick kiss on her neck.

"Conner..."

"I know, I know, you're only here for the ice cream. Nicole, I'm not trying to make you uncomfortable, but I can't help myself. Every time I'm around you I want to feel you in my arms. Is that so wrong?"

"Yes, it is. We're coworkers. I'm a manager Conner, we just really shouldn't be doing this," she protested weakly, wanting nothing more than to feel him all over her body as well.

Her conversation with T sprang to mind and she quickly tried to turn away before Conner noticed her embarrassment.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing," she told him. "How would you like your sundae?"

"Well, let's see, I'd start by covering your beautiful breasts with whipped cream. Then I'd make a chocolate syrup path down your body, until I reached your delicious pussy, which doesn't need

anything to distract me from your sweet taste. I'd sprinkle a few of the sprinkles over your nipples, and place a perfect cherry in your navel. Then I'd begin to devour each and every bite of my delicious dessert."

Nicole's breasts begin to ache, her nipples pebbling at his words as her pussy grew wet with need and desire.

"Conner..." she tried again breathlessly, this time trying to fight her entire body to finish saying what needed to be said.

"Nicole, we're both adults. If you don't want this to get around the office then it won't. But don't deny yourself because you're too busy worrying about your career. I'm sure we can be mature and keep whatever happens in the bedroom out of the workplace."

"You mean like you did earlier today when you asked me to have sex on my desk?"

"Nicole," he practically pleaded. "I'm willing to let you make the rules. I promise I will follow them. And if I don't I'll walk away, I will never bother you again. I will remove myself from being your messenger at the office. I will stay away from you unless absolutely necessary. Just please, don't use that as an excuse."

She licked her lips as she thought. *It was such a tempting offer...*

"You'll allow me to make all the rules?"

"All of them, except one. I get to make one rule that you have to follow."

"What?" she asked skeptically. *What would he say? Would it be blowjobs whenever he wanted them? Or sex in her office after everyone else left?*

"Whenever we're together outside of the office, you're just Nicole. You leave Ms. 'stick-up-her-butt' Blake at work. You're just Nicole, and I'm just Conner."

"And that's it?"

"That's it."

"What if you don't like my rules?" she asked trying to find a way that he could weasel out of the agreement. "What if things end badly and you decide to tell everyone what happened and ruin my career?"

"Then I'll still do what I promised. I'll never bother you again. I would never do something so petty, Nicole. I know how hard you've worked to get where you are. I hope you think more of me than that."

"Alright. But first, we will sit down with our ice cream and write down the rules. Agreed?"

With a sigh Conner agreed.

“Now, how do you want your sundae?”

Chapter 9

Conner made his sundae with whipped cream, chocolate syrup, walnuts and a cherry on top. Nicole added a banana and pineapple topping to hers. When both sundaes were made Conner placed the ingredients into the refrigerator, then joined her at the small table he typically used for his laptop.

“Rule number one should be, ‘No mixing work and play’. Meaning, while we are at work, no matter how much either of us are tempted, we never act anything but completely professional. No suggestive remarks, no hungry looks, no jumping in to defend the other person. No matter what.”

Conner flinched. Already he didn’t like that rule. But he nodded his agreement.

“Next I think should be, ‘both of us promise not to confide our activities to anyone at work’.”

“Agreed.”

“Finally, I don’t want you to think this is more than it is. I don’t want you to think this means we’re in a relationship, because we’re not. We’ll exchange phone numbers, and if either of us are feeling...frisky, we’ll call the other. We are free to date whomever we choose and under no obligation to the other.”

“As you wish,” Conner said. Though all the rules would be hard to follow, he knew of all of them, he would have the hardest time with the last rule. It would be hard controlling his jealousy at the thought of another man in her arms, burying himself deep inside her...

“More rules can or will be added as they become necessary,” she added as an afterthought.

“Done.”

“Then I guess we’ll just act like mature adults,” she said, taking another bite of her melting sundae.

Conner stood up and grabbed the notepad from his refrigerator door, and quickly scribbled the number to his cell phone. “Here’s my cell, I keep it on me at all times.”

He watched as Nicole wrote down her cell number for him. “Here’s my cell number, and my home number. I sometimes forget to take my phone out of the car,” she explained sheepishly.

“I would like just one modification of the first rule. I want either of us to be free to text the other at work. Only one line, something that will let the other know that we would like to be with them that night. Something simple and innocent like...I don’t know...‘milk’.”

“Alright. Just text in ‘Milk’ during work hours if you want to get together that night.”

“What about the where? Should it be Milk for my place and Juice for yours?”

“If you don’t mind, I’d rather just come here.”

“I don’t mind at all,” Conner said, unsure of why she still refused to let him know where she lived. But happy that it was, at least, a start. At least they had made progress away from the Ice Queen reputation she had at work, and he could hold her in his arms.

“Then we’re agreed. I should be going, it’s getting late...” Standing up, Nicole began to gather her things.

“You do realize that if you walk out that door, in about five minutes I’ll be calling your cell phone right?” Conner asked huskily. He stood so close behind Nicole, she could feel his breath on her neck.

“I thought that was a joke...,” she told him surprised.

He took her hand and guided it to the front of his pants where his raging cock was still straining to be free of his pants, straining to feel her bare flesh rubbing against him.

“Nicole, does that feel like a joke to you?”

She shook her head.

Conner’s lips met hers in a hungry kiss. A kiss full of passion too long denied.

“Spend the weekend with me, Nicole.”

Nicole looked in his eyes, clearly tempted. He nibbled on her neck, hoping she would agree.

“I’ll have to leave for a little while on Saturday, but alright.”

“I don’t care if you leave, as long as you come back.”

“One more rule,” she whispered as he began to outline her ear with his tongue. “No visible marks. I do not want to have people staring at me because of my sudden fascination with turtlenecks again.”

Conner couldn’t help himself, he laughed. “Agreed, no visual marks. Now, can we go to the bedroom before I lose all my control and just rip your clothes off here and take you on the floor?”

Laughing, Nicole nodded.

Grasping her hand in his, Conner led her through his apartment to the bedroom. By the time they got there, Nicole was blushing brightly and acting shy and nervous.

“What’s the matter, sweetheart?”

“Don’t. This isn’t a relationship, please don’t try to make it one. I don’t want you to use any endearments.”

He pulled her to the bed until they were both sitting down.

“Then can I at least call you Nikki? I promise not to use it except here.”

Nicole nodded her head, her blush deepening.

“That is the most amazing thing I’ve seen. You’re so calm and cool at work, you never get embarrassed or blush. But it seems like whenever you’re in my bedroom, your entire body, not just your face blushes. Why is that?”

“At work I’m in complete control, it’s like it really isn’t me, you know. But here, I just can’t help myself, I can’t control it. I still can’t believe I’m here.”

“Why can’t you believe you’re here? You are a very beautiful woman.” Conner decided to begin with mild truths. “From the very first time I saw you, I thought you were easily the sexiest woman in the office.”

“Now, you’re just being nice. You don’t have to be.”

“Nikki, I’m not being nice. I’m not a nice person. A nice person would see how uncomfortable you are now and tell you that you can go home. A nice person would tell you he’d give you some time to get a little more used to the idea, to our arrangement before you spent the night with him.

“I am not a nice person. I’m selfish and I want you in my bed tonight. I want to feel you in my arms. But most importantly, I want to wake up and know that you’re still here with me, that you didn’t leave like last time.”

Conner stroked Nicole’s cheek, then her hair, pulling her gently to him. “We can go as slowly as you want.” *It might kill me, but we’ll go as slowly as you want, sweetheart*, he added silently.

Nicole nodded her head and closed the distance, kissing him at first timidly, then more aggressively as he moaned deep in his throat.

Conner pulled at the pins holding her hair up without breaking the kiss. He wanted to see it down, around her body again.

He pulled away, sliding off the bed, to his knees in front of her. Without taking his eyes from her face, Conner began to unbutton the jacket she was wearing. Then, careful that he wouldn’t wrinkle it, he stood and placed it on a chair in the corner of the room. When he turned back to look at her he was surprised.

Nicole was standing up, taking off her slacks.

No wonder she hadn’t taken her jacket off when they reached his apartment. She had left on the tempting red nightie!

Self-consciously she stood there for a moment wearing nothing but the red nightie she had changed into earlier, for T.

When Conner just stared at her she began to grow uncomfortable. She shouldn't have tried to believe she could be sexy wearing something like this. They were made for skinny women, not women like her.

Nicole turned around and turned down the bed, keeping her back to Conner. She didn't want to see the revulsion that was sure to be in his eyes. She was startled when she felt his hands on her waist, stopping her from climbing into the bed.

Very gently, he turned her around to face him.

"Why are you crying?"

"I'm so stupid. I should have known something like this is made for a more...petite woman," she stammered, unable to lie to him.

"Nikki, I'm gonna add another rule to our list. Are you ready?"

"Never wear a nightie again, believe me I can handle that," she told him quickly trying to pull back from him.

"No." His voice was gentle. "I want you to stop making those comments about yourself while you're around me. You're not fat, you're not heavy, you're a beautiful woman. Even if those comments don't bother you, they bother me.

"I don't want you to change a thing about yourself. You are beautiful and I find you very, very attractive."

"Then why did you just stare at me when I took my pants off?"

Conner smiled. "Because I couldn't believe my luck. I couldn't believe that you were really standing in my bedroom in such a sexy outfit. I couldn't help wondering if maybe it was all just a dream."

"But you could have any woman. I've seen women that are much prettier than me throwing themselves at you."

"Like who?" he asked as he bent his head to tease her neck with his lips again.

It felt so wonderful that at first Nicole couldn't remember what they were talking about. "Like, Brigit, Phillip's fiancé," she said finally remembering the question.

Conner stopped and looked at her like she were crazy,

"That woman was not prettier than you. She was way too thin for my taste, and I didn't like the way she tried to grope me on the dance floor. You are much more to my liking." He kissed her lips pulling back before she could react. "You are beautiful." He kissed her cheek, "you are intelligent."

He sucked her earlobe gently, “you have the most wonderful and witty sense of humor.” He nibbled on the curve at the base of her neck, “And your body is more temptation than one man should have.”

Nicole stood perfectly still as Conner pulled the straps off her shoulder, then tugged the nightie off her body. She sighed with pleasure when his nose slid over her already tight nipple, a second before he surrounded it with his warm mouth. His teeth tugged the pebbled nipple, and Nicole wondered how her legs were still able to support her weight.

When his fingers slid underneath the lace covering her sex, she began to collapse as her entire body went completely boneless. Thankfully the bed was right behind her and she just fell back onto it.

Smiling, Conner worked his way down her body, placing a lingering kiss on her stomach. His fingers slid in and out of her, causing delicious tingles and warmth to spread to all of Nicole’s limbs.

When his fingers froze, buried deep inside her, Nicole wanted to cry out. She tried arching her hips to feel him moving inside of her again, but Conner stubbornly refused to move.

“Would you like me to continue, Nikki?” he asked before stroking her aching clit with his tongue.

She couldn’t manage to speak so she just nodded her head.

“Then tell me you’re beautiful. I want to hear you say you’re perfect, just the way you are.”

“I can’t,” she said, shaking her head vigorously.

Conner pulled his fingers out of her body, and shifted his mouth farther from her, his breath barely teasing her body from a distance.

“Conner, please don’t stop,” she pleaded, as she rose up to her elbows to look at him.

“Tonight, we play by my rules, Nikki,” he told her mischievously. “And if you want to feel my mouth on your body again, you’ll tell me how beautiful you are.”

Nicole fell back against the bed, torn by what to do next.

“Why did you put this on?” he asked. “Why did you buy it?”

Because I wanted to be sexy for you, she answered immediately, her answer scaring her.

“I thought it looked sexy. It made me feel sexy.”

She was rewarded for her answer with a lazy stroke of his tongue against her hot sex.

“You are very sexy in it,” Conner told her, his lips caressing her inner thigh.

“Conner,” she began, but he silenced her with a finger against her lips.

She couldn’t resist the temptation, Nicole sucked his finger into her mouth and began to tease it with her tongue, feeling more confident about herself when she heard Conner’s moan.

“Sweet, sweet, Nikki,” he kissed his way up her body. “I wish you could see just how beautiful you are.”

“I believe you think I’m beautiful,” she told him honestly looking deep into his eyes.

“Then I guess that’s a good start,” he gave her a quick kiss that left Nicole wanting more.

Conner pulled the revealing lingerie completely off her body, and Nicole forced herself to simply lie there, not to cover her stomach from his view. She watched hungrily as he stepped back, quickly stripping off his clothing and pulling a condom from the nightstand drawer.

Nicole licked her lips as she watched him roll the condom on, then come back to her.

“You don’t know how much I’ve wanted this since you left,” he told her. She felt the tip of his cock nudging at her entrance. He thrust inside her a few inches causing Nicole to raise her hips to try to take all of him inside her.

“I have some idea, considering your desk comment earlier,” she managed to say.

Conner chuckled as he thrust fully inside of her, then held still. “Tell me, did you want me as much as I wanted you?”

Nicole nodded, seeing no reason to deny her desire for him now.

“Do you know how much I wanted to just sit you on top of your desk and fuck you? To lose myself in you? To lift your shirt and feel your tempting nipples harden in my mouth...”

His words were making her hot. Nicole still couldn’t believe she was able to make a man like Conner lose control like that. She decided to join the fun and tease him as much as he was teasing her.

“Do you know what was going through my mind while you were in my office?”

“Tell me Nikki,” he encouraged.

“When you sat on my desk, all I could think about was you. I wanted to walk right past you and lock the door myself. When I sat back down, I would roll over to you and unbutton your jeans...Oh my!” she gasped, wrapping her legs around his hips, and digging her fingernails into his back, scratching as his strokes became more forceful

“Go on,” he panted.

Nicole watched his eyes close for just a moment before he leaned his forehead on her shoulder. For once in her life, she was sure he was imagining *her*, not *some willowy model*. She wasn’t sure why, but somehow she just knew that he was simply picturing her words, fantasizing about what she was saying.

The thought gave her a thrill, and enough courage to go on.

“I ...unbutton your jeans, and slowly pull your zipper down, freeing your glorious cock...Oh jeez!” she moaned then forced herself to continue. “I wanted so badly to taste you in my mouth, to feel you on my...my lips and...Oh God,” she panted as his thrusts became harder and faster until Nicole couldn’t keep an intelligent thought in her head. Her fingers dug into his ass again as her body tensed, then exploded from pleasure.

Conner continued to pump into her a few seconds until he shouted with his own release, and then collapsed on top of her.

“God woman, you have no idea what you do to me do you?” he asked breathlessly.

Nicole smiled, and pulled his head to hers for a kiss. She whimpered when he pulled away from her, but knew he needed to dispose of the condom.

When he came back to the bed, Nicole was under the sheets, the sweat on her body making her a little chilled in the now cool room.

“Will you finish your story?” Conner asked nuzzling her neck.

Nicole laughed, pushing him away, and onto his back. “I wanted to taste you, to suck that wonderful cock of yours into my mouth until it erupted.”

“Erupted?” he asked with a chuckle.

“Do you want to hear my story or not?” Nicole waited until he nodded his head before she continued. “Then don’t make fun of my choice of words.” She straddled his thighs, then slid slightly back, leaning over his body.

“Where was I? Oh, yeah, I wanted to feel you, taste you come inside my mouth.” She slid lower until her mouth was only a breath away from the muscle she was praising. “I wanted to see if I could make you see heaven,” she smiled, placing a kiss on the head. It was still sticky from the fluids trapped against him thanks to the condom. “Mmmmmmm...” Nicole moaned in her throat as she tasted him with her tongue.

Between the rest of her story, and the attention she was now giving his cock, he was once more hard and eager for her.

“The way I see it, we have two choices. I can either help you with another condom and you can make me see rainbows, again, or...”

“Or?” he asked eagerly.

“Or, I can just have my fantasy now.” Nicole teased him again by sucking on the tip of his cock as if it were a sucker.

“Get up...”

“Why?” she asked lifting her head.

“I have a desk in the other room...”

Nicole stopped him with a smile as she lowered her head, this time taking him fully into her mouth before pulling back.

“Maybe another time. Right now, I can think of better ways to use the energy it would take to leave the bed...”

Chapter 10

Conner smiled when he woke up. Without opening his eyes, he knew Nicole was still in his bed, his arm was still wrapped around her and her sweet ass was pressing against his groin. His Nikki. Part of him couldn't believe he had been able to convince her to stay the night.

Reluctantly Conner climbed out of the bed and headed for the bathroom. He answered nature's call, and glanced in the mirror at his back. The woman was definitely a wildcat in bed, but he wasn't about to complain about such a minor inconvenience. Especially not when he had the pleasure of waking up to her snuggled close to him.

As quietly as he could, Conner walked back into his bedroom and quickly got dressed. He left a note on the counter explaining he just went to grab them something to eat then left the apartment.

He drove to the nearest store and went straight to the bedding department. He nearly shouted with joy when he found the perfect fur throw, large enough for his King sized bed. He couldn't wait to see Nicole laying on it, her beautiful brown hair all around and her legs spread wide, tempting him...

He quickly purchased the throw and went back to his car. He stopped at the grocery store and picked up bagels and cream cheese, cereal and milk, and an assortment of doughnuts.

When he finally reached his apartment, with the various bags, Conner decided to make sure he asked Nicole what she liked for breakfast. If he had his way, she would be spending many, many more nights with him.

As Conner walked through the door, he wasn't surprised to find Nicole walking around the kitchen.

"I hope you don't mind. I just grabbed a shirt from your closet. I can go change if you want..." she told him nervously.

"I don't mind at all."

"What's in the bags?"

"I wasn't sure what I had in the fridge that you might like, so I went to get some stuff for breakfast. You're gonna have to sit down with me and tell me what you like to eat in the mornings, or just go shopping with me before you leave," he grinned. "What are you eating?"

Nicole blushed as she showed him the ice cream she had made herself while he was gone. "I was hungry, and this was about all you had in the fridge..."

Conner was shocked. Most women would have simply waited until he came back with food. But not his Nikki. She wasn't afraid to eat ice cream for breakfast. The thought made his body surge to life and he almost dropped the bags and run over to her. He wanted to lean her over the counter and fuck her while she enjoyed her ice cream.

"So what did you get?"

"I'm sorry?"

"The bags," she pointed with her spoon at the bags still clutched tightly in his hands. "What did you get?"

"Oh," he walked over to the counter and put the large bag with his new blanket on top then walked to the fridge and began to put the items away. "I got cream cheese and bagels, plain, I wasn't sure what you would like. Milk and cereal, and some doughnuts." Conner looked up when he heard her put her bowl on the counter. "What are you doing?"

"I'm being nosy. What's in this bag?" she asked trying to get to the bag before he could stop her.

Conner only barely managed to reach it first. "It's a surprise."

"Then let me see..." she said trying to reach behind him to grab the bag.

"No, it'll ruin the surprise."

"Is it for me?"

"Well, mostly for me..." he said with a huge grin.

"Then why won't you let me see what's inside?" she asked trying to peek around his shoulder.

Conner slowly backed out of the kitchen and into the living room while Nicole was trying to get the bag. He dropped it beside the couch and, his hands free now, reached up and began to tickle her waist when she tried to reach for it again.

"Oh, no Conner, don't," she squealed as her body began to shake with laughter. "Don't tickle me..." she pleaded between giggles.

But now that he had started, Conner couldn't seem to stop. Every place he touched seemed to be so very ticklish, he soon had her backing down the hall, trying to escape him.

With an adorable squeal she managed to get away, running into his bedroom and to the far side of his bed. Conner smiled as he shut the door, and began to stalk her.

"No more tickling Conner, it isn't fair," she told him still trying to catch her breath from her last attack of laughter.

"What isn't fair, Nikki?" he asked still smiling as he approached the bed.

“It isn’t fair that you know I’m ticklish. Are you ticklish? And if so, where?”

“Nikki, I found out all on my own that you were ticklish. It wouldn’t be right for me to just answer you,” he was passing the foot of the bed, and she was starting to look for a way out.

Conner’s smile grew. Her only options were to go past him, in which case he would tickle her some more, or to go over the bed, where he would capture her beneath him and tickle her.

With only one chance to make the right guess, he lunged at the same time Nicole began her attempt to escape, and rolled her beneath him on the bed.

“Now I have you right where I want you,” he told her laughing sinisterly as he straddled her hips and tickled her waist, causing Nicole to laugh harder as she tried to squirm away from him.

His playfulness quickly faded as Nicole squirmed under him. He stopped tickling her and leaned down to kiss her gently.

The laughter died on her lips as she began to moan, tugging at his clothes, trying to pull his shirt off.

Conner hastily complied and soon they were both naked and laying on top of his bed. He quickly slid on a condom and thrust into her eager body.

As he thrust into her Conner leaned down to her breast. They had promised no visible marks, which meant anything below her collar was easy to cover, and therefore fair game. He sucked the flesh of her left breast, moaning as she scored his back with her nails.

Conner felt her pussy tightening, contracting against him, speeding up his own orgasm as Nicole shouted out his name. From somewhere deep inside he felt the incredible urge to tell her he loved her. He opened his mouth to say the words and was only able to stop himself by once more latching his mouth onto her breast, causing the mark he left to be larger. Still, he mumbled the words around her flesh.

Slowly he stood up and threw the used condom in the trash before joining her once more on the bed.

Where had that urge come from? Conner leaned down, kissing the purple mark he had left behind, thankful that he had been able to stop himself. If he was this confused and scared by the depth of his emotions for her, what would Nicole have done if he had said them out loud?

“I’m so sorry,” Nicole told him with a tired smile as she stretched on the bed.

“Sorry for what?” he asked gently.

“Your back doesn’t hurt?” she asked amazed. “I didn’t mean to scratch so hard, I just couldn’t seem to help myself.”

“Don’t worry about my back. It will gladly be a casualty to your nails anytime, especially when you shout my name like that. That, my dear Nikki, does wonders for my ego,” he kissed her nipple, and then lifted his head, smiling at her.

Nicole chuckled. “Now will you tell me what’s in the bag?” She pushed him over onto his back and straddled his waist.

“I could be persuaded. What did you have in mind to tempt me with?”

Nicole leaned down and kissed one nipple, swirling the sparse hairs around with her finger.

She nibbled her way across his chest, until she was teasing his other nipple with her teeth.

“How’s that for a start?” she asked huskily, her long hair partially hiding her face.

“That’s a very good start,” he told her, his hands resting on her hips.

She sat up and taking his hands off her hips placed them above his head. “Leave them there. My game, my rules,” she teased. “You can’t touch me unless I give you permission.”

Conner nodded, eager to see what she would do next. Memories of her talented mouth the night before played through his head.

Sliding down his body Nicole, took a moment to nibble on his hip. He lay perfectly still until he felt her slide off the bed. He looked up just in time to see her sneaking past the bed to the door.

With a laugh Conner jumped off the bed and quickly followed the laughing Nicole into the other room. Both were unconcerned by their nudity.

He caught her just in time. Gently prying the bag out of her hands before she could look inside, he somehow managed to keep her from seeing inside the flimsy plastic bag.

“That wasn’t very nice of you,” he told her as he put the bag back down out of her reach.

“No, but it almost worked,” she answered playfully.

“But it was very naughty of you. Maybe I shouldn’t even let you see what’s in the bag now...”

“Conner!”

He laughed. “Who would have thought you’d be so curious! No, don’t blush, I like it. I like getting to know you like this. Well, if you want to know that badly, I guess I’ll just have to figure out another way to punish you.”

“Do I get to choose my punishment?”

“What would be the fun in that?”

“Well, you never know, I could have some very interesting suggestions...” she told him as she bit gently on his ear.

“I’m listening...”

Conner's phone rang. He groaned when Nicole pulled away. "Why don't you answer that, while I go through your things and find a towel then jump in the shower?"

Conner laughed and answered the phone while he ushered her to a closet to show her where he kept the towels.

"Hello?"

"Conner, so glad you're there. I just heard there was an attempted break-in last night."

He wanted to groan when he recognized John Brooks' voice. Instead he simply said, "Yes." Conner's eyes never left Nicole until she closed the bathroom door.

"Can you tell me about it?" Mr. Brooks asked.

"There isn't much to tell. Nothing noted as stolen or even out of place. A more thorough inspection will be conducted first thing Monday morning, while the locks are being replaced."

"Whose office was broken into?"

Conner paused, forcing himself to become professional. "Ms. Blake's."

"Is she aware of what is going on?"

"Not everything, but yes, she is aware that someone tried to break in."

"I want to be kept informed, Conner. I want to know everything that is going on where she's concerned."

Conner smiled. There were just a few details he just wasn't going to get. "Of course, John. I'll tell you anything I am at liberty to discuss. But if you'll excuse me, I believe the shower is calling my name."

Mr. Brooks chuckled. "Say no more. I know when I'm interrupting something. Go have fun with your lady Conner, and come back to work ready to focus."

"Yes, sir."

Conner hung up the phone and grabbed a towel before joining Nicole in the shower.

"Conner!" she said startled when his arm brushed against her breast as he reached for the soap.

"I have a small shower Nikki, I can't help it if I accidentally rub against you," he responded shamelessly as he stepped closer to stand under the hot spray with her.

"If you wait just a moment, I would have gotten out..."

"What fun would that have been? Besides you probably would have simply used the time alone to try to snoop through my bag." He wiggled his eyebrows at her.

"Well then in that case, will you wash my back for me? I'll wash yours in return," she teased over her shoulder as she held her hair off her back.

Conner was still amazed at his luck with such a woman. He never wanted the weekend to end. He wanted to stay trapped in his apartment, with Nicole laughing and smiling, and teasing, him instead of going to the office where she would be cool and distant once again.

He generously lathered his hands and began to wash her back, every now and then allowing his hands to stray around her body to ‘scrub’ her breasts.

When it was her turn, Conner expected more of the same playful manner that he had helped her clean with. She surprised him. She turned him around until he faced her, and stepping closer to him, ran her soapy hands up and down his back. She rubbed her breasts and hips tantalizingly against him. She even dropped the soap when she tried to lather her hands again.

“Oops, butterfingers,” she said as she knelt down to get the soap. She stayed there cupping his ass, and began washing his legs. With the soap in one hand she began to thoroughly wash his now hard cock, smiling as she looked up at him.

Conner nudged her away and rinsed the soap from his body, unable to wait another second for her. Climbing out of the tub and ignoring the towels, he picked up Nicole’s wet body and carried her to his bed, not caring about puddles on the floor.

“Conner, we should dry off first. We’re going to get your bed soaking wet!”

“Don’t care, it’ll dry. I need you *now* Nikki,” he told her reaching for another condom. He made a mental note to buy more later that day, otherwise their weekend would have to be cut short.

He knelt beside her, and watched as she took the condom from his hand and opened the package. Her playful fingers rolled it down over his hard cock, making him even more insane.

When she lay back and opened her legs for him, Conner couldn’t restrain himself. He lowered his mouth to her and heard her gasp as his tongue thrust deep into her. He continued to fuck her with his tongue, shifting slightly to suckle her clit. He waited until she was on the verge of an orgasm. Then he stopped and with her encouragement rose and slammed deep into her in a single thrust, holding his body still while hers shuddered around him.

“Oh God, Conner,” she moaned as he held her hips and continued to slam into her body. “Oh yes, Conner, yes!”

Nicole’s screams of encouragement were all he needed as he fought his body, determined to give make her come before he allowed himself to.

With sweat dripping down his body, he held on to his control with all of his might. He shouted with joy as her body tightened against him, just as his control broke and his own orgasm washed over him.

Again he was amazed at the almost overwhelming urge to tell Nicole how much he loved her.

“Why so serious now?” Nicole asked as she propped herself on an elbow and looked at him when he lay back down after throwing the condom away.

What could he say?

“I was just thinking how weird this all is.”

Nicole’s heart sank. “Oh,” she said. She stood up and began looking for her clothes. She should have known it was too good to last. At least she’d had some fun, right? Nicole tried to force a smile.

“What’s wrong, Nikki?”

“Nothing’s wrong, I just want to get dressed, it’s a little chilly in here.”

“Yes, it is, but that doesn’t explain my sudden case of frostbite.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” *Damn, the man was perceptive!*

“Cut the games Nikki, what did I do wrong this time?”

Nicole watched as he reached into his nightstand to pull out a bottle of aspirin. He shook two into his hand, then without bothering to get dressed, he left the room. Nicole continued to get dressed.

“Are you even going to tell me what I did wrong, or do you routinely go from hot to cold with no notice? I hear there are several very good medications available these days if that’s your problem.”

“I don’t have a problem, and I certainly don’t know what you’re talking about...” Nicole stopped herself. She had nearly called him Mr. Matthews instead of Conner. “May I have two of those?”

Conner nodded and Nicole grabbed the bottle from the drawer. She was about to leave, to go grab something to drink when he offered his glass of water.

“Thank you.” She took the medicine and sent up a prayer that it was the fast acting kind.

“So this is it?”

“What else did you expect? We still have our...arrangement, and each other’s number. We both know the code word is ‘milk’. I don’t see any reason why I should just sit around here all day.”

“Maybe because you said you would? I asked you to spend the weekend with me Nikki, and you said you’d have to leave for a little while on Saturday, but that you would stay. Does that count for anything?”

“We don’t have anything in common, Conner. And we aren’t dating, so that leaves two things, work and sex. Since we just finished having sex, I can’t imagine why you would want me to stick around.”

Nicole walked past him and headed for the door.

“What happens if five minutes after you walk out that door I text message you ‘milk’?”

“Neither of us are under any obligations in this...affair.”

“You owe me more than that. You owe me more than the cruel uncaring attitude you’ve adopted out of the blue again.”

“I don’t owe you anything!”

“You owe me an explanation!” he shouted.

“Fine, you want an explanation I’ll give you an explanation. ‘I was just thinking how weird all of this is.’ Is that enough of an explanation for you? Or would you rather me spell it out for you?” She rushed on without waiting for his answer. “Yes, it’s weird, I don’t know how in the world I’m going to go into work on Monday and do my job, and the countless number of mundane things that I have to take care of and not imagine being here with you.

“I don’t know how I’m going to be able to look at you and keep my professional distance when all I’m going to want to do is kiss you. But mostly, I don’t know how I can go back to acting as if nothing in my life has changed. Weird doesn’t begin to describe it for me, Conner. But I guess it sums everything up well for you. After all, I’m just the Ice Queen, remember!” She burst into tears.

Conner walked over and took her into his arms. He just held her while she cried.

“I knew I shouldn’t have agreed to this. I knew I shouldn’t have accepted that ride the night my tires were slashed and I knew I should have refused when you offered me ice cream. I’m an intelligent woman, I *knew* these things but I didn’t listen. Now I’ve just got to stop and pick up whatever pride I have left and leave.”

“Tell me about him,” Conner requested guiding her to the couch.

“Who?”

“About Phillip. I want to hear about the man that created the Ice Queen. I think you need to talk and I’ve been told I’m a good listener.”

Nicole shook her head. She hadn’t even told T that story, and she told him almost everything.

“Nicole. Nikki, don’t shut me out. Don’t try to define whatever is going on between us. Let me help you, please,” he asked looking into her eyes.

“You’re wrong, Phillip didn’t create the Ice Queen, he only taught me one final lesson that I should have learned back in high school.”

Chapter 11

“It all started just over five years ago. When I began working at Thomas Pharmaceuticals. That’s where I met Phillip. He was so nice to me, we were both just little peons in claims, and he asked me out to lunch.

“I guess to tell the story right I should have gone back to high school where Shayne Turner was the first boy to inform me that the only reason guys like him – handsome, popular, jocks – ever dated a girl like me was for help passing their classes. And we would always help them because we wanted so much to fit in.

“I didn’t want him to be right, but he was. I dated Tommy for three months after he told me that. Until the end of football season, when his grades didn’t matter quite as much anymore. I wanted him to be so wrong, but at least by my Junior year of high school, I had learned enough to know that I could get away with anything while the guys needed me. They gave me flowers, took me to parties only the most popular kids were invited to. All I had to do was ask and they gave me whatever I wanted. Those boys did anything to keep me happy while I did their work for them. I had always been the ‘fat kid,’ you know, so when this guy asked me out, and it looked like he had nothing to gain from it, of course I accepted.

“We’ll fast forward a bit. I’ll skip the petty drama, and how we moved in together. Suffice it to say we had been together for almost two years when Phillip stole a promotion from me. Somehow he managed to take credit for everything that I had accomplished since my first day. But I didn’t find out about that until later.

“I was happy for him, when I found out about the promotion. I tried setting a romantic evening to surprise him. When he came home that night, instead of celebrating, like I expected, he just told me that I wasn’t good enough for him. That he wasn’t happy with me anymore and he could do so much better than a fat bitch who tried to control everything and everyone.

“I was shocked, to say the least. Up to that point our relationship had been going so well...we had even been talking about marriage. I packed my stuff and moved out that weekend. Monday, there was an entirely different woman in my cubicle. Nicole was gone, and in her place sat Ms. Blake.

“Ms. Blake didn’t take any crap from anyone. She did her job and didn’t care what anyone said about her. She was strong and didn’t care how many people hated her for doing her job to the best of her ability. She was determined that no one would ever use her to get what they wanted again.

“So you see Phillip didn’t create the Ice Queen. No, he simply reminded me of a lesson that I should have learned long ago. Nothing in this world is free. And the cuter the guy, the higher the price.” Nicole looked up at Conner, for the first time since she began her story. “So what’s your price, Conner? You are easily the most handsome man I’ve ever met. What do you want from me?”

Nicole just sat there, patiently watching, waiting for his answer. *Would his price be too high?*

“Nikki, I won’t ask you for more than you’re willing to give me.”

“But that isn’t what I asked. I asked what you wanted from me.”

Conner sat beside her unable to respond.

What did he want? *Your heart. Your soul. I want your body and your love. I want, now more than ever, for you to stay the playful Nikki and never have to turn into Ms. Blake again. I want you to believe that I will be there for you no matter what.*

“Does it matter what I want?” he asked honestly.

“And if it does?”

“Then I promise to tell you when the time is right, Nikki. You’ll just have to trust me when I say that the only thing I want is you.”

“I need to go,” Nicole stood up.

“Will you come back?” he asked as he followed her to the door. He knew now was not the time to push her for anything.

“I honestly don’t know yet. My head is telling me to leave. Just leave and never look back. But my body...”

“What does your body want, Nikki?”

“My body just wants to lose itself in you, Conner. It wants to forget how to think, how to reason, and just feel.”

When he stepped closer to pull her into his arms, Nicole stepped back. He nodded his head. He didn’t like the fact that she needed space, but he would respect it.

“I understand. Go take care of whatever it is you need to take care of.” Conner shut the door behind Nicole, and rested his forehead against it. “Hurry back to me Nikki...” he whispered.

Conner turned on his computer, logging in automatically before he left to get another glass of water.

What would he do if Nicole/Kitty asked for his advice? He closed his eyes unsure of what he would do, what he could say.

The only thing he was certain of at this point was that he was in love with her. All of her – from the cold-blooded Ms. Blake, to the passionate Nikki, and every bit in between.

Conner wanted to shout his love at the top of his lungs. He wanted to tell her he loved her sense of humor, her passion, that he even loved it when she made him squirm at work. He wanted to end the games and tell her who he was, but wasn't sure how she would take the news. He knew she would feel betrayed, that was only natural. But he was so afraid that she would never want to see him again, that he just couldn't bring himself to tell her the truth.

He could only sit patiently and wait to see if she would give them a chance, give him a chance to prove he was different from those other jerks that only wanted to use her.

Nicole was furious. How could she have let herself break down like that in front of him? She finally climbed out of her car, and unlocked her front door.

She shook her head. It was just a fling, just some affair that she shouldn't be having. Only she would stress about a no-strings-attached sexual relationship. She needed time to calm down, to collect herself.

Part of her wanted to run to T, to find out what she should do. But another part said it wasn't right to continue to tell him about her problems.

Unable to resist, Nicole turned on her computer and logged on. T was online. She walked away from the computer to go change her clothes.

Ten minutes later when she got back to her computer, dressed in a long skirt and top, she smiled. T always did make her laugh.

tchnogk527: Can Mistress Kitty come out to play?

tchnogk527: Kitty? I've been a bad boy... ;-)

tchnogk527: is it too early to cash in my rain check? :-D

netktn39: LOL. Sorry, just had to go change really quick. What's up?

tchnogk527: you mean besides me? ;-P

netktn39: LOL.

tchnogk527: what? I was seriously impressed with your ... talents last night.

Nicole looked at the screen. Sometimes it was hard to remember that so much had changed in just one night.

netktn39: I aim to please ;-)

tchnogk527: seriously, Kitty, if you ever want me to return the favor, I will be more than happy to oblige...

netktn39: LOL. I'll keep that in mind T. Thanks.

tchnogk527: what's wrong Kitty?

netktn39: nothing.

netktn39: Ok, I'll say this and then I just really want the subject to drop, ok?

tchnogk527: deal

netktn39: I'm just really afraid T. This guy is making me feel things, and it's really scary.

tchnogk527: just tell me who he is...I'll go beat him up for you :-)

netktn39: :-) thanks T. That means a lot.

netktn39: not gonna bore you with any more of my sad story. I'd much rather play instead... ;-)

tchnogk527: Play? What would you like to play?

tchnogk527: Mistress Kitty and the naughty T? I know, Officer T and the mischievous Kitty? Playful Kitty and the video?

netktn39: ROFL!

netktn39: you are too much sometimes!

tchnogk527: does that mean no? ... they need to come up with a pouting smiley... :-)

netktn39: LOL

netktn39: How about I let you choose? ;-)

tchnogk527: Wow, Christmas has come early this year!

Nicole laughed at the screen.

tchnogk527: let's see...Mistress Kitty sounds fun...you could handcuff me to the bed...

tchnogk527: but Officer T could handcuff you!

tchnogk527: Then again, the fantasy of you making a video for me...well that did grab my attention...;-D

netktn39: so Naughty Kitty and the video?

tchnogk527: Hmm... not this time, but I'm definitely calling Rain check on that as well!

tchnogk527: Nope, if you don't mind, I think I'd enjoy Miss Kitty talks dirty. Just a nice old-fashioned cyber-sex chat.

tchnogk527: just give me a minute to grab something to drink first.

netktn39: give me just a minute too...brb.

Nicole stood up and walked to the mirror. She really should pull her hair back, it looked wild, and all was over the place. She wasn't surprised people stared at her as she rushed out of Conner's building. She had "sex hair."

Nicole began ripping a brush through her hair, wincing as she tried to untangle the massive knots at the back of her head. She growled as she worked, her thoughts going back to the reason her hair was so tangled in the first place.

She should have brushed her hair immediately after their shower, but instead she had allowed herself to become caught up in his body, his desire.

Nicole threw the brush across the room, feeling a few seconds of satisfaction when she heard it hit the wall then fall to the floor.

Why did he have to make her feel so special? Why couldn't Conner just act like a jerk so she could use him for sex and never feel a moment's hesitation. She had to let him know that she wouldn't be able to continue as his lover. She did owe him that much.

Nicole walked over to the brush, picked it up and finished brushing her hair, pulling it into a loose braid when she was finished. She looked good, she decided. Not too professional, not too distant. But the look didn't scream "take me now you sex god," either.

She sat back down in front of the computer after she filled Candy's bowl with food.

netktn39: I'm back. Sorry it took so long.

tchnogk527: s'alright. Gave me a chance to figure out what I wanted to do first.

netktn39: T, about that...

tchnogk527: Nope, not listening...if it doesn't involve a work related emergency, or something of catastrophic proportion, can't it wait, just a little while?

netktn39: I guess it can, but its something I'd really prefer to take care of, so I can come back and be your naughty kitty. I'll even let you handcuff me ;-)

tchnogk527: Promise I'll be able to enjoy your sweet pussy when you get back?

netktn39: Ok, it just got hot in here...if you want to, then of course. :-D

tchnogk527: then hurry up and take care of whatever errand you have to run so you can come back here and I can tell you all about how I plan on burying my tongue inside you until you scream.

netktn39: you certainly know how to give a girl incentive...

Nicole closed the program and cut her computer off. She headed for the door, determined to explain to Conner why things could never work out between them.

Conner sat the small plastic bag on the counter as he threw his keys onto the table.

He wouldn't hold his breath for Nicole to come back, but he wanted to be fully prepared if she did. He walked around trying to straighten up his apartment. It wasn't very messy, but cleaning made him feel a little more in control.

He switched off the vacuum and tilted his head, wondering if he were suddenly hearing things. No, there it was again; someone was knocking on his door.

Sure it was just a neighbor wanting to borrow a cup of something, or maybe ask for his help with their computer, Conner was tempted not to answer the door. Sighing, he thought to himself sulkily, *yeah, well, what else do I have to do tonight?*

He quickly turned off his laptop, closed it and headed for the door. Without bothering to look through the peephole, he opened the door.

"Yes?" As soon as he saw her, Conner pulled Nicole into his apartment, shutting the door. Without giving her a chance to speak, he captured her mouth in a kiss. His hands went to her hair, pulling the rubber band out and freeing it to hang in slight waves down her back.

He pulled back and looked at her. She looked amazing! Wicked thoughts instantly filled his head about what he could do to her, the easy access her skirt would allow.

"Conner, we need to talk..."

"Nope, not listening." He told her taking her hand and gently pulling her into the living room. "Would you like something to drink?"

"Sure, what do you have?"

"I can make some iced tea..."

"That would be fine, thanks."

He heard her follow him into the kitchen. He watched her from the corner of his eye as she watched while he placed a pan of water on to boil, then filled a pitcher halfway with ice and added some sugar.

“We really do need to talk,” she began again as he added the teabags to the water.

“No, we don’t. Or at least I think it can wait until we have some iced tea to drink while we talk.”

“Alright, it can wait for the tea,” she agreed.

“Good,” he smiled.

Both stood in the kitchen silently waiting for the water to come to a full boil. Conner removed the pan from the heat, and poured the liquid into a pitcher filled with ice, stirring to mix it well.

“Will you grab two glasses for me?” he asked as he placed the pan and the spoon inside the sink.

He watched as Nicole began to open each cabinet, as she searched for them. He couldn’t stay away from her as she raised her arms to pluck two off a shelf.

“You have very beautiful glasses,” she complimented as she looked at them.

“Thank you,” he said directly behind her. He heard her breath catch as he began to pull her skirt higher. He knelt behind her, pulling her underwear down, her skirt falling over his head as he licked and bit one ass cheek. She lifted each foot when he tugged on it to finish removing her underwear.

Conner was surprised when she easily opened her legs wider at the slightest pressure from him. He pulled the skirt over his head, so he could see her as he slid his finger deep inside her. She was already so wet!

“Conner...” her voice ended in a moan as he added another finger before biting her ass cheek again.

“Nikki, if you had worn a skirt last night, we never would have made it to the bedroom,” he told her. “When I saw you leaning over the counter, looking for bowls for our sundaes, all I wanted to do was lean you over the counter and fuck you right there. I wanted to do the same thing this morning when I saw you eating ice cream. I wanted to “enjoy” you while you enjoyed your ice cream.”

She grew wetter with every detail. Conner used his free hand to spread her legs farther apart as his fingers slipped out of her to tease her swollen clit.

Nicole whimpered and leaned back slightly, closer to him.

“Stay just like that, Nikki, I’ll be right back.” He left her and grabbed the bag still sitting on his counter, carelessly ripping open the new box of condoms. Yanking open the button of his jeans, and jerking his zipper down, he pulled his jeans down to just a few inches below his ass, quickly placing the

condom on his hard cock. It would take too much time for him to strip completely – there would be time for that later.

He sighed; while he was gone those few seconds she had closed her legs slightly.

“Conner, we need...” her voice cracked as he slid his finger back into her.

With gentle persuasion, he convinced her to spread her legs apart once again, and even had her leaning on the counter, with her lower body positioned slightly away from the lower cabinets.

“Nikki, I told you I’d be right back,” he told her, his mouth near her ass again. He tilted his head, biting her gently just underneath the left cheek.

“You liked that didn’t you?” he asked. “You got so wet from it, Nikki. I still owe you a punishment for trying to go through my bag earlier. Do you remember?”

Nicole nodded her head yes.

Conner smiled, the more he talked and the closer his mouth came to her sweet pussy, the wetter she got for him.

“I think now would be the perfect time for your punishment...”

“What are you talking about? Conner I just came to...”

“Not yet you haven’t, but believe me, you will in just a few moments.” He shifted replacing his finger with his mouth, his hands helping to brace her thighs.

“Careful Nikki, if you move, I’ll stop.” He smiled against her as he felt the muscles beneath his hands trembling as she forced herself to remain perfectly still. His hands reached around to squeeze her ass as he licked her body hungrily. He felt her body shudder as she cried out his name.

“God Nikki, I could almost come just eating you,” he told her as he forced himself to climb from between her legs and stand behind her. One of these days he would have to learn to control himself. One day, he would spend all night eating her, showing her just how beautiful heaven could be.

“What do you want Nikki? Do you want to talk, or do you want me to fuck you right here?” Conner shifted his hips allowing his hard cock to brush against her wet hole. “The choice is yours Nikki, which one shall it be?”

“Fuck me,” she gasped. Nicole moaned as he slid deep inside her.

Conner stuck one hand beneath her shirt to tease her nipples through the lace of her bra, the other gathered her skirt until he could reach beneath it to stroke her clit.

“You’re so tight. I can’t believe how tight you still are after all the times I’ve fucked you since last night.” His thumb circled her clit, aggressively applying pressure to the sensitive area.

“Would you like to hear another fantasy of mine?” he asked as he thrust in and out of her body.

Nicole nodded her head.

“I want to hear you say it, Nikki.”

“God...yes, I want to...I want to hear your fan...fantasy,” she panted.

“I want to lay you on my bed, your arms over your head, and your legs spread wide just for me.”

Conner released the nipple he had been pinching to wrap his arm around her waist as his thrusts became more forceful. “I want to crawl between your legs and lick you until you can tell me exactly what heaven looks like, sweetheart. I want to spend hours memorizing your taste, your feel. I want to drink your cum like wine.”

Nicole moaned and shouted, “Oh, my God, Conner!”

He felt her body shuddering, and releasing her clit placed his hands on both her hips, pulling her back onto him with as much force as he could. He felt another orgasm begin to roll through her body when he felt his own climax wash over him. He shouted her name, burying his head in her back as her body milked every drop of come from him. He slid easily out of her, her pussy still dripping with cream from her orgasm.

Conner walked on shaky legs, wrapping the used rubber in paper towels before throwing it into the kitchen trashcan. He pulled his jeans up, but left them unbuttoned, his cock still hanging out. When he turned around he smiled, his ego inflating at the sight of her.

Without him behind her, helping to hold her up, Nicole had slid to the floor.

“If you tell me where you keep your mop and cleaning supplies, I’d be happy to mop the kitchen for you when I can stand up,” she told him leaning against the cabinet.

“That’s not necessary, really.”

“No, Conner, I really think it is...”

“Why,” he asked laughing, “did you have an accident on the floor?”

“You know perfectly well it wasn’t an accident, Conner. You meant to do every last thing you just did to my body.”

Conner smiled as he walked across the room and helped her up.

“Wow. I don’t think I’ve seen that much cum on the floor since...”

Nicole raised her hand, placing it over his mouth. “Number One, I haven’t forgotten that I came here to talk to you. Number Two, just because you made me see stars doesn’t mean anything other than you are one talented lover. Number Three...finish that statement and I won’t even finish my ‘we need to talk’ speech, I’ll simply walk out without looking back, as fast as my wobbly legs will carry me. Understood?”

Conner nodded his head.

“Good. Now, if you don’t mind, would you get the glasses, and the tea, I’m gonna go sit down before I fall flat on my face.” Nicole turned and began to walk to the small table they sat at the previous night. “And take that ‘I-tore-her-ass-up’ grin off your face,” she told him without turning around to look at him.

Conner tried not to smile, but he couldn’t help it. He sat her tea down and tried to cover the smile that was still on his face by taking a sip of his own drink.

“Conner, this isn’t...”

“I know what you’re going to say, and I don’t agree.”

“How can you possibly know what I want to say?”

“How many times does someone start a conversation full of good news with ‘we need to talk’?” He shook his head. “I won’t accept whatever you have to say because I know you’re just scared. I scared you earlier.”

Nicole’s eyes looked like they were ready to pop out of her head.

“Come on, Nikki, give me some credit, you flew out of here like a bat out of hell, as if something were after you,” he said trying to cover his slip.

Chapter 12

Nicole was stunned. How could he possibly know he scared her? How could he possibly know that she was afraid of developing any feelings for him; that she needed to walk away as quickly as she could?

He couldn't, she reminded herself. He's just guessing.

"You're just guessing," she said, but it came out more like a question than a comment.

"Does it matter?" Conner sighed. "You flew out of here so fast what was I supposed to think? That you were just eager to go run some errands? Damn Nikki, you looked afraid. I can't figure out why, I would never do anything to hurt you."

Nicole decided to allow the comment to drop. Considering what was going through her head, she really shouldn't be so surprised Conner figured it out for himself. "Conner, we have to stop. Don't you think it's going to be hard enough going back to work and acting like nothing ever happened between us? Like this weekend never happened?"

"Why do we have to pretend? Why don't we just go in there and tell people to mind their own business?"

"I can't do that."

"Yes, you can, I've heard you. 'Excuse me, is there something you'd like to say? No? I didn't think so, I suggest you get back to work this instant before I decide you have a little too much free time and cure it with more paperwork.' Sorry if I didn't quite get it right word for word," he told her sarcastically walking away from the table.

She was embarrassed by his imitation, because he was right. She had told people to keep their noses out of her business at work, even if she didn't use those particular words.

"So at work I'm a bitch, what's your point? You know what...never mind, I don't even want to begin to get into *that* argument with you. How can you dislike who I am at work so much and still want me in your bed?"

"Because, here – now, you're different, Nikki. If I touch your waist, you're more likely to laugh than to slap me or call security. When I pulled your hair down, you moaned in my mouth and arched closer to me, instead of biting my head off."

“And you think you behave nicer to me? Mr. ‘Call-me-if-you-ever-want-help-taking-that-stick-out-of-your-ass’? Was that you being nice?”

“No, that was me trying to get you to loosen up.”

Nicole leaned back in her chair and began a slow, sarcastic applause. “Bravo. It just worked so well, don’t you think?”

“I don’t see you walking around like someone shoved anything up your ass. No, if anything, you’re walking around looking like a very well fucked woman.”

Nicole’s jaw dropped. “Excuse me?” she asked forcing herself to say something instead of doing an impression of a goldfish.

Conner practically stormed over to where she was sitting, and leaned against the table. “You heard me. Your entire body is more relaxed. I bet you couldn’t even call me ‘Mr. Matthews’ right now if you wanted to. And I think that scares you.”

“You couldn’t be more wrong,” she told him, but even she could tell her voice lacked conviction.

“Prove it. Call me ‘Mr. Matthews,’ he dared.

“That would be against our rules,” she tossed back thinking quickly.

“I’ll make an exception to them this once.”

“You can’t do that.”

“Yes, I can, it was my rule.”

“No, you can’t,” she insisted. The conversation was quickly getting out of hand and she tried to steer it to a safer subject. “I seem to remember you saying something about giving me my punishment for trying to look inside your bag. Well, since you got to give me your punishment, I want to know what was inside the bag. It’s only fair.”

“I’m not letting you change the subject. I want to hear you say it. And I’m not going to drop the subject until you do.” He sat down on the table.

Gathering all the control she had spent years forcing herself to learn she looked at him icily, taking the dare. “Mr. Matthews, I do not appreciate being badgered like this. Did you realize your pants were still open and your cock is hard?” she asked. His waist was eye level with her as he sat on the table beside her. Nicole licked her lip. She no longer cared about whatever conversation they had been having, she simply wanted to feel his velvety soft skin sliding in and out of her mouth.

Conner closed his eyes the moment she called him Mr. Matthews. He hadn't really believed she'd be able to be so impersonal with him. He barely even heard her next comment, so filled with sadness that he had been wrong.

His grip on the edge of the table tightened when he felt her tongue sweep across his cock.

Now his imagination was running away with him too!

Feeling her lips surround him, he opened his eyes and looked down at her.

"What are you doing?" he asked, completely shocked as he watched her head bob up and down between his legs.

"What does it look like I'm doing? What does it feel like I'm doing?" she threw back sarcastically.

"No, we were in the middle of an argument. You can't just end it by giving me a blow job!"

"Why not?" she asked before taking him into her mouth once again.

"Because it's not right. Because...Because I can't think when you do that! Do that again! No, Nikki, not that. Yeah...tha...that."

His hips thrust upward into her mouth as she lightly bit down on the head of his cock causing flames to race down his body. Easing off the table, he stood up and began to fuck her mouth.

Conner's hands tangled in her hair, pulling it up out of her face so he could watch her suck his cock into her mouth. Her lips were such a contrast to the dark head of his cock, the sight hypnotized him.

"Oh no, Nikki," he groaned as he pulled his cock out of her mouth.

Nicole pouted, then captured him between her lips again.

Despite his best intentions to give her pleasure before his body filled her with his cum, Conner couldn't keep his hips still. As she began to increase her speed, he began to fuck her mouth harder, his hands still wrapped in her hair pulling her farther down on his cock, pushing more of him inside her sweet mouth.

"I'm gonna cum, Nikki," he warned believing she would want to pull back before he shot his load down her throat.

Instead she only moved faster, sucking harder as he thrust into her mouth.

"Nikki!" he shouted as the warm fluid shot out of him, filling her warm mouth.

Without missing a stroke she swallowed, and continued to suck until she had gotten every drop from him.

Conner fell back against the table his legs suddenly weak.

Nicole ended up spending the rest of the weekend in his bed. Every time she tried to tell him why things couldn't work out between them he would make her body hum with need.

But she was able to turn the tables on him as well. Any time Conner tried to ask her why they couldn't be together she would suck his cock into her mouth or straddle his waist or anything else that would make him quickly forget the topic he so desperately wanted to bring up.

He tried talking her into spending Sunday night with him as well, but she refused.

"I'm going to go home to soak in a wonderfully hot tub, and then pass out," she told him with a chuckle.

"Nikki," he pleaded, but she cut him off.

"You'll see me in the morning. Somehow I get the feeling you're the one the security office is going to send to change my locks."

"How did you know?"

"Murphy's Law. And you were the one they called when my office was broken into. Why did they call you anyway?"

"Lucky I guess?" he shrugged.

"And the correct answer for two hundred is what, Conner?"

"Ok, let's just say I got the honor of becoming your personal messenger in the security department. What? You scare all the other guys," he told her grinning. "Of course, now I think that's a very good thing. Just remember not to smile when you go in to work," he told her as he leaned down and kissed her neck.

"Really? And why don't you want me to smile?"

"Because then those other guys might realize how beautiful you are and decide to brave your wrath. That, my dear Nikki, would be devastating. I like being your personal security man."

Nicole laughed and pushed him away before he could fan the flames coursing through her body any higher.

"Good bye Conner."

She felt as though she was floating as she made her way down to her car. With a smile on her face the entire trip, Nicole drove home. Once inside, she ignored her answering machine and went straight to filling Candy's food dish. She removed the plastic bag that her automatic kitty litter cleaner emptied waste into and replaced it with a fresh one.

Humming tunelessly, she climbed the stairs and went straight to her bathroom, running herself a hot bath. On an impulse, she added bubble bath to the water and walked to the counter to brush her hair and pin it up out of her way.

Sighing contentedly, Nicole slid down into the tub. She turned her head when Candy pushed against the door and opened it just enough to step through. Her cat sat perched near the tub and just looked at her expectantly.

“What? I’m allowed to have some fun aren’t I?”

The cat tilted her head.

“Not you too Candy, you’re supposed to be on my side. And I can’t have him come here. I don’t want him that close to me. As long as we only go back to his place I can stay detached.”

The cat simply stared at her for a moment before she twisted and began to groom herself.

“I am not attached to him. I can walk away at any time. I just don’t want to yet,” she told the cat before closing her eyes and simply letting the water soothe her sore muscles.

“I am so going to pay for this weekend tomorrow,” she told the cat without bothering to look to see if she was even still in the room. “I don’t think I’ve ever been this satisfied before. I certainly know I’ve never been this well...” Nicole cleared her throat as Candy butted her head against Nicole’s cheek. “Ok, I really do need to get a life so I can stop telling my cat the details of my sex life.”

Nicole arrived at work an hour earlier than usual. She wanted to have extra time to prepare for the day ahead. She wanted to regain the cool and aloof attitude that somehow Conner had managed to strip away over the course of the weekend.

She decided she really did need stop spending time with Conner. He was turning her black and white world of work and home into a grey blob.

Nicole unlocked her office door and turned on the lights, prepared to go through her desk for the more detailed search to find out if anything had been tampered with or stolen.

She became so engrossed in her work she didn’t hear when someone stepped behind her desk.

“Has anyone ever made you pass out from too much pleasure?”

Nicole jumped slightly in her chair, turning quickly to see who would dare to speak to her like that!

When she saw Conner smiling beside her, two answers fought inside her brain.

Closing her eyes she reminded herself that she was at work and it was time to be professional. “Mr. Matthews, I refuse to answer such a personal question, and you are perilously close to violating rule number one.”

“Don’t touch anything on your desk?” he asked as he leaned closer to her.

“This is not the time or the place for games, Mr. Matthews.”

“But there’s no one else on this floor, Nik...Ms. Blake.”

Fighting the voice inside her head that was screaming for her to just wrap her arms around him and kiss him until she couldn’t remember where exactly she was, Nicole crossed her arms over her chest.

“Do you remember our agreement, Mr. Matthews?”

He nodded, “Fine, Ms. Blake. Conner Matthews reporting for duty,” he saluted then walked around her desk. “I’ll just let you know that I’m going to go to the security department and get the new locks for your door. As soon as I get back, I’ll get started. While I’m there I’ll pick up the paperwork you’ll need to fill out for our records.” Conner turned to leave the room.

“How long will it take?”

“I should be back in less than half an hour,” he answered, looking back at her.

“I meant how long will it take for you to put the new locks in.”

“It shouldn’t take more than a few hours, depending on the complexity of the new locks.”

“A few hours! A few hours to use a screwdriver to tighten a few screws?”

Conner laughed. “No, Ms. Blake. The Head of Security decided to systematically change all the managerial locks. You wouldn’t have been entered into the new system for another few months, but with the attempted break in, you’ve been given a higher priority.”

“This is just claims, not research, or funding,” Nicole answered slightly confused.

“I’m just telling you what I’ve been told. Besides, why change your inefficient locks for another set of inefficient locks? We’d have to change you over to the new version eventually anyway, so why not now?” Conner leaned against the door.

Nicole couldn’t help thinking how yummy he looked standing like that.

“Unless of course, you want me to just continue to come to your office to switch the locks...”

“Well, if it’s going to take several hours, you’d better get to work. Hopefully I’ll be finished with the inspection of my desk and be able to begin filling out that report when you get back.”

“Yes ma’am.” Conner winked then turned around.

Nicole had to fight back a chuckle. She knew she couldn't say anything about his flirting because he always flirted with her.

Forcing herself to stop entertaining fantasies of what she would like to do to him wasn't easy, but somehow she managed to do it. It became harder to concentrate and forget about him when he returned ready to install the new lock.

"Good Morning, Ms. Blake," Pam smiled, as she walked in.

Nicole saw the questions all over her face, but the other woman did not voice them. She placed her finished security report in an envelope and laid it on top of her desk, without addressing it.

"Would you like me to put that in the mail for you, Ms. Blake?" Pam asked.

"No thank you, Ms. Grey. I still have a few adjustments to make before that is ready to be sent anywhere."

Without another word, Pam nodded and handed Nicole a stack of files then quickly exited her office.

Nicole sighed. Of all the claims she had to process, she hated these the most. Employee Claims. It was amazing what some of the employees tried to get reimbursed for. But thanks to a program she had struggled through, she found a system that actually worked.

Her Executive Assistant would type the names into the database, and it would be replaced with a random number. Inside the database, it would still show the employees name, but in the files sent to her staff, or the print outs that had to be reviewed the number was firmly inside the box titled name. There was even a box for the computer to check if a certain employee made too many claims in a short period of time, telling their department that the expenses needed to be examined very carefully.

It was part of the reason she had earned her promotion, and why she was considered such a valuable employee. Because with this system, the little man and the CEO of the company had the exact same chances of their claims being denied.

Fighting another sigh, Nicole began to review the files they handed to her.

Conner absently wiped the sweat from his forehead by running his sleeve across it. He hated installing these locks, but he wanted to make sure it was done properly, that no one else knew about anything extra he added.

Everyone in his area knew about the electronic locks, as did most of the upper management. But none of them, not even John Brooks knew he slipped his own program into the mix. It would record the date and time and individual badge number of anyone that accessed the office.

As he carefully hooked the wires together, connecting them to the main power of the building, he sighed. The weekend had been much more fun. He watched covertly as Pam walked past him into Nicole's office and handed her a stack of files, then came back out quickly.

He carefully finished placing the box on the wall. The easy part was done; the magnetic lock and card reader were hooked up. Now came the hard part – coding the box and Nicole's card.

Conner stood up, his knees hurting from the hour he had just spent installing the box.

He watched as Nicole stood up and walked over to where he tried to work the cramps from his body.

"You're doing a very good job, Mr. Matthews," she complimented. "I was just about to get myself something to drink, would you like me to grab you anything?"

"A Dr. Pepper would be very appreciated. But I'll go get it..."

"Why? I'm going to that way, I can easily grab it when I grab my own drink. Mrs. Taylor, would you like something to drink?"

"No ma'am," came a distracted reply.

Nicole walked past the desk outside her office and down the hall, returning a few minutes later with a list in her hand and three sodas.

"Ms. Grey," she said as she handed her secretary her favorite diet drink, "Mr. Matthews," handing Conner his drink then walked back to her desk. He watched as she sat down and began to pour her soda in a large metallic travel mug.

"May I ask you a question, Ms. Blake?" he asked approaching her desk and lowering his voice.

"You may ask, but that doesn't mean you will receive an answer."

Conner nodded. "Why did you just do that? Why didn't you just buzz Pam to go get the drink for you?"

Nicole looked surprised. "Why would I do that? I do occasionally enjoy leaving my desk, Mr. Matthews, and why should I force Ms. Grey to stop what she is doing because I am thirsty? Her job is just as important as mine."

A week ago Conner would have been utterly shocked. Now he simply smiled before lifting his soda and drinking. Her co-workers gave Nicole so little credit. Now that he knew more about her he wanted to go to each of them and tell them of how hard she worked for them.

"Why don't you tell them? Why don't you tell Pam you see her job as equal to your own?"

Nicole looked up from the file she was reviewing, then quickly looked back down at the file, as though dismissing him. "I have my reasons."

Chapter 13

Conner gratefully lounged on his sofa. The week had been much too long for his liking. Nicole had been right about how hard it would be to keep their relationship – he refused to think of it as an affair! – A secret while they were at work. Whenever he saw her frowning over a document he had wanted to go to her and soothe away her troubles. Several times, he had to force himself to stop as he took a step towards her to do just that.

Nicole hadn't been back over to his apartment since the previous weekend. No matter how much he wanted her in his arms, Conner knew he needed the time away to figure out what he wanted. It would be so hard to have her come over knowing that he would not be able to wake up with her curled in his arms.

She hadn't spent much time online either. Was it because she felt guilty for never returning to 'play' with T?

Conner, sat up and turned his computer on. Through the course of the week he had been able to get many more recordings of her voice, as he worked the bugs out of her new lock.

He sighed, he could have gotten enough in one day to finish his program last weekend, but somehow he couldn't do it. He couldn't record her while she was in his apartment, it seemed somehow too deceitful.

He uploaded the recordings and integrated it into the program and saved it. Then he logged on. Great, she was signed on! He would be able to test his program now.

netktn39: I owe you an apology...

netktn39: something unexpected came up last weekend, and I didn't get home until pretty late.

Conner smiled at her slight untruth. She hadn't gone home again at all until Sunday evening.

tchnogk527: That's alright. I figured it had to be something important.

Would she correct him?

netktn39: :- ! I owe you a giant kiss for understanding!*

Conner laughed and turned on the 'voice' he had been working on just before he signed on.

tchnogk527: I can be very understanding, especially if I get rewarded with a kiss ;-)

“L-O-L”

tchnogk527: Had a better week I take it?

“Much. Thank you.”

tchnogk527: want to tell me about those errands you had to go run last weekend?

“Not really. I’d rather just play, if you don’t mind. I’ll even let you rub my belly...”

Conner smiled, at both her comment and the program. Though much less ‘canned’ it wasn’t quite perfected yet, but it was getting better.

tchnogk527: So, what would you like to play?

Nicole smiled at the screen. She had felt too guilty to log on. For some reason she couldn’t quite understand, being intimate with Conner felt too much like betraying T.

He was the closest thing to a boyfriend she had, and as sad as that thought was, it was also comforting. He accepted her for who she was. He’d never called her a bitch or anything else.

T was always there for her, always made her feel better. They confided in each other, she trusted him completely.

tchnogk527: Kitty?

netktn39: I’m here.

tchnogk527: You got so quiet I was wondering if maybe I’d lost you.

netktn39: No, sorry, just got lost in my thoughts for a few minutes...

tchnogk527: Pleasant thoughts?

netktn39: very :-D

tchnogk527: Will you share them?

netktn39: Ok, don’t flip out on me, but

netktn39: I was thinking how nice it was to have someone in my life that accepted me so completely. Someone that I could trust so completely.

tchnogk527: Kitty! You didn’t tell me you were seeing a new boyfriend! Bad Kitty!

netktn39: No, T. I was talking about you.

Conner stared at the screen in shock. *Him? She was talking about him!*

netktn39: I'm not trying to freak you out T, I was just thinking how nice it was to have a friend I could talk to.

tchnogk527: You didn't freak me out, Kitty.

Liar!

The hell she hadn't freaked him out! Conner stood up and began to pace. There he was trying to be everything that she could want, trying to show support for her, and she still acted as though he were going to get something out of it!

That he would get something was beside the point. Because the only thing he wanted *was* Nicole and her happiness.

Liar. You want her love. You want her to talk to you the way she speaks to T.

"But I am T, damn it!" he practically shouted at the computer. Conner wanted to tell her then, he wanted to expose his secret and tell her who he was so she wouldn't think T was so wonderful.

netktn39: I think I'm going to sign off. I think I did freak you out, and I'm sorry T.

Conner ran back to the keyboard and quickly typed.

tchnogk527: wait!

netktn39: yes?

tchnogk527: that was really sweet of you.

Conner rolled his eyes as he typed.

tchnogk527: You just surprised me, that's all. I swear.

netktn39: If you're sure.

tchnogk527: positive...

tchnogk527: now roll over and let me rub that soft tummy.

Nicole chuckled. If anyone else had said the same thing, she would have been offended. But not with T. They made too many 'cat' references for her to think he was trying to be anything other than funny.

Feeling mischievous, Nicole began to type, to tease.

netktn39: Well all right, that is if my tummy is the only thing you are interested in rubbing...

tchnogk527: Ouch!

netktn39: What?

tchnogk527: I think my jaw just hit the floor!

tchnogk527: so, what else will you let me rub Kitty? :-D

netktn39: what would you like to rub?

netktn39: I have a twitching tail that is practically begging to be stroked...

netktn39: or maybe you'd rather play with my...

tchnogk527: Dear lord woman, are you trying to kill me?

netktn39: ;-) no, of course not... just thought maybe you'd like to play a little.

tchnogk527: then sit back and relax, because I'm about to start.

tchnogk527: For the purpose of this chat, keep two things in mind

tchnogk527: You won't tell me anything about how you look, so if I get a description wrong, be gentle...

netktn39: and?

tchnogk527: and, going back to earlier you won't give me any details thing, I'm just going to picture you in a skirt, for easier access. Not the kind people wear as part of a business suit, one of those long flowing ones that is easy to raise if you're sitting down.

Nicole closed her eyes, almost able to feel Conner walking up behind her, lifting her skirt before he...

Another ding brought her back to reality.

tchnogk527: Do have one question though. And it's innocent enough that I'm pretty sure you'll be willing to answer it.

tchnogk527: Do you have a desktop (sitting at a desk, in a chair), or a laptop (on a couch or bed)?

netktn39: I'll answer.

netktn39: I have a desktop, and yes I'm sitting at a desk in a very comfortable chair at the moment.

tchnogk527: good. Ok, now let the fun begin...

tchnogk527: First I come up behind you and begin to massage your shoulders and neck until there is no more stress...

netktn39: Oh that sounds heavenly!

tchnogk527: shhh...keep interrupting and you'll have to be punished. ;-)

tchnogk527: I get you to lean forward so I can continue to massage my way down your back.

tchnogk527: I lower myself to my knees as I rub your lower back, taking an opportunity to tease the nipple closest to me through your thin shirt.

Nicole's nipples hardened slightly as she read.

tchnogk527: I continue the soothing circles I'm making with my thumbs, and gently spin the chair, shifting slightly until I'm between your legs.

tchnogk527: I reach behind me on the desk, and, lifting your skirt until I see your black panties, I make three small snips.

tchnogk527: one on each side, and one across the bottom, I wouldn't want you to have to get up for anything ;-)

tchnogk527: I lower your skirt slightly, to help build the anticipation...

Nicole gasped as she read that. That certainly would drive her crazy, to be sitting there like that – bare for him – and he just pretends not to notice. She felt her pussy grow wet from the thought.

tchnogk527: My hands go back to your waist, and resuming the massage, I work my way up your body until I have your

tchnogk527: beautiful breasts in my hands, my thumbs circling your nipples.

tchnogk527: I slowly unbutton your shirt, careful to kiss every inch of creamy skin that I see. But I can't resist when I see your sexy black lace bra.

tchnogk527: I leave it on you, but run my tongue over your nipples, over the lace of the bra.

tchnogk527: I enjoy teasing your nipples; your moans turn me on, but not nearly as much as your beautiful body.

tchnogk527: I can't restrain myself any longer. Soon my fingers are slipping under your skirt until I reach your hot pussy ;-)

tchnogk527: I slide my finger deep inside you, moaning against your body at how wet you are for me...

tchnogk527: Are you purring for me yet Kitty?

Nicole had to type carefully.

netktn39: not quite yet, but pretty darn close!

tchnogk527: Well, let's see what we can do about that. ;-)

Nicole was so horny she couldn't think. She wondered if she should go upstairs and play with her new rubber boyfriend.

But the thought left her feeling cold. She didn't want something fake vibrating inside her, no matter how good it felt. She wanted to feel a real cock filling her, easing her ache. She wanted Conner.

As much as she hated to admit it, Nicole wanted Conner, felt like it had been an eternity since he had touched her last.

Giving in to her whim, she pulled out his number and dialed it, praying he was home and would want some company.

Conner was smiling. She liked that did she? He would just have to figure out a way to show her how much better it would feel in person.

Conner rolled his eyes as his cell phone rang. He wasn't really in the mood to deal with anyone right now.

"Hello?" he answered a little roughly.

"Conner, it's...Nicole," the voice hesitated over her name.

"Nikki, I wasn't expecting to hear from you. What's up?"

Besides me, he thought with a smile. Just hearing her voice was enough to make him rock hard. They had spent too much time apart...

"Not much, if this is a bad time I can always call you back some other time..."

"No, it's fine. I just wasn't expecting to hear from you tonight."

"I was just wondering if maybe you wanted some company," she told him. "Would you like some company, Conner?"

"Sure. Out of curiosity, will this be we'll-watch-a-movie-and-enjoy-discussing-it-later-but-keep-my-hands-to-myself kind of company, or the hurry-up-and-go-grab-another-box-of-condoms-because-you-aren't-leaving-the-bed kind?"

Nicole gave a husky chuckle. "More like the go-grab-more-than-one-box-because-you-won't-be-leaving-the-bed-all-weekend-except-to-eat kind. If you didn't already have plans that is..."

"How long before you get here?"

"About twenty minutes?"

"I can get to the store and back in twenty minutes, I'll see you then!"

Nicole hung up without saying goodbye. As Conner ended the call, he quickly returned to his attention to his laptop, and their conversation.

technogk527: Kitty, got to go. Just got a phone call and I have to run out. I'll catch you when I get back.

Grabbing his jacket and his keys, Conner felt for his wallet in his back pocket. Assured it was there, he quickly left to run to the corner drug store.

He bought four of the large packs of condoms, grinning stupidly when the cashier gave him a funny look.

"Making sure you don't run out?" she asked with a smile as she looked him up and down, her eyes lingering on his groin.

Conner could feel the material of his jeans pulled tight across his erection, and it would be hard not to miss it. Nicole had him so hard he felt as if he were going to explode, and he hadn't even looked at her beautiful body or tasted her yet!

He smiled as he nodded. "Yeah, that wouldn't be a good thing."

"I hope she knows how lucky she is," the woman said licking her lips. "Well, tiger, if she doesn't treat you right, my shift ends at three am."

Conner paid for the condoms and smiled, thanking the woman. A month ago he might have taken her up on her offer, but not tonight. Tonight he was going to spend in Nicole's arms, buried in her body.

He looked at the clock when he got home, happy that he still had five minutes to spare before she arrived. *Plenty of time to put the boxes all over the apartment for easy access*, he thought.

As he headed for the kitchen, he saw his screensaver rolling across the screen. It wouldn't do to have her see that.

Conner hit the space bar, preparing to cut off his computer, when the screensaver dropped, instead seeing the messenger window he had left up.

netktn39: Cool

netktn39: I'm gonna go visit a friend. I'll chat with you more when I get home.

An almost irrational wave of jealousy filled him as he saw the lines where 'Kitty' had been purring for him.

She's only coming to see me because another man got her horny! The thought was like a slap in the face. It didn't matter that he was that man; she didn't know it was him. She was just using him! He felt as though someone poured ice water over his body.

Conner wondered if he should just leave the screen up for Nicole to see. *How would that feel?*

That wouldn't be right, it would be cruel, Conner told himself.

But part of him didn't care. He was tired of the games. Tired of trying to figure out where he stood and feeling some irrational jealousy of his online persona...

He turned the computer off just a few seconds before there was a knock on his door.

Conner opened the door, and couldn't help his body's instant reaction to Nicole. But even though his body was again, immediately ready for their weekend of playtime, his heart ached at the memory of how free she was with T, and how reserved she was with him.

Her body wasn't reserved, but that's all she would allow between them.

It just wasn't enough any more.

Chapter 14

“What’s wrong?” Nicole asked as Conner shut the door behind her.

“Nothing,” he told her unconvincingly.

Nicole walked inside the apartment and sat down on the couch beside him. This was certainly not how she imagined things would go. She had pictured something more along the lines of him pulling her into his arms and down the hall. But he wasn’t even looking at her.

Her body was practically screaming now that she was so close to him!

“If you didn’t want me to come over all you had to do was tell me no.”

“I never said I didn’t want you here.”

Nicole rolled her eyes. “You don’t have to say it, I can tell.” Conner finally looked at her again. Nicole continued. “Since I’ve gotten here, you’ve been careful *not* to touch me, you’ve got this weird ‘I’m pissed’ look on your face, and you refuse to look at me. Don’t try to tell me your body language isn’t screaming for me to just leave.”

“I don’t want you to leave, Nicole. Honest.”

“Nicole? All righty then. I will talk to you later,” she stood up to leave but his hand quickly clasped hers, preventing her from walking away.

“Why don’t we just talk?”

“I didn’t call you so that I could come over and we could have a conversation.”

“Fine. Why don’t I pack a bag and we’ll go back to your place. I’ll be whatever you want me to be there,” he promised.

“I told you in the beginning that we would only meet here, at your place,” she answered shaking her head.

“Why?”

“Why are you asking so many questions?” she threw back.

“Why won’t you actually answer any of my questions?” he quickly threw back.

“Look, either you can tell me what’s going on, or I’m leaving, and this time I won’t be coming back.”

“Is that a threat?”

“Consider it more of a promise.” For the first time in a week Nicole had to struggle not to call him Mr. Matthews.

“Are you using me?” he blurted out.

“What? Why would you ask me that?”

“I want to know if you’re using me Nicole. I deserve to know the truth.”

“And if I am?” she asked, her temper flaring.

“Then, please, live up to your promise.”

Nicole was stunned. She couldn’t believe what he had just said. If she were using him he wanted her to leave and never come back. Her mind kept repeating that fact, as if trying to understand what he meant.

She stood there, unable to speak, unable to move. Was she using him? *It was terribly convenient than I called him after that steamy conversation with T...*

But if that were the case why would I imagine Conner’s hands, his mouth being the ones that teased me. Why would I want to close my eyes and imagine it was him instead of creating some fantasy man image for T?

Nicole shook her head as her thoughts whirled around her head almost faster than she could keep up with.

“I think I should go,” she told him trying to pull her hand out of his grasp.

“So you are just using me?”

Nicole looked at him, really looked at him. He looked so sad, so...heartbroken? *No, that couldn’t be it*, she told herself forcefully. *He doesn’t care about me. All we have is a physical relationship.*

“I don’t know. But it’s not fair to you for me to be here while I’m trying to figure it out, is it?”

“Nicole...”

She finally pulled her hand out of his and began to walk to the door.

“Nikki!” he said, trying to stop her.

“No, Conner. I won’t become one of the people I hate. I won’t be the person that just uses you for my own pleasure. I promise, I will give you a call just as soon as I figure out what is going on. I’ll give you my answer, as soon as I know what it is.”

Conner just stared at the door after she left. Sullenly he walked over and turned his computer back on. T would be there if she needed to talk.

He hated using T to find out what was going on in her head, but it seemed that was the only way he could get her to open up to him.

He toyed with the thought of going back to the cute cashier that flirted with him earlier, but knew instantly that he could never do it. She wasn't Nicole, and whether he liked it or not, Nicole was the only woman he wanted...

Conner was online the entire weekend, but she never signed on.

When Monday finally arrived, Conner was more than ready to go to the office. He wanted to see her, to know how she was.

Nicole groaned, her head falling to her desk.

"Is there something wrong, Ms. Blake?" Pam asked.

"No, there isn't."

"Ms. Blake, may I be honest with you?"

"Of course." She heard Pam close her office door, then walk back over to her desk.

"You are so full of shit it's pathetic."

Nicole's head flew up in surprise. Pam was sitting in the chair positioned in front of her desk, looking as though she hadn't just insulted Nicole.

"Please. I'm not blind. I know you aren't the bitch that you pretend to be. Just like I know you allowed Mr. Brooks to take credit for my promotion and the raises through the years. With all due respect, I'm not stupid, Ms. Blake. You may have everyone else fooled, but not me. I haven't been fooled for a very long time."

"And why would you think that, Ms. Grey?" Nicole was careful to keep her tone calm and aloof.

Pam rolled her eyes. "I've been a secretary for over ten years now. Yeah, yeah, I know, the PC term is 'executive assistant', but I was a secretary. Well, until I came to work for you. You never acted like you were better than me. I can't even remember one time that you buzzed me to get you something to drink unless you were practically buried beneath paperwork. And even then I can probably count the number of times on one hand. You gave me responsibilities, and, even though you tried to hide it, I know you gave me credit for the things that I did."

"How long have you known?"

"Since about the third month I worked for you," Pam smiled. "At first, I believed everyone else when they said you were just a cold bitch. But the longer I worked for you, the more I realized you were just being professional. Don't get me wrong, I think you can be professional without acting like there's a stick up your ass, but, I respected that. I respect you. I just figured it wasn't right to ruin your prickly

image with my knowledge. I saw how people treated you, and I knew they would never work that hard for a woman that acted as though she cared for them. I understood that most of the workers around here would just try to take advantage of you.”

“Thank you for not saying anything.”

“You are very welcome. Now, back to the reason you had your head on that desk. I can see the way Conner looks at you, and I see the way you look at him. I know there’s something going on between you, or at least there was something going on. I can respect the fact that you don’t want the entire building to know about it, but good grief, you look like you need to talk to someone.” Seeing Nicole’s panicked, wide eyed look Pam added, “It wasn’t very obvious. I don’t think anyone would notice it unless they were looking for it. And let’s face it, the last thing practically all of your coworkers would look for is whether or not you were mooning over another employee.”

“Ms. Grey...”

“Ms. Blake.” Pam interrupted. “Fine, you need proof, I’ll give you proof that I know what’s going on. For one thing, I saw you dancing with Conner, then leave with him at the anniversary celebration. I also know that you hate turtlenecks, and suddenly wore them for a week straight. I know that your mood improved at the exact same time that Conner began to walk around with a stupid grin on his face. Should I continue?”

Nicole shook her head. With a sigh she told Pam, “It’s complicated.”

“Then just uncomplicated it.”

“I don’t know how.”

“You could start by talking about what’s going on. You have my word it won’t leave this room.” Pam chuckled. “After all, I could have ratted you out anytime over the last three years. But even if you don’t talk to me, Ms. Blake, you do need to talk. I’ve never seen you look so miserable before.”

“Are you sure you don’t mind?”

Pam shook her head.

Nicole buzzed Mrs. Taylor and told her to hold all calls. She wasn’t to be disturbed for any reason. Turning back, she smiled at Pam and began. “Then I’ll just say one more thing before I start. You can call me Nicole.”

“Thank you.”

Nicole nodded once to acknowledge the woman’s words. “Well, the thing is, I feel like I’m torn between two guys...”

Nicole told her about her online friendship, and how she had grown to care for him, careful not to mention his name. She also confided how much she had been thinking about Conner.

“I’m just so scared that I’m just using him like Phil...Like I’ve been used in the past.”

“You aren’t,” Pam told her with conviction.

“How can you be so sure when I don’t even know the answer?”

“You aren’t the type of person that would just use another human being. And besides, if you were just using him, you certainly wouldn’t be feeling guilty over it.” Pam stood up, collecting her notepad and the files that Nicole had finished going over earlier. “I’ll give you one piece of advice before I go back to work. If you really want to know the truth, ask yourself why you’re keeping him at arm’s length. I heard about what Mr. Weiser did to you, Nicole. He certainly didn’t seem to care about keeping you at arms length when he was using you did he? Who are you trying to protect? Conner, or yourself?”

Pam exited her office, and Nicole didn’t feel any closer to an answer than before. If anything she felt more confused. Now there were more questions inside her head.

Conner’s mood was bleak. It was Thursday, and he hadn’t seen or heard from Nicole since she left his apartment the previous Friday night. He was just about to climb into his SUV when he noticed Nicole walking to her car.

“Nicole, I was wondering if you had given any further thought to...”

“No, Mr. Weiser, I have not. As I mentioned before, I do not wish to rekindle any form of relationship with you.”

Their voices drifted over to him. Conner decided to go make sure she didn’t need any help. He also made a mental note to begin investigating Phillip Weiser, to see if he had the knowledge to try to break into Nicole’s computer.

As he drew closer to her car, Conner noticed a strange smell on the air, but as another employee pulled off, he dismissed it, believing the man was having a problem with his exhaust.

“I had a feeling you would say that. Ah, there he is now, your own little knight in shining armor. Conner, lad, do you follow Nicole with the hope that she will need you to swoop in and rescue her? Do you think that will thaw her icy heart?”

“Good evening, Mr. Weiser,” Nicole replied stiffly. She waited until Phillip climbed in his car and drove off before turning to Conner. “Mr. Matthews, I am sorry, I do not have an answer for you at this time. I promise I will let you know as soon as I do.”

“Have a nice evening Ms. Blake,” Conner told her gently as he nodded. He refused to be classified as the same type of jerk as her ex.

He watched as Nicole sat down in her car. He knew he should go back to his own vehicle and go back to his amazingly lonely apartment, but couldn’t force himself to move. Once the door was shut and her seat belt fastened, she nodded to him once then tried to start her car. Instead of starting it made a funny noise. Conner had just turned to go back to his own vehicle but stopped when the engine refused to turn over. After the tenth, time it failed to start her head fell to the steering wheel.

“Pop the hood,” he told her walking toward the car once more.

Nicole quirked an eyebrow but did as he requested.

Conner looked at the engine, so different from the old one he tinkered with beside his grandfather when he was a younger. He carefully checked the cables to the battery, made sure it had oil and water in the proper places. He didn’t really believe any of those were the cause of her engine refusing to start, but it wouldn’t hurt to check them either.

He closed the hood and tried to think.

“Turn the key. Don’t try to start it, let’s just check the battery.”

Nicole did as he asked and the radio came to life instantly.

Puzzling it out, Conner began to circle her car. As soon as he was on the passenger side, he had a suspicion he knew what was wrong with her car. The smell of gasoline drifted up to his nose as he saw a giant puddle that ended somewhere under her car. It would have been easy to miss, since there was no sign of the puddle from the driver’s side.

“Do you have a flashlight?”

“In the trunk, why?”

“Pop the trunk.” Conner quickly grabbed the flashlight and lay down on the hard pavement.

“What are you doing? Why are you looking under my car? You’re going to get filthy!”

He ignored her as he wiggled until he was slightly underneath the vehicle. The smell was almost overpowering down there. As he watched closely, the beam of the flashlight searching underneath, he saw a small tell-tale drip.

Scooting back he turned the flashlight off and tucked it back into her trunk.

“Look, now you’re filthy! I’m not sure some of those stains will even come out... What are you doing?” she asked as he grabbed her arm and began to lead her back to the building.

“We have to go inside. We need to call a tow truck and the police.”

“We? Wait, the police? Again!”

“Nicole, someone’s cut your fuel line. The least of your problems is the fact your car won’t start. If someone drops a lit cigarette or match near your car, it’s going to explode.”

He led her easily toward the building, her shock written all over her face. Once inside he made the calls for her, staying to wait for the police as well, unwilling to leave her alone.

Who would hate her so badly that they would want to try to kill her?

When the police arrived, Conner lay on the dirty ground once again and showed the officer the drip, and the large puddle underneath the car.

The cop was noncommittal, but promised to file the report. He gave Conner his card and asked him to have the mechanic that checked the car give him a call once the car had been more thoroughly examined.

“You’re one lucky lady, Miss. If your boyfriend there hadn’t found that puddle, you could have gotten seriously injured.”

“Thank you,” she replied mechanically.

“Is there anyone you know of that could want to kill you?” he asked.

“No,” Conner answered for her.

“Not that I know of,” she told him shaking her head. “But I’m also not the most popular person here either.”

“If you can think of anyone, anyone at all, you give us a call.” The policeman left just as the tow truck pulled in.

John Brooks walked up at that moment and asked what was going on.

With a sigh, Conner began to tell the older man of the puddle beneath Nicole’s car.

Nicole was silent the entire time the burly man strapped her car to the truck to tow it. As he drove away, the shock began to wear off, and her body began to tremble slightly.

“Do you really think someone hates me enough to try to kill me? Mr. Brooks, I’m sorry, I didn’t even notice you walk up.”

“Don’t worry about it, dear, that was a terrible shock you had. I want you to take tomorrow off. That’s an order,” he added when Nicole was about to protest. “You deserve a break. I don’t want to see you here, and I don’t want to hear about you stepping one single foot on the property.”

Nicole nodded. She knew that Mr. Brooks was right, that she wouldn’t be able to concentrate on her work even if she were to show up.

“Conner, do you mind making sure Ms. Blake gets home safely?”

“No sir.”

“Good, good. Remember what I said, Nicole. And no one will blame you if you decide to take a few days off next week either.”

“Yes sir,” she responded automatically.

The older gentleman walked off leaving Nicole alone with Conner once again.

“Come on.” Conner tried to guide her to his vehicle.

“Wait. I need to go back to my office for a few minutes.”

Conner groaned but didn’t try to stop her. He followed her to her office and watched from the doorway as she scribbled on a legal pad and carefully prepared her office for a long weekend.

“Just one more stop,” she told him as they left the office.

Conner followed her to the lounge where she grabbed several garbage bags.

Without another word, Nicole left the building and headed for Conner’s SUV.

He just stared when she opened his door and began to carefully arrange the bags.

“So you don’t ruin your interior,” she told him before walking to the passenger side and climbing in.

For a woman with such an ‘inconsiderate’ reputation, she sure does consider other people’s feelings and possessions a great deal.

Conner started the car and began to drive. “Where would you like me to take you? Would you just like to call a cab from my place?” he asked, wishing that she would stay with him, but knew the next move was hers to make.

“Yeah, sure. That’ll be fine, thank you.”

The rest of the drive was made in silence.

When he pulled into a parking space, Conner looked at her and noticed she was shaking. He wanted to pull her in his arms and comfort her. “Nicole, you are welcome to stay with me, if you don’t want to be alone. No funny business, I swear. I’ll even sleep on the couch...”

She shook her head, “You’ve already done so much I couldn’t put you out like that. Especially considering what’s going on between us...”

“The offer is open, if you change your mind.”

A few of people gave him curious looks as he made his way to the elevator, and later down the hall to his apartment carrying the two garbage bags.

“I’m going to jump in the shower. You know where the phone is. Help yourself to anything in the fridge...”

Conner turned and headed for the bathroom. As he turned on the shower, he couldn’t help wondering if she would still be out there when he was finished.

Chapter 15

Nicole sat down on Conner's couch trying to figure out what she wanted. She didn't want to spend the night anywhere except her own bed, but she didn't want to be alone. Not if someone were truly trying to hurt her...

She heard Conner repeating his generous offer over and over inside her head. *Would he...no*, she shook her head. *It wouldn't be right to ask him to spend the weekend at her house. It would only lead him on, and allow him to think they had a future together.*

"Wow, I wasn't sure you'd still be here," Conner said, startling her out of her thoughts.

When she turned around Nicole began to wish she had simply answered him without looking back. He only had a large towel wrapped around his waist, another slightly smaller towel in his hand wiping the moisture from his upper body. "Feels good to be clean again," he teased.

Nicole wanted to tell him anything that would get him to drop the towel. Her brain felt like it was going to explode from the sight of him. Her body, so cold just a moment ago began to flare to life.

"Would you go home with me?" she asked before she even knew what she was saying.

"You want me to go home with you? What about your rules?" Conner walked over to the couch and sat down near her, but not near enough that she could touch him accidentally.

"Conner I'm scared. No one has ever done anything like this to me before. I...I just want to be in the safety of my own house, but I don't want to be alone. I understand if you don't want to."

"For how long?" he asked. When Nicole finally looked at him, he was staring at her, his expression carefully closed.

"The night? The weekend maybe? I'm really not sure right now."

"I'll go pack a few clothes."

Nicole couldn't take her eyes off his butt as he walked out of the room. But the towel stayed firmly in position around his hips.

She walked around his apartment, still shaking slightly. But now she wasn't sure if it was because of her car or because Conner agreed to go back to her home.

"Are you ready?" he asked as he reentered the room carrying a gym bag. He grabbed the bag with his laptop inside and smiled.

Nicole could only nod her head. He looked delicious with his hair brushed back out of his face, dressed in a dark green shirt and dark jeans.

“Let me help you with some of that...”

“It’s ok, Nicole. I’ve got it,” he told her smiling.

As they left the building, Nicole even felt herself smiling. She climbed into his car and buckled her seat belt while he put his bags in the back.

“Where to next, my lady?” he asked playfully.

“Well, if you don’t mind, I need to go to the grocery store... I’m not sure my house is stocked enough for a weekend of company.”

“Then to the grocery store we shall go.”

Nicole smiled as Conner finally pulled into her driveway. She loved her house. Just being home made her feel slightly better.

“Wow. Nice place,” Conner said admiringly.

“I’ll show you where you can put your stuff, then come back for the groceries,” Nicole said, the smile still on her face.

She pulled out her keys and unlocked the door. “Watch out for Candy,” she told him as she led him into her home.

“Candy? You have candy that attacks here?”

“No, Candy is my cat. Her full name is Candy Cane, but I only call her that when she’s in real trouble.”

“Candy Cane, that’s an unusual name.”

“I got her a few years ago, just before Christmas,” Nicole told him as she led him through the den and up to the hallway. “She kept attacking my tree and breaking open the candy canes. She would eat the candy, and leave the plastic wrapping all over the house.”

“Sounds like she deserves her name,” Conner said chuckling behind her. “So now what do you do? About the great Candy Cane snack monster I mean?”

Nicole laughed. “I don’t buy very many, just a few and put them in her stocking. That way she gets her favorite treat, and I don’t have to worry about trash all over my house. I know, you aren’t supposed to feed your cat human food, but I figure it’s only once a year...”

At the top of the stairs, Nicole led him to a room. “You can stay in here,” she told him walking inside.

“It’s beautiful, thank you.”

“My room is right across the hall if you need anything...” Nicole blushed. She couldn’t believe how hard it had been not to just put him in her room for the weekend! “I’m going to go bring in the groceries, feel free to explore the house. If you go in my room, just be careful, Candy usually lurks in there ready to pounce on ankles. There’s a cable modem in the closet,” she pointed, to a door. “If you want to hook your computer up to the internet...” Then she rushed out of the room.

Conner left his bags on the bed and went back downstairs to help her bring the bags of groceries in, despite her protest. When they were all safely in her kitchen and she began to put them away, he went back upstairs and sat down on the large bed testing the firmness of the mattress as he looked around.

He put his bags in the corner and decided to take her up on her suggestion. He put his toothbrush, toothpaste, brush and deodorant in the bathroom next to his room, and began exploring the rest of the upstairs. In one room, he saw a sewing machine and a very orderly stack of patterns and beautiful materials.

He left Nicole’s bedroom for last.

Opening the door, he looked around. Seeing her bathroom door open, Conner walked in and stopped in awe. He got an image of himself fucking her inside that huge tub, their bodies surrounded by bubbles. His cock got hard from the image, just as a small orange ball of fur ran up to his ankle and swiped at it.

Conner closed his eyes in relief that Nicole’s cat didn’t use her claws. He knelt down and rubbed the cat on its head, then picking it up, he walked downstairs.

“What would you like for supper?” she called from the kitchen as he continued to walk around her house.

“I’m pretty easy, whatever you were going to fix. I don’t want to be any trouble. I can order us something if you’d like...”

“No, I like to cook.” Nicole stuck her head out of the kitchen. Her hair was still up, and she wore an apron over her clothes. “I just don’t cook very often. It gets a little depressing cooking for just one, you know?” She quickly disappeared back into the kitchen, as if embarrassed by her admittance.

“You have a beautiful home; it’s so warm and inviting.” Conner walk over to a curio filled with beautiful dragon figurines.

“Thanks,” she called.

When he had walked through every room, he stepped inside the kitchen, sitting down on a stool at the bar, smiling as he watched her prepare their meal.

“I hope you don’t mind Italian food,” she told him as she rinsed something he couldn’t quite see in the sink. “Have you ever had Chicken Parmesan?”

“Yes I have. It sounds delicious. Are you sure you wouldn’t rather do something a little simpler?”

“No,” she smiled. “Really, I love to cook. Why don’t you go watch a movie or TV show or something?”

“Can I stay here and talk to you?”

“Sure,” Nicole said, adding spices to create the breading without missing a beat.

“So, how have you been? I mean, other than tonight’s big shock.”

“I’ve kept busy,” she said as she began to heat the oil to begin cooking.

“I’ve missed you, Nicole.”

“Why did you stop calling me Nikki?” she asked turning to look at him.

“It didn’t seem appropriate any more.”

“I liked it,” she said, her voice low as she turned to continue to fuss with the various pots and pans on the stovetop.

Conner wanted to walk over and help her. He wanted to walk over to her and fuck her while she cooked. He wanted her to be screaming and sitting in a boneless heap on the floor again.

“Can I help with anything?”

“You can set the table...”

“Consider it done.” Conner couldn’t stop himself from pressing a kiss to the side of her neck just before he began to gather utensils and glasses.

A half hour later, the table was set, and Nicole brought their plates to the table.

“You lit the candles...”

“I’m sorry, we can blow them out.” Conner began to stand to blow the one closest to him out, but she stopped him by placing a hand on his shoulder.

“I like it. Thank you.”

Conner filled their glasses with wine, and teased Nicole. “Don’t drink too much, Nikki. I’m a guest remember, you have to entertain me.”

Rather than taking offense she laughed. “Yes sir. No more than one glass of wine for me.”

Conversation was sparse as they ate their meal.

“This is the best Chicken Parmigiana I’ve had in ages,” he complimented her.

“Thank you.”

“Seriously, Nikki, if you keep spoiling me with such good food, I may never want to go home.”

Nicole didn’t respond to his teasing. What could she say? That she didn’t think she wanted him to go back home either? Did she want him to move in with her?

She was surprised when the thought didn’t immediately start her stomach heaving.

“Would you like some dessert? I have a chocolate pie that I made last night...”

“Can I take you up on it a little later?”

“Of course.” Nicole stood up and began to clear the dishes from the table.

“I was just teasing when I made the never leaving comment, Nikki.”

He was so close behind her that she could practically feel the heat from his body.

“I know,” she told him her stomach clenching. Would he kiss her again?

“Would you mind if I take some of the leftovers to work with me tomorrow?”

His breath was warm and moist on her neck as he placed one hand on either side of her body, blocking any retreat with his body.

“I’ll fix you a lunch,” she promised, amazed that she could still speak coherently.

“Nikki...”

That broke her resolve to stay away from him. She couldn’t seem to convince herself any longer that she was imagining things. Not when she could feel the heat, the tension flowing from his body.

Nicole spun around in his arms and pulled his head down to hers, kissing him with all the longing she’d felt since she’d walked out of his apartment. His hands flew up her body, unpinning her hair until it flowed freely down her back.

Nicole moaned into his mouth as his tongue began to take control of the kiss, as he began to push her back against the counter.

She pushed him away, and when he stepped back he looked stunned and more than a little confused. One glance told her his cock was hard and straining against his jeans to be closer to her.

Never before, with any guy, had she felt so powerful, so feminine, so desirable.

“Not like this Conner,” she started.

“I understand. I should...maybe I should go...”

“You can if that’s what you really want...” Hurt flashed in his eyes. “But I was thinking more along the lines of I’ve got a perfectly good bed upstairs...”

Conner wasted no time. Picking her up he headed for the stairs, walking as quickly as he could. Anytime she tried to protest about being too heavy, he would kiss her, shoving his tongue into her mouth to silence her. He laid her on the bed and then disappeared through the door.

Back in his room he pulled out the box of condoms he had packed just in case. He really hadn't believed there would be any cause for them, but preferred to be prepared than denied.

Unopened box in hand, he quickly went back across the hall, and seeing the cat running up the stairs, quickly shut Nicole's bedroom door. "Sorry kitty, no belly rubs for you tonight."

When he looked back, Nicole had an odd expression on her face. Conner yanked off his shirt and tossed her the box of condoms. Toeing off his shoes, Conner's eyes never left her as he quickly continued to strip.

"Now, sweet Nikki, it's your turn." He got to the bed and reaching under her skirt began to pull the pantyhose she wore off. He smiled wickedly when he noticed they were thigh highs. He pulled her closer to him. As he kissed her, he began to unbutton her very professional white shirt. Without breaking the kiss he unfastened her bra and pulled both the shirt and bra away from her.

He continued to undress her until she was laying on her bed naked but for the stockings.

"God, I've missed you," he said just a moment before he lowered his face to her breast, taking the nipple into his mouth.

Nicole gasped and arched against him.

"Have you missed me?" he asked as he licked a path over to the other breast.

"Yes," she moaned.

"I'm glad. I want to taste every inch of your body," he said as he kissed and licked his way down her body.

Nicole grabbed his head, jerking on his hair, before he could bury his tongue in her sweet pussy.

"No," she ordered. "There will be plenty of time for that later," she said pulling his head back up to her mouth. "If you don't fuck me now, I won't be held responsible for my actions, Conner."

"Yes ma'am," he smiled as he took possession of her mouth once again. He groaned into the kiss as he felt her hands sliding the condom onto his body. As soon as she was finished, Conner nudged her legs farther apart and thrust deep inside of her.

He held himself still as his body threatened to come just from being inside her again.

As soon as he felt he had some control over his body once again, Conner began to thrust inside her, his mouth devouring her breasts. He latched onto her left nipple and began to suck, his mouth mimicking his thrusts.

He wanted to mark her, he wanted anyone that saw her body to know that she belonged to him.

He felt her body going tense with pleasure, knew she was close to coming as her nails began to dig deeper into his flesh.

“Oh, God, Conner,” she panted.

He increased his thrusts, until she was screaming his name over and over again. As he felt her body shudder, clenching, milking his cock, he released the tenuous hold on his control. His cock exploded with pleasure, as the condom quickly filled with the warm fluid just released from his body.

He collapsed on top of her for just a moment before he reluctantly pulled out of her, and went into her bathroom to dispose of the condom.

Conner didn't want to get out of bed the next morning. He didn't want to leave the warm comfort of Nicole's bed, her body. At that thought, Conner reached for her, only to find her side of the bed empty.

“Nikki?” he called drowsily. *She wouldn't run from her own damn house to avoid me*, he thought angrily. He opened his eyes to see an orange ball of fur lying on the foot of the bed, staring disdainfully at him.

He got up quickly and walked across the hall to put on clean boxers before going downstairs to look for Nicole.

“Nikki, what are you...” A wonderful aroma hit him, filling his mouth with moisture. “What are you doing, baby?” He stared at her, she was standing at the stove, cooking, only wearing a thin bathrobe. It hugged her curves, and he was positive she wasn't wearing anything beneath it.

“I'm fixing breakfast. Go upstairs, jump in the shower and get ready for work. By the time you come back down, breakfast should be ready.”

Conner reached for a slice of bacon, pulling his hand away when she slapped it.

“Go get ready for work, or you won't have enough time to eat.”

Conner nuzzled her neck, smiling when he heard her sigh. “What if what I want to eat isn't on the menu?” he asked nipping her neck with his teeth.

“Then maybe, if you're a good boy, it'll be put on the menu at supper,” she told him playfully before once again gently pushing him away.

Conner smiled and left the kitchen to do as she directed, but wanting to do nothing more than stay there with her, making love to Nicole all day.

Conner sighed with contentment as he sat eating his lunch. A man could definitely get used to this. Not only had she fixed him an amazing breakfast, Nicole had packed up some leftovers, as he requested, and even included a slice of chocolate pie. He closed his eyes, smiling at the memory of her at the table this morning, wearing just a robe.

“Dude, who are you fucking?”

“What?” Conner’s eyes quickly popped open to see one of his fellow security messengers sitting down beside him. “What makes you think that?”

“Dude! That dreamy smile, that feast you brought for lunch? Does she have a sister?”

“A guy can’t just decide to bring an actual meal for lunch every now and then?”

“Yeah, he can. But then, we’ve been working together how long? And how many times have you brought something like *that* for lunch? I don’t buy the innocent act. But that’s alright, if you don’t want to tell me who she is, I won’t pry. But you better make sure you hold onto her tight.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Conner chuckled as he got up to wash the dishes and repack them.

“She’s got you whipped,” the other man said, shaking his head as he laughed.

The rest of the day flew by for Conner. Nothing was able to ruin his good mood. He knew people were whispering about him, trying to figure out who the new woman in his life was. He was just about to leave when his cell phone rang.

“Hello?” he answered, the smile on his face all day evident in his voice.

“Conner, its Nicole. I was just wondering if you could stop by the store on your way back here...”

“No problem. What do you need?”

“I need some cinnamon, milk, and eggs. I was thinking about making French Toast for breakfast tomorrow.”

“Got it. Sounds delicious, I can’t wait.”

“I’ll see you when you come...get back.”

“See you then.” He closed his phone and looked at the people staring at him. “What?” he asked annoyed.

A few of the men just chuckled and the women had knowing smiles on their faces.

Shaking his head, Conner got out of there as quickly as he could.

Chapter 16

Nicole stretched on the bed, loving the way Conner's arm tightened around her waist when she shifted.

"Good Morning," she smiled.

"Ugh."

Nicole rubbed her hand on his cheek.

"I need to shave. I should have remembered my razor," he grumbled.

"I like it. Shave the sides, and just leave a little goatee," she traced the outline around his mouth before she leaned in and kissed him, her tongue barely brushing against his. "I like it."

Conner braced his head on his arm. "You like it, huh. Then maybe I'll keep it, just for a little while. But you have to tell me why you like it."

"It feels different. It tickles a little when I kiss you, and," she pulled his head back down to hers, whispering the rest of her answer against his lips. "I love the way it feels so rough against me when you eat me. It drives me wild," she said before kissing him deeply again.

"Then it's settled, it'll stay for a little while. But I always thought most women didn't like that."

"I'm not most women, or do I have to remind you of that *again*," she asked feeling mischievous.

"Mmmmm. Remind me," he said with a smile.

"I think you enjoy that too much. Maybe I should just handcuff you to my bed and just use you as my love slave for the rest of the day..."

Nicole chuckled as his cock hardened and pressed against her thigh.

"Well, I guess that makes it unanimous. Use me as you will," he said dramatically, his arms positioned above his head.

Nicole climbed over him until she was straddling his legs, his cock pressed tight against her sex.

"Well, then, let me put it to you this way. I can cuff you to the bed, or I can go downstairs and fix us breakfast. I don't know about you, but I'm hungry after that workout you gave me last night."

"So it's either cuffs or breakfast. That's not fair," he pouted. "Can I get a rain check on the cuffs?"

"Of course," she leaned down and bit gently on his nipple.

Nicole jumped slightly when he gently smacked her ass.

“Then let’s get up and get some breakfast, before I change my mind and cash in my rain check right now,” he teased.

Laughing, Nicole climbed off him, making sure to give his cock a caress with her wet pussy.

She grabbed her robe and ran out the door, as he growled and tried to grab her.

She managed to make it downstairs before he finally caught her. He threw her over his shoulder and began to walk back up the stairs.

“I can’t make breakfast thrown over your shoulder like this,” she squealed.

“You tease, you,” he said heading for the stairs. “Gonna torture me then run like that,” Conner tickled her waist.

“Conner! What are you doing?”

“Well, since you don’t seem able to fix breakfast, I’m going to enjoy a different treat.”

“Put me down. Conner, the phone is ringing, I have to answer it,” she told him as he strode into her bedroom.

He growled when she reached for the cordless phone by her bed, but didn’t stop her.

“Hello?”

“Good morning, Ms. Blake. This is John Brooks. I was just wondering if you knew whether or not you would be at work on Monday.”

Her face must have shown how shocked she was because Conner instantly left her alone and got quiet.

“Yes sir, I will.”

“Fine, fine, I’d like to see you in my office when you arrive.”

“Of course.”

“Have a nice day,” he told her dismissively.

“You too, Mr. Brooks.”

She hung up the phone and sighed.

“What was that about?” Conner asked, sitting down beside her.

“Mr. Brooks wants to see me in his office first thing Monday morning. Oh, great, this isn’t good.” Nicole shook her head.

“Nicole, it could be anything...”

She looked at him. “And how often have you been called at home by your supervisor just because he wanted to tell you what a great job you were doing? I’m going to go make breakfast.”

Conner watched Nicole wrap her robe tightly around her body as she left the bedroom. *What did John want? And why the hell had he had to call then!*

Conner went into the bedroom across the hall and pulled out some clothes. He was positive that Nicole wasn't in the mood to play anymore, at least not yet. But he refused to let one three minute phone call ruin her entire weekend.

Conner went downstairs, sighing in pleasure as he smelled the French toast Nicole was cooking. It was quite a step up from the cereal or doughnuts he usually had for breakfast. She certainly was spoiling him.

Nicole sat on the couch, leaning back against Conner as they watched television.

"Nikki, this has been really fun, thank you for inviting me to your home."

"I'm glad you came."

"I should probably get ready to go home," Conner said, but didn't move from his position.

"I've been thinking about that..." she said, darting a glance at him from the corner of her eye.

"And?" he asked, giving her his full attention.

"Well," she shifted until she could look into his face. "I'm not using you. I don't know what's going on between us, but I swear, I'm not using you. I want...that is, if you want to try..." She took a deep breath to steady herself. "I want to try to find out what's between us. I want to know if it's just sex, or if there could be more."

"I can't stop thinking about you, and I was so miserable when we weren't talking. I'm willing to see where this could go if you are..."

"Nikki, of course I want to see where this could go. Does this mean we're dating?" he asked playfully. "Are you my girlfriend now?"

She smiled. "Yes. Just remember, I never learned how to share my toys," she said, her tone light, as she turned to sit facing him. "And, well, since we're already sleeping together, that also means that if you wanted, you could leave some of your stuff here. In case you want to spend the night sometime..."

Conner leaned down and kissed her deeply. "I would love to spend the night."

"I'm glad. I think you've spoiled me these past few days..." Nicole's hand slid under his shirt to circle his nipple. "Well, if you're going to stay, I guess we really should get up and go to the store." Nicole tried to shift away from him, but Conner held her against him.

“Why?” He was just about to lower his mouth to that tempting spot, just below her ear, the one that made her whimper when she pulled his head back up.

“Well, you do need a couple of thing, like a razor, since you refuse to use mine,” she teased.

“What, and get torn up by it? No thank you,” he teased back. “It won’t kill me to go into work looking rough one day, I’ll just tell them my new girlfriend kept me tied to the bed,” he told her with a wink. He began to move back to that spot.

Nicole whimpered slightly, the sound making him rock hard inside his jeans.

“We’re also...almost out of condoms...” she told him as she tilted her head to give him better access to the spot.

“Then what are we waiting for? We have to hurry up and go to the store.”

Nicole laughed as Conner got up and adjusted the erection inside his jeans.

“Let’s go, woman. The faster we go, the faster we can get back here and get back to more important things.”

Nicole hummed as she twisted her hair into a tight bun, then secured it. She smiled as she glanced into her bedroom to see Conner still sprawling on her bed, with Candy curled up on his chest.

As quietly as she could she went downstairs and began to make muffins for breakfast and poured some orange juice for herself.

She heard her alarm clock going off and Conner walk across the room to cut it off. After a few minutes she heard him turn the water on in her bathroom.

The oven timer went off and she pulled the fresh baked muffins out and placed them around a plate to cool.

“Good Morning, Nikki.” Conner put his arms around her waist and kissed her cheek.

“Eat your breakfast,” she scolded gently. “I’m heading into the office early today.”

“I can take you. Just let me grab a couple of these and...”

“I wish I could. As much as I want to shout to everyone that we’re together...”

“It wouldn’t be very professional,” Conner finished for her. “I understand completely.”

“Thank you,” she told him, giving him a brief, unsatisfying kiss. “I’ll see you later?”

“OK.”

Nicole picked up her briefcase as the taxi honked its horn to let her know it had arrived.

“What!” Nicole couldn’t believe what she was hearing from Mr. Brooks.

“Please, Ms. Blake, calm down. I have to check into every claim of impropriety. Now, a...gentleman in your office, who wishes to remain anonymous, has complained that you refuse to give him a satisfactory evaluation unless he...” Mr. Brooks cleared his throat. “Unless he satisfies you.... Sexually.”

Nicole fought to keep her calm, cool attitude. “Mr. Brooks, that statement is partially true. I refuse to give any of my employees, male or female, a satisfactory evaluation unless they satisfy me. But,” she continued as the older man opened his mouth. “But I can assure you that I do not harass my employees.”

“So you have never slept with an employee that works beneath you?”

“Mr. Brooks, I have never coerced any man to sleep with me.”

“That isn’t what I asked, Ms. Blake.”

Nicole knew she could easily lie and get herself out of the predicament. But she just couldn’t bring herself to do it. “I’m sorry, but what I do in my private time, away from work, is none of your business, with all due respect. I will however once again insist that no man has ever been intimate with me for any reason other than his own free will and desire to be intimate with me.”

“Ms. Blake, Nicole, I need to know who the employee is.”

Nicole simply shook her head, refusing to answer.

“Then I will have to file a report.”

“I understand sir. I have done nothing wrong.” Nicole began to stand up to go back to her office and get to work. Hopefully, she would be able to simply forget that such a ridiculous accusation ever happened.

“One more thing, then you may go, Nicole.”

She sat back down and waited, her patience growing thin.

“Phillip has also informed me that you have refused to work with him, that you refuse to even allow him to speak with you. Is this correct?”

“Yes, Mr. Brooks.”

“What is going on Nicole?” John Brooks slammed his fist down on top of his desk. “A month ago you were a model employee. Now I have claims of sexual harassment and refusals to work with others. Please, tell me what is going on, I want to be on your side, Nicole. You’re one of the best employees we have here! Talk to me.”

“I’m sorry,” she shook her head again. “My refusal to work with Mr. Weiser is a strictly personal decision.” Nicole softened her tone when she saw the man’s disbelief. “I just can’t work with him. I’m sorry, but I refuse to go into my reasons any farther.”

“You understand that I have to make a report on this as well?”

Nicole nodded.

“Damn it, Nicole,” John said, his frustration evident in his tone. “One more incident and I have to fire you. Is that what you want?”

“No sir. But I’ve worked too hard to keep my professional and private life separate. I love my job, but I will not put my private life on display for everyone in this company simply to prove my innocence at such horrible accusations. I understand you are only doing your job. If that’s all, please, allow me to get back to mine...”

John sighed. “That’s everything I needed to discuss with you. Nicole, if you change your mind about answering my questions, my door is open for you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Brooks, but that won’t be necessary.”

Nicole walked out of the office with her back straight. She kept herself stiff and formal until she reached her office.

Pam watched as Nicole walked stiffly past her into her office. Something wasn’t right, she hadn’t even stopped to get her messages or any files.

Pam walked into the office with a quick knock, and took the files she needed to review and gave her the ton of messages that were taken the previous Friday.

“Ms. Blake, here are your messages and the files that need to be reviewed. The most pressing ones are on the top.”

“Thank you, Ms. Grey. Please see that I’m not disturbed.”

“Yes, Ms. Blake.”

Pam left the office determined to find out what had Nicole in such a bad mood when she had seen Conner practically skipping around the office.

She decided to do something Nicole would never have approved of. She called Mr. Brooks secretary.

“Hi Gladys, it’s Pam. I was just wondering when Mr. Brooks wanted that file he requested.”

“The sooner the better, Pam. After what happened earlier...”

Pam knew the woman loved to gossip. She had one of the biggest mouths in the company, but she had to play this just right so Gladys wouldn't know how interested she really was.

"Really? Anything good?"

"Well, I'm not one to talk, but it involves a certain stuck up woman in Claims."

"Really? Can you tell me who?" Pam made sure she sounded intrigued, as though she didn't already know the other woman was talking about Nicole.

"Well, I really shouldn't. Hold on just one minute." Pam heard the other woman speaking to someone in front of her. "I'm sorry, Conner, Mr. Brooks won't be available before lunch. But you're welcome to wait if you like," she said with a smile in her voice.

Pam didn't hear his reply, but Gladys was practically purring the next time she spoke. "Well, will you let me know if you decide to grab something outside the building for lunch? I forgot to bring something and can't leave the building today. You are such a doll! I'll see you later, Conner."

When the woman remembered she was on the phone, her voice was almost breathless. "Lord that man is just too handsome! It's a shame he's dating someone..."

"He is? When did you hear that? And if he's dating someone, why were you flirting with him?"

"Tim, from security, told me that Friday the man practically brought a gourmet meal for lunch, and he was smiling all day. Well, he's still smiling, so he has to be dating someone, doesn't he? And I was flirting because, well, it never hurts to let a man know he has choices, does it?"

Yes, it does, Pam wanted to scream. She wanted to see the woman's face go pale when she found out that Conner was dating Nicole. But she respected her boss too much to just blurt out details about her private life, no matter how much she wanted Gladys to shut up.

"So, can you tell me who's in trouble?"

"Well, let me put it this way. You might be getting a new boss soon. One more complaint and Ms. I'm-too-good-to-speak-to-you Blake will be fired."

"No! Goodness, what happened?"

"Ms. Blake has outright refused to work with Phillip Weiser. You know, Head of Promotions, Phillip Weiser..."

"Wow."

"But that's not all..." Gladys lowered her voice conspiringly. "Someone in your department has reported her for sexual harassment. I knew she didn't treat everyone equally," Gladys told her in a smug tone.

Pam balled her hand into a fist underneath her desk and forced herself to keep her tone light.

“Who was it?”

“I don’t know! The suspense is killing me! I want to know who to send the thank you card to when she gets fired! Excuse me.”

Music drifted to Pam’s ear as she was placed on hold. After a few seconds, Gladys came back.

“I have to go. Tell me if you find out who she’s after?”

“Gladys!” Pam said carefully in a tone that neither agreed nor disagreed to tell the woman anything.

“I knew I could count on you, Pam!”

Pam hung up the phone then quickly dialed the security department.

“Yes, please send Mr. Matthews up here as quickly as possible, there’s a problem with the lock he installed for Ms. Blake last week and we are eager to have it fixed. Thank you.”

Less than fifteen minutes later, Conner turned the corner and, a smile all over his face, began to walk toward Nicole’s office.

Conner couldn’t believe Nicole would call him to fix her door. He knew there were no more bugs in the system, so he figured she had just wanted to see him. He wouldn’t complain, he had been trying to think of an excuse to see her since he arrived at work that morning.

“Conner, I’m so glad you’re here,” Pam said cheerily.

“Hey, Pam. Would you buzz Ms. Blake and let her know I’m here?”

“Why, the problem is out here. Let me show you.” Pam walked over to the door. “This morning, when I tried to open Ms. Blake’s office to get it ready for her day, my card was rejected. Her office couldn’t be setup until she arrived. I’m sure you can imagine that put her in a worse mood.”

“She was in a bad mood?”

“Horrible! You’d think after an extra day off to relax she would come back a little more cheerful, but no, not her.”

Conner just looked at Pam. This wasn’t like her to speak badly about Nicole. And he knew for a fact that Nicole had come to work early. What was going on? He looked at her questioningly.

“I’m sorry. I know this isn’t like me. I’ve just had a horrible morning, and being fussed at by Ms. Blake when I took her the messages she received Friday didn’t make my day easier.”

Conner watched her carefully and saw her eyes dart over to the desk and Mrs. Taylor. When he looked in the direction she indicated, he saw what she was warning him about. Leaning casually on her desk, flirting was Roger Hill.

“Excuse me one moment. Roger,” he called.

“What?”

“I’m sorry, would it be possible for you to go down to security and ask them to run a diagnostic on all the locks for me?”

“You want me to play errand boy for you?”

“If you don’t mind. Otherwise I’m not going to be able to get this lock fixed today...”

“Just do it Roger! I’ll be sure to inform Ms. Blake of the reason you weren’t able to complete all your files. I’m sure she will agree that having her locks in working order as soon as possible is equally important.”

Conner watched as the man’s face brightened. Roger had just been handed an excuse to slack off for the rest of the day, and Conner knew the man was going to jump on it.

“Of course. Anything for Ms. Blake,” he said in an oily voice.

When the man was no longer within hearing range, Conner looked at Pam again, the question all over his face.

“As I said, the problem is my card doesn’t seem to work. Watch,” Pam stood beside Conner and slid the card the wrong way through the lock. Nodding when the light turned red.

“Let me see it,” Conner took the card carefully. “Sometimes if the strip isn’t clean, or if it’s gotten a scratch it won’t work any more.”

“But I just cleaned it...” Pam complained.

Conner made a show of checking the strip, and Pam leaned in to watch. He was just about to ask her why she was pulling a stunt like this when she began to whisper to him.

“Long story short, I know what’s going on between you and Nicole. I don’t plan on telling anyone. But I thought you should know what happened at the meeting earlier.” Then in a louder voice, she said, “I told you it was clean.”

Conner walked slightly farther away from the other desk until he was almost directly under an accent light. “Then we need to check for scratches...” He made a show of again checking the back of the card. “Go on,” he whispered.

“Someone has accused Ms. Blake of sexual harassment...”

“There’s the problem. You have a small scratch. I’ll just buff that out,” Conner quickly walked back over to his bag and took out a cloth. After a moment he said, “Now let’s try it.” He slid the card through the right way and the green light appeared. “Please be more careful with your card, Pam. If you’ll excuse me, I need to make sure Ms. Blake is aware of the sensitive nature of her card as well.”

Without waiting to hear another word from Pam, he knocked then quickly opened Nicole's office and stepped inside.

Chapter 17

“I said I didn’t want to be disturbed!” Nicole said without looking up.

“Tough,” Conner replied as he walked over to her desk. “Why didn’t you tell me what was going on, Nicole?”

“Conner, now really isn’t the right time for this...”

“I disagree. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I would have told you later. Really, Phillip is nothing to worry about.”

“Phillip?”

“Yes. He told Mr. Brooks I refuse to work with him, and I confirmed it. And no, I will not tell Mr. Brooks that he’s my ex and I have every reason to dislike the man. Can I get back to work now?”

“No. Nicole you have to open up, you have to start trusting people!”

“Conner, it’s not that big a deal, really. I really would have told you about it later.” Nicole stood up and began to walk around her desk.

“And when were you going to tell me you’ve been accused of sexual harassment? Or is that no big deal either?” Conner couldn’t hide the hurt in his voice.

As he watched her, Nicole froze and her face paled. “How did you...Gladys, of course...” she shook her head.

“Conner, let it go. I’ve done nothing wrong and when the claim is investigated, they’ll find out I’m innocent.”

“Nicole!”

“No. Conner, I have too many errands I need to run during my lunch hour and a stack of files I need to finish before I can leave today. Please, can’t we just talk about this tonight?”

“Whatever,” he said heading for the door.

“I’ll call you,” she told him when he put his hand on the knob.

“I hope you do. But damn it Nicole, I’ve stopped holding my breath for you. I don’t know what else I can do to show you that you can trust me.”

Conner walked out before she could reply. He picked up his bag and strode to the elevator. Climbing inside he pressed the button that would take him to the floor that he could find Mr. Brooks on.

He waited impatiently for it to finally open on the desired floor and strode purposefully towards the other man's office.

Ignoring Gladys, Conner opened the door to John's office and sat down in the chair in front of his desk.

"It's alright," John said when Conner heard Gladys follow him inside the room. "Hold my calls."

"Yes sir," Gladys replied, her voice eager. Conner knew it would be only a matter of minutes before half the building knew he had stormed into John's office.

"Gladys," John buzzed his secretary, using the speakerphone, returning Conner's stare the entire time.

"Yes, Mr. Brooks."

"If anyone hears so much as one word about Mr. Matthews here barging into my office you will be looking for a new job. Am I clear?"

"Yes, Mr. Brooks," Gladys said, her voice filled with regret.

"Now, what is so important that you couldn't wait until after lunch to speak to me about?"

"Who is accusing Nicole Blake of sexual harassment?"

"Heard about that did you?"

"It's a lie."

"Conner, I don't want to believe it any more than you do, but she refused to defend herself! What am I supposed to think?"

"I want to know who the bastard is that's accusing her, John and I want to know now."

"Conner, son, calm down. She's as much as admitted she's guilty of something."

"What?" he asked through clenched teeth.

"I asked her if she had ever been intimate with an employee beneath her and she all but said yes."

Conner sat back in shock. How could she say that? Had she slept with anyone else from that company, someone he didn't know about?

He ran his hands through his hair, then over his chin when it hit him. *No, she thinks I'm just a messenger boy...She could have easily lied and gotten herself out of trouble. It wouldn't have been a lie, but she would have thought it was.*

"She was mistaken."

“Start thinking with the right head, boy. I think Nicole knows better than you who she’s had sex with.”

“And if I can prove it?”

“I’m all ears,” John said leaning back in his chair.

“You called her Saturday morning. Around ten to tell her to meet you in your office this morning.”

“How do you know...?”

“I was there. She admitted to sleeping with an employee beneath her because she doesn’t know what my real job is here. She was the woman you told me to go back to when you interrupted my weekend a few weeks ago.”

“That’s impossible...” John said, shock all over his face.

“No, it isn’t. You’re a smart man, do the math. Nicole is a very private woman, she would never have told anyone when you called her at home. I remember it clearly because you interrupted something very important.”

John opened and closed his mouth several times at the implications.

Conner leaned forward and spoke between clenched teeth. “You will not tell anyone in this company what I just told you. And you will tell me who is accusing her right now. Don’t make me tell you again.”

His mouth set in a grim line, John shook his head. “I respect Nicole too much to ruin her reputation. But you know I can’t tell you who made the accusation. I know you have a soft spot for her, especially now that you’re in her bed but...”

Conner slammed his palms down on the other man’s desk. The resulting boom echoed through the quiet office.

“What I feel where she is concerned is none of your damn business. Tell me who it is *now*, or there will be hell to pay.”

“Are you threatening me, Conner?”

“Yes, Uncle, I am.” Conner glared at his uncle. He didn’t bother to hide his fists. “I work my ass off for you, unlike another nephew of yours. I would hope you would have enough respect for me to tell me the truth. I’ve never asked you for anything, not one goddamn thing, but I want to know who is trying to ruin Nicole.”

“What is so important about this woman?”

“I’m in love with her. Now you can tell me who is accusing her, or so help me, you are looking at your worst nightmare. Unlike Roger, I earned my job, and I’m very good at it. I promise you *Uncle John*, you don’t want me for an enemy.” His voice dropped low, became menacing. “You know as well as I do just how far my hacking skills go. I will tie this company in so many knots that you’ll be begging to tell me, just so you can read your emails again.”

Nicole stifled a groan when Pam stopped her from reaching her office after her lunch break. She had been so busy she hadn’t even had a chance to stop for food. She rented car to use until her car could be repaired, then went to a locksmith and had her keys duplicated for Conner. She wanted to give him his own set. She hoped then he would realize she was doing her best to trust him.

“Mr. Brooks wants you in his office, now.”

Groaning, Nicole turned around and headed for the elevator once again. The short ride three floors up to Mr. Brooks’ office passed entirely too quickly. Nicole had to resist the urge to roll her eyes when she saw Gladys smirking as she entered the man’s office for the second time that day.

“Yes, Mr. Brooks?” Nicole asked shutting the door behind her. She froze when she saw Conner sitting in front of his desk.

This cannot be good.

“Nicole, I’m only going to ask you one time, so you must be honest. Are you and Conner having sex?”

“No,” she told him without hesitation.

“No?”

“No!” Conner practically jumped out of his chair.

“No, I’m not. Right now, I’m standing in your office, sir,” she said looking John in the eye. Then she turned and narrowing her eyes, continued. “And no, I do not plan to have sex with him any time in the foreseeable future.”

To her satisfaction, he winced.

“Nikki...”

“I don’t want to hear it,” she practically snarled at him. Regaining her composure, she looked at John once again. “If that is all, I would like to go back to work.”

“Have you had sex with Conner?”

“I don’t care if you are my boss. That is none of your business. Stay out of my personal life.”

“Calm down, Nicole. This could mean the difference between my having to file that report or not. Answer my question.”

“I will not.”

“How would he know when I called you yesterday, if he wasn’t with you?”

Nicole shrugged, refusing to answer.

“Damn it, Nikki, just tell him yes.”

“Go to hell. You want me to open up to you, but then you tell people details about my life that is none of their concern? No, I really don’t want to hear another word you have to say.”

John sighed. When Nicole looked over at him again, he looked very relieved.

“And just why would that information make you happy?” she asked not bothering to hide her irritation any longer.

“Because, Ms. Blake, that would change your response to my questions. Conner isn’t one of your employees, Ms. Blake. He’s...”

Nicole stared at him as John hesitated.

“He’s head of security, but no one is supposed to know that, because what good would it do if people knew who to watch out for?” Conner explained dryly.

Nicole’s face paled as she got a flash of her request to have her locks changed.

“No wonder you were able to get in my office all the time! What else don’t I know about?” she demanded, looking straight at Conner.

Conner forgot his uncle was in the room as he confessed to Nicole.

“I’ve stayed late several times to update the security on your computer. Someone has been trying to break into your files.” *I’m T!*

But somehow, Conner knew Nicole wouldn’t appreciate that confession in front of an audience.

“Why would someone want to break into my files?”

“I’m not sure, but if you add it together with the slashed tires and the cut fuel line, someone really dislikes you.”

Nicole was staring at him as though he had grown a second head.

“I couldn’t tell you, Nikki. I wanted to, but I wasn’t sure you would believe me.”

“That still doesn’t excuse you telling Mr. Brooks what happened between us.”

“I wasn’t going to sit around and let anyone accuse you of something like that.”

Nicole shook her head. “It wasn’t your place to defend me. I didn’t do anything wrong!”

“Maybe you should finish this later,” John said, reminding them both that he was still in the room.

“Mr. Brooks, there is nothing else to discuss.”

“Then will you at least listen to me for a moment? Good,” he continued, not letting her answer. “I promise word of your relationship with Conner will not leave this room. He took a chance coming here and trying to clear your name. Will you keep his secret?”

“Yes,” she said.

“Tell me honestly,” Conner asked Nicole. “Which idea is more horrible to you; that I would defend you or that I would sit by and do nothing while someone tried to ruin your reputation? I have no doubt that you are capable of defending yourself, Nikki, but I couldn’t just sit around and do nothing.”

Conner walked over to her. “I understand if you’re mad, but I wouldn’t have been able to live with myself if I hadn’t done something. Wouldn’t you have done the same thing for me?”

Nicole nodded her head. “I would have done everything within my power to help you.”

“Then you’ll forgive me?”

“Yes. But promise me you won’t keep any more secrets from me?” Nicole shocked Conner by hugging him in from of John. “I really do need to get back to work,” she told him, her tone considerably softer than it was when she entered the office. “Call me later?”

Conner nodded his head, and watched as with a shake of her head she once more became the cool and aloof Ms. Blake.

“Nikki?” John asked when they were alone once again.

“No, John. I’m the only one who gets to call her that.”

John chuckled. “You do have it bad, don’t you?”

“No, I don’t. I’m the luckiest man in the world.”

Nicole smiled as she set up all the candles she bought. Making sure all were safely inside a glass container and in no danger of being knocked over now that Candy was locked in her sewing room, she began to light them. Before her eyes, the bedroom turned from an ordinary room into a magical escape. By the time they were finished eating, the room would be perfumed with vanilla.

The doorbell rang and Nicole quickly went down the stairs. She opened the door and smiled as Conner handed her a bottle of red wine.

“Thank you. Supper’s almost ready. Please, come in.”

Conner followed her to the kitchen. Nicole smiled as she pulled the moist tender roast from her oven. She added food to both their plates then took them into the dining room.

“I didn’t think you’d be in the mood for a romantic dinner anytime soon.”

“Well, we have something to celebrate...” Nicole poured them both a glass of wine and held hers up for a toast. “To trust,” she said.

“To you.” Conner clinked his glass against hers and took a small sip.

“I wanted you to have something...” Nicole held out a small box and laughed at his expression. “I’m not proposing.”

Conner opened the box and pulled out a key ring. “Thank you...”

“I saw that and it reminded me of Candy.”

“You bought me a key ring that reminds you of your cat...”

“I thought maybe it would be cute, but it’s not your entire gift.”

“There’s more?”

Nicole handed him the keys she had hidden underneath her napkin.

“What are these?”

“Keys to my house.”

“Nikki?”

“I trust you, Conner. This way if you have to work late, or I need to run errands, you can still come over if you want to.”

Conner pulled her into a knee-melting kiss.

Nicole pulled back reluctantly. “My game, my rules. First you need to eat supper, and only then will we get to the more exciting parts.”

Conner sat, awed by her trust. He opened his mouth to give the rest of his confession, but she began to eat her food. He couldn’t wait to find out what else she could possibly have planned for that night. Ignoring his conscience, he began to eat his supper.

A half hour later.

“That was delicious,” he complimented her, leaning back in his chair.

“I hope you left room for dessert...”

“There’s dessert too?”

“It’s the best part of the meal,” Nicole smiled. “Just give me five minutes, then come upstairs.”

Conner cleared the table while he waited the required time. When he decided she'd had enough time, he went upstairs. He looked curiously at the closed door that had meowing coming from behind it.

When he reached her bedroom, Conner thought he would pass out from desire.

The entire room was filled with soft candle light. He took a deep breath of vanilla scented air, and tried to keep himself from drooling.

Nicole was lying on the bed, her hair brushed out in soft waves, in the sheer white gown she had told T she bought. Conner wondered if he would embarrass himself by coming in his pants before he even touched her.

As he approached the bed, Nicole raised herself to her knees. She pulled him down into a kiss. Conner groaned deep in his throat when her tongue slipped inside his mouth as her hands unbuttoned his shirt.

Without ending the kiss, he took the shirt off, almost falling when he felt her hands dip inside his jeans to stroke his hard cock.

Conner tried to nibble on her skin, but she stopped him.

"My game, my rules. And I want my dessert."

As he watched, Nicole pushed his jeans and boxers off his hips and took his cock deep inside her mouth. It was exactly the way he had imagined that night during their chat.

Back and forth, back and forth, ever so slowly, Nicole teased and tantalized, until Conner held onto his control by a mere thread.

She slid her tongue around the sensitive head of his cock, and he moaned. She stroked his flesh until he wanted to scream.

"God, Nikki, I'm gonna come," he warned in case she wanted to stop.

Instead she sucked harder, her mouth moving quicker, until his hands were wrapped in her hair and he was thrusting into her mouth. Conner watched her face as he came in her mouth.

His eyes never left her as she continued to suck every drop from him, then lap any excess off his softening cock.

"That was a pleasant surprise," he said languidly.

"I do so love my dessert," Nicole told him with a smile and kissed his neck.

"Uh-uh. You don't suck my dick like that then kiss my neck." He plunged his tongue into her mouth, the taste of his come on her lips making his cock hard once again.

"Are there any more rules for your game that I should be aware of?" he asked huskily.

“Let’s see, you ate supper like a good boy, you followed my instructions and came up here, you let me have my dessert...I think that’s everything.”

“Then it’s my turn to enjoy...” Conner knelt on the bed beside Nicole after shedding his clothes and shoes. “Do you know how beautiful you are? I was almost afraid I was dreaming.” He cupped her breasts through the gown, rolling her nipples between his thumb and forefinger watching them tighten for him.

“Nikki, I...” It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her just how much he loved her, but instead, he pulled her gown over her head and let it fall to the floor.

He took one nipple into his mouth and bit gently.

“Tonight I’m gonna make you scream,” he promised as he continued teasing her body.

“Conner, please,” she pleaded.

“So soon, Nikki?”

“I’ve been thinking about this all day. I want to feel you inside me.”

Conner moved behind her, and nudged her legs farther apart. He slid one finger inside her. “So wet,” he breathed against her back.

Pulling her back against him and closer to the middle of the bed, Conner paused only long enough to grab a condom and put it on. Gently nudging her to her hands and knees in the middle of the bed, Conner knelt behind her.

“Are you ready for me, Nikki?” he asked a second before he thrust deep into her.

“God, yes,” she moaned. After a few strokes her body was tensing around his cock and she cried out his name. But Conner didn’t stop.

“Come again for me, Nikki,” he growled, feeling her body beginning to tremble again.

He leaned over and cupping one breast in his hand, gave a gentle bite on her side as she came, screaming out his name.

Only then did he allow himself to lose control, pounding into her body a few more times before his own pleasure overwhelmed him.

God, Nikki, I love you so much. I don’t ever want to lose you. I don’t want to go back to a life without you in it, Conner screamed inside his head, careful to keep his mouth against her flesh; to prevent the words from slipping out.

Chapter 18

The last two weeks had flown by. Pulling the brownies out of the oven, Nicole smiled. Conner was practically living with her now, and she planned on discussing their arrangement soon. There was no sense in him paying rent for an apartment he never lived in, was there?

She glanced out the window. Storms always made her feel like snuggling in bed, especially when she had such a handsome lover to snuggle with her.

Nicole was playing solitaire on the computer when she got a message.

tchnogk527: Hey sexy, what are you doing?

netktn39: playing a game. What are you up to?

tchnogk527: nothing much. Was sitting here working on a program and began to think about you. Are you still seeing what's his face?

netktn39: subtle. Yes, he's wonderful. But I miss talking to you. I wish we talked more than just once or twice a week.

tchnogk527: I'm a jealous man. I can't stand the thought of someone else putting a smile on that beautiful face of yours. ;-)

*netktn39: *blushing**

tchnogk527: at least tell me you haven't let him take naked pictures of you yet.

Nicole laughed out loud.

netktn39: No

tchnogk527: well, at least that's something for me to look forward to. Though I might find a way to forgive you if you emailed them to me if you do have them taken ;-)

netktn39: how is the project going? The one you were working on a month or so ago?

tchnogk527: better than I ever hoped.

netktn39: will you tell me about it?

tchnogk527: sorry, really don't want to jinx it, you know. Forgive me?

netktn39: of course! :-D You'll just have to find a way to make it up to me.

tchnogk527: that sounds promising.

“Are the brownies ready?” Conner called from the dining room where he was working.

“Yes, but they’re still hot.”

“That’s the best time to grab them,” he chuckled.

tchnogk527: BRB.

netktn39: Ok.

Nicole stood up and stretched. She was amazed, but anytime she said she was working on the computer, or even just playing around, Conner never bothered her. She walked into the kitchen to find out how much longer he would be working before they could go to the bedroom and try out the new satin sheets she bought.

When she got there, Conner was nowhere to be seen. Thinking that he must have already returned to his laptop she went into the dining room. He wasn’t there either. She was about to just walk right past his computer, but she saw a flashing orange program at the bottom of the page.

Unable to ignore her curiosity, Nicole selected the program and brought it up.

Her mouth hung open when she read her conversation with T. Nicole typed with one finger. OMG Conner is T?! That’s impossible! And pressed enter.

She stared at the screen one more second then practically ran to her computer. Her message bar was flashing.

tchnogk527: OMG Conner is T? That’s impossible!

Nicole felt as though she had been punched in the stomach.

“The brownies are delicious, Nikki,” Conner said from the door. “What’s wrong?” he asked his expression growing worried.

“How could you? I trusted you!”

“Nikki, baby, tell me what’s going on.”

“Do you still want me to go to your apartment and take pictures?” she asked her voice harsh.

“Nikki, I...I can explain.”

“Don’t bother. I asked you, Conner. I asked you if there was anything else you were keeping from me. You looked me in my face and told me no. You played me! God, how hard did you laugh as I poured my heart out to you online?” she screamed. “Did you piss yourself when I asked for your advice on how to keep you out of my office?”

“Nikki...”

“Don’t.” Nicole put her hands over her ears trying to block out anything he had to say. “I was so stupid. The signs were there. ‘Nope not listening’, the fact that you knew I was afraid. God! The

explanation after I stormed off, and the way you were so pissed that night when I came over. God, it all fits now!”

“Nikki, please, let me explain.”

“I don’t want to hear another word from you ever again. Not from you, not from Mr. Matthews, not from T! I trusted you, both of you! I hope it was worth it, Conner. Because now, all I want is for you to get the fuck out of my house. Pack your things and be gone by the time I get back, or I swear, I’ll call the cops.”

Nicole stormed over to the door and marched out of it, ignoring the pounding rain, not caring that she had forgotten her umbrella, or even a jacket.

Conner stood in front of his laptop and read her last message. Of course it had been typed on his computer. He wondered if she would ever let him explain what happened. He wondered if he even deserved a chance to explain.

With a heavy heart, he packed up his computer then went upstairs and shoved all the clothes he could into his gym bag. He left the key ring she had given him on the pillow and left as quickly as he could.

Nicole wandered around her neighborhood in the rain. She didn’t feel the wind or the water soaking her body. All she felt was Conner’s betrayal. She wanted answers, wanted to know why he had played games with her the way he had, but she was afraid to ask them. She was afraid of the answers.

When she began to shiver uncontrollably, she turned and began to slowly walk home.

Nicole felt a sense of loss and relief when she saw that his car wasn’t parked in her driveway anymore.

She walked inside and closed the door, careful to lock it. Without bothering to look around she went upstairs to her bathroom and turned her shower on. As the water heated up she undressed.

Nicole was able to hold her tears in until she stepped under the hot spray. But with the return of warmth to her body, came the return of pain. She sank to the tiled floor, sobs wracking her body. The water had grown ice cold before she was able to stand up and climb out of the shower, tears still running down her cheeks.

She dried herself off and climbed into the bed without bothering to turn on lights or get dressed. When she heard a jingle, she felt the top of her pillow and felt the keys Conner had left behind.

That only made the tears begin again.

Nicole climbed out of bed stiffly and turned off her alarm clock. She looked at her closet then at her bed and simply climbed back into bed, pulling the covers high over her head.

After lying in the dark silence for a while, she fell back to sleep.

Three days had passed since Nicole found out who he was, and she had yet to come into work. Conner was growing worried. He decided to stop by her office to find out if Pam knew anything about what was going on.

“Pam, have you heard from...”

“No, Conner. She still isn’t answering her phone. What happened?”

Conner just shook his head. He didn’t care if Pam knew they had been involved in a relationship. He would never say another word about what he knew about Nicole’s private life. He owed her that.

“Please, just call me if you hear from her.”

“I promise.”

The following Monday Nicole walked into the office building as though she had never left.

Pam greeted her in front of the office and Nicole nodded, giving her usual short and completely professional answers.

“Thank you, Ms. Grey. I don’t wish to be disturbed for any reason today.”

“Yes, Ms. Blake.”

Nicole walked into her office and sat down.

Pam entered her office and closed the door behind her. She carried files under her left arm.

“Yes, Ms. Grey?”

“That’s all you have to say? ‘I don’t wish to be disturbed for any reason’.”

“What would you like me to say?”

“How about ‘I’m sorry for letting you worry about me?’ or ‘I need to talk about what happened?’ How about anything that treats me like a human being instead of just your secretary?”

“I am sorry you were worried, Ms. Grey. But something very unexpected came up that demanded my full attention last week. Now, please, excuse me. I would like to get to work.”

“After all these years of working with you I never thought I’d say this. But you really are one cold bitch.” Pam turned to walk out of Nicole’s office, just as she requested.

“I hate him, Pam. I feel like I’m being ripped apart inside. He had the nerve to ask me if I was just using him, but he was using me. I was nothing more than a project to him. Something to do so he could say he did it. I feel like I’m going to drown in my tears.” Tears slid down her cheeks.

“Nicole...” Pam approached her and wrapped her arms around Nicole comfortingly.

“That’s what you wanted right? You wanted to know why I’m such a cold bitch? I trusted him, Pam. I trusted him with secrets that I’ve never told another human being and he laughed at me. I was a big joke to him. God, I’m so stupid. Men like Conner Matthews never fall for women like me.

“He’s worse than the rest of them Pam,” she sobbed as the other woman rocked her gently. “The others just used me. God, he made me believe he truly cared. That a man like him could really fall in love with a fat girl like me. He made me fall in love with him Pam, I’ll never forgive him for that. Never.”

Twenty minutes later Pam walked out of Nicole’s office to find Conner waiting for her.

“Is she here?”

She nodded her head.

“How is she? Can I see her?”

“No. Ms. Blake has left explicit instructions not to be disturbed.”

“Pam...”

“Don’t. Save your breath, Conner. I thought you were different from the other guys. You want to help her? Leave her alone.”

Conner nodded and walked away from Nicole’s office. His heart shattered with every step, but he still had his pride. It was all he had left, but it helped him to keep his back straight as he walked away.

He swore he would be online every night, and if she ever came on, he would at least apologize for hurting her. It was that hope that kept him from pushing past Pam and going into Nicole’s office, her instructions be damned.

Nicole stared at her blank monitor. She hadn’t even turned her computer on since she kicked Conner out of her house.

Every time she looked at it the tears started again. Her first impulse was to run to T, to tell him what happened and let him soothe her pain with his wit and jokes.

Every time she remembered it was all a big lie, the stabbing pain in her chest returned.

Nicole wondered if she would ever be able to go online again. Would she ever be able to even turn her computer on without remembering T or Conner?

Conner sat on the floor under Nicole's desk as he ran his now weekly tests on her system. He couldn't bear to sit in her chair any more. Couldn't bear to be surrounded by her sweet perfume, knowing he would never be able to hold her again.

He growled, his cock stirring from the mere memory of her. It was going to be a long night.

Nicole couldn't sleep. Every time she closed her eyes, she saw Conner. Sighing, she climbed out of her bed. Thanks to her surprise vacation she had a ton of work to catch up on at the office.

She decided she'd rather be at work and be miserable. At least there she could be productive instead of seeing Conner everywhere she turned.

Conner stiffened slightly when he heard the door open and then close. The light was turned on and he heard a sigh that sent fire through his blood. He wondered how he would explain the fact that he was sitting under her desk. He wondered if she would be wearing a skirt, and if so, would she have panties on underneath?

Just the thought of her tight, sweet pussy sent the blood flowing to his cock, and made his mouth water in anticipation.

He almost groaned with regret when she simply grabbed files from the top of her desk and walked away.

Nicole knew he was under her desk. She could smell his cologne all over the room. Though curious to know why he was under her desk instead of sitting comfortably in her chair, she was still furious and wasn't about to ask him about it. For a brief moment, before she could contain her lust, she wondered if he still wore the sexy goatee she liked, or if he'd shaved it off, leaving his handsome face completely smooth.

Instead of sitting down at her desk and acknowledging his presence, she moved to the couch, turned on the lamp on the end table, and began going through her files.

Just as she was struggling through her third file, she heard a scraping sound outside her door. Before she could get up to check what the sound was, the door opened and a handsome man was smiling at her.

“Well, well, well. What have we here? This is better than I could have ever hoped for. Now I don’t have to worry about trying to figure out this week’s password, I can just have you type it for me.”

Conner stiffened as he heard a man gloating to Nicole. He couldn’t believe it when he recognized the voice.

“Go sit at your desk. You’re going to change the files I tell you to change, or I’m going to make you very sorry.”

Conner slid back as far as he could as Nicole sat down in her chair.

Nicole rubbed her arm where he had grabbed her. She hated being pushed around, and having someone shove her into a chair made her even more cranky. She took her time settling in her chair just to annoy him.

“I don’t have all night.”

Nicole fought back a gasp when he produced a gun. She didn’t need Conner to know there was a dangerous man on the other side of her desk. He was safely hidden and could hopefully think of some way to get help.

Once she was seated comfortably, she kicked Conner. When he didn’t seem to take the hint she kicked him again. She felt his hand tug on her slacks just as she was about to kick him yet again. She just hoped he took the hint and did something – anything – that would help them out.

Conner rubbed his shin where she had kicked him twice. He felt her pull back again to kick a third time but tugged on her slacks quickly. That seemed to be what she wanted.

“I want you to pull up these files. Don’t tell me you can’t, I’ve been inside your computer, I know you have access to them.”

Conner didn’t know what to do, but knew that having proof of this conversation would be necessary. Conner wanted Nicole to kick him again when he realized he couldn’t get to his digital recorder.

With no other options available to him, he did the only thing he could think of.

Nicole's eyes widened slightly when she heard her cell phone ringing.

"Ignore it. Print those files for me."

She nodded her head and began typing on the keyboard.

"Why do you want these files?"

"Suddenly you have an interest in what someone else wants? You know, you could have made life a lot easier on yourself if you had just agreed to become Phillip's assistant."

"And have him take credit for all my hard work again, no thank you. I've worked too hard to get where I am now."

"Where is that exactly? The woman all the employees love to hate? You should have seen the parties and celebration that went on in these halls the week you were out. I could shoot you right now. Tell me Ms. Blake, if I did would anyone even bother to come visit you in the hospital? Would they go to your funeral? Is there even one person that would care if you disappeared?"

"Why are you doing this?"

"Because, bitch, you aren't a team player."

Nicole watched as he cocked the gun and aimed it at her again.

"Now, I said print those files for me."

Conner pushed against Nicole's legs, struggling to climb from beneath her desk, wanting to rip the bastard's head off. He couldn't believe the asshole was pointing a gun at Nicole. The son of a bitch had actually threatened her! Conner struggled to get past her legs again. He got kicked again for his trouble, this time more sharply than before.

He heard the printer start to whirl and groaned.

"Now, give me the keyboard so I can delete the files."

"Here."

"Are you going to move so I can reach it?"

"No. I'm quite comfortable, thank you. You want to sabotage my system, you're going to have to do it by leaning across my desk."

Conner hung up his cell phone and quickly dialed John's number. He couldn't say anything, so he left text messages instead.

Come to office now.

Know who hacker is.

Call security.

Nicoles office.

Hurry!

Chapter 19

Just as Robert was about to make his escape, Conner heard the night security guards swarm inside of Nicole's office.

He pushed against her legs again and this time she allowed him to crawl from beneath the desk. As Conner watched, they easily took the gun from his stupid cousin.

Just a few minutes behind the security team was John, still dressed in his striped pajamas.

"What is going on here?" John asked turning to Conner where he was still kneeling beside Nicole.

"How did he get there?" Robert asked confused. Then he got a nasty look on his face and said, "Never mind, we take what we can get, right Conner? Tell me, was it fun being on your knees for her while she did everything I asked her to do?"

Barely controlling his rage, Conner slowly walked across the room. Stopping in front of his cousin, he smiled, then before anyone realized what he was going to do, he hauled back and punched the man in his jaw as hard as he could. The guards quickly released their hold on Robert and Conner ducked as he swung at the man a second time, his right hook landing squarely on his cousin's eye.

Robert began throwing punches wildly and Conner, still pissed at being forced to sit safely under a desk while the woman he loved was being threatened, hit Robert again. His anger eased slightly when he saw blood pouring out of the other man's nose.

"Ow, you bastawd, you bwoke my nose!" Robert complained in a nasal voice as he put a hand protectively over his nose.

Finally satisfied, however minutely, Conner turned and looked at Nicole. She was pale and had both eyebrows arched in disbelief. Conner only gave her a lopsided grin and shrugged. He smiled when he saw her eyes linger on the goatee he still wore for her. Turning to John and seeing his shocked and confused expression he explained, "Robert's the one that's been trying to hack into Ms. Blake's computer. Listen to her voice mail, it's all there." He watched Robert's face go paler then smiled. "That's right. *You* gave her the proof yourself. *You* told her not to answer the phone."

"Mr. Hill isn't the only one. Phillip's behind it as well." Nicole added from behind Conner.

"How can you know that?"

“Mr. Brooks, I can recognize my own work. Especially when I have a suspicion someone is copying my files. I included typos to set my work apart. I never misspelled the same word, the exact same way twice.”

Nicole listed the words that were spelled incorrectly. John nodded every time he remembered a particular word or spelling.

“That’s no pwoof,” Roger complained in his still nasal voice.

“It is when the files supposedly left Phillip’s computer to be placed directly into my hand. Get out of here Roger. Your father and I are going to have a long talk tomorrow. Get him to the hospital so someone can set his nose for him, then hand him to the cops.”

Conner tried to step closer to Nicole; he wanted to know what was going on inside her beautiful head, if she was really ok. But she stepped away from him, careful to keep the desk between them.

He heard John telling the guards that weren’t going with Roger to the hospital to go back to their jobs and shut the door.

“Nikki...”

“Thank you for your help tonight.”

“I should be able to retrieve the files Roger tried to delete from your hard drive...”

“That won’t be necessary. I keep a backup disk, as well as a copy of every report hidden in a secret folder on my computer. I told you I took my own security precautions.”

“Yes you did,” he told her proudly.

Looking around the room, he was surprised to see they had been left alone. Knowing he would probably never have another chance to be alone with her...at least, not any time soon, Conner took a deep breath and apologized as quickly as he could.

“Nicole, I’m sorry. I wasn’t trying to hurt you. I swear I didn’t know it was you until after we slept together. Even then I wasn’t absolutely positive until the whole Trek misunderstanding...”

“You should have told me, Conner.”

“When? Anytime I tried to tell you even the most insignificant personal detail you froze up or signed off.”

“You could have told me to my face!”

“You’re right. You want honesty, fine, I’ll be honest. I was afraid that you’d think I had plotted it from the beginning. I was terrified that as soon as you found out I was T you’d never talk to me again. I didn’t want to lose you, Nikki. I fell in love with you.”

“You don’t even know me...” she said turning away from Conner.

“Yes, I do. I know the free-spirited Kitty, who thinks Daniel is cuter than Jack, on Stargate. I know the uptight, but very professional, Ms. Blake who treats all her employees like equals. I know Nicole, the woman who will smile and laugh. And I can remember every detail about Nikki, the woman that makes me just want to crawl under the covers and never get out of bed again because I don’t want to be away from her.

“I know them all Nikki. I love them all. I think Ms. Blake should let her hair down every once in a while, and let her employees know just how much she does appreciate them, but I still love her. I love your strength, your soft heart, your laugh, your wit...”

“I just can’t be with a man I don’t trust. How do I know you aren’t still hiding things from me?” she asked, but her voice sounded wobbly.

“I have only one last secret from you. John Brooks is my uncle. That asshole Roger is my cousin. But unlike Robert, I earned my job, no one handed it to me. Now you know all my secrets.”

Nicole turned to look at him and Conner felt his heart break into a million tiny fragments. Tears rolling down her face she looked him in the eye and said “I don’t believe you.”

“I had to try. Believe me or not, it won’t change the fact that I’m in love with you. I’ll make sure you have a new security man first thing in the morning. I promise I won’t bother you again.”

Nicole fell back in her chair. He said he loved her. But could she ever believe him again? Furiously wiping the tears from her cheeks she made her way to the lounge and started a pot of coffee.

Freshly brewed cup in her hand, Nicole went back to her office and continued to work on the files.

Nicole worked through the night, making pot after pot of coffee, and crying whenever she stopped long enough to think of Conner.

The office was in an uproar the next morning as everyone whispered a different version of what happened the night before with Roger.

Conner strode into Phillip Weiser’s office beside John and several security guards.

“John, what a surprise, I wasn’t expecting you.”

“Collect your things and leave,” Conner told the man through clenched teeth, balling his fists with the desire to punch this man for everything he had done to Nicole.

“Conner, I’m not sure this conversation involves you.” Phillip looked at John and asked, “What’s this all about?”

“We know the truth Phillip. As of this morning you no longer work for Thomas Pharmaceuticals. We know that you’ve been stealing files off Ms. Blake’s computer.”

“John, how long have we worked together? Why would I do something like that? I’m sure she’s only trying to get even with me for reporting her refusal to cooperate,” Phillip replied slyly.

“Did you tell John why she refused to work with you?”

“I’m sorry, why is he here?” Phillip asked John, ignoring Conner.

“I was there when you tried to talk to her after work. I believe she made herself very clear when she told you she wouldn’t work with you and you needed to leave her alone.”

“Thank you,” Phillips smile brightened. “See, John, she was being unreasonable.”

“Did you tell John why she refused to work with you?”

Phillip’s smile lost some of its voltage. “I’m sure I don’t know what you mean.”

“Sure you do. She told me about it at the party a month or so ago.” Conner smiled. “And according to company policy, we will not ever force former lovers to work together. They have a bad habit of not working well together and, well, we want our employees happy and doing their job to the best of their abilities.”

“Is this true? Why didn’t Ms. Blake inform me of this?” John asked angrily.

Conner just looked at his uncle until the man nodded and shrugged. The woman valued her privacy, too much at times.

“Look, it’s all over. Your lackey has confessed. He confessed that you put him up to stealing the files, and that he was the one that came up with the idea of slashing her tires. But he also swears you were the one that carried it out, just like you were the one that cut her fuel line. Did you even care that she could have been killed? That innocent people could have been hurt, or worse?”

“You have no proof, it’s my word against his,” Phillip said as the police arrived and began to cuff him.

“That’s where you’re wrong. I wasn’t the only person that saw you loitering around Ms. Blake’s car on the days it was vandalized.”

“Still playing her knight in shining armor?” Phillip laughed cynically. “But Nicole, still won’t even let you call her by her name. But I guess it takes all kinds in this world. Even the ones that fall for fat bitches like her.”

Conner’s fists were balled and he wanted nothing more than to knock the smirk off of the other man’s face. He wanted to rip out his tongue so Phillip could never say anything horrible about his sweet, passionate, beautiful Nicole again.

Conner looked back at his uncle who, with the aid of the security guards, held him securely away from Phillip.

“Don’t do it. Think about it. They’ll have to arrest you too, and that’s what he wants. Just ignore him.”

Conner nodded and forced himself to relax. Taking a deep, cleansing breath he said, “I’m alright.”

Slowly the guards released Conner, but remained close by, ready to grab him again if he so much as twitched in Phillips direction.

“You’re not worth it.”

The cops began to read Phillip his rights. He nodded his head. “Yes, I understand them.” Before they could get a tighter grip on Phillip, he pulled away and walked over to Conner.

“Tell me knight, just what were you doing while Roger waved a .38 in girlfriend’s face? Hiding under the desk? Tell me, did you find a chisel big enough to pry her legs apart?”

Before Conner could react, the four men were pulling him away from Phillip.

Conner jerked away from the men holding him and smiled. “Just a minute. No, I’m not going to punch him,” he threw back at John. “No one ever said anything about Roger having a gun.”

Phillip’s face paled and the cops were shaking their heads grinning.

“Of course you could have heard that from one of the rumors running around here...” Conner said thoughtfully.

Phillip quickly nodded his head.

“But exactly what caliber gun was never mentioned. Not even in the security reports, I know, I filled them out. How did you know it was a .38?”

The policemen laughed as Phillip grew pale and began demanding the presence of his lawyer.

True to his word, Nicole received a new security officer the next morning. As she was forced to listen to him almost daily over the next few days, she found herself missing Conner’s friendly flirtation. She missed his warm smile and his witty banter.

At the same time, every time Nicole looked like her head was going to explode because of her new, dull security man, Pam would just smile and tell her to call Conner.

Once she had opened up to the woman, Nicole found herself unable to shut her out any longer, and finally stopped fighting it.

She was packing up her desk, getting ready to go home for the weekend when Mr. Brooks walked into her office.

“We’d like to promote you to the head of accounting, supervising all the money in and out of this place. Claims, research funds, expenses, all of it.”

“I couldn’t possibly manage all that,” Nicole said shaking her head.

“Yes you can. You did deserve that promotion Phillip received. And if you had gotten it, you’d be in charge of Accounting by now anyway. We’re prepared to offer you anything within reason to get you to accept the job. But I’m not supposed to tell you that part,” he winked.

“I couldn’t possibly leave Pam behind...”

“Done. She would be your executive assistant, with a staff of five under her with nearly a thirty-three percent pay raise. I knew you wouldn’t leave her behind.”

“I want her to have a thirty five percent increase.”

“Done. What else?”

“What about the Claims department?”

“Mrs. Taylor will make a superb manager. At least, that’s what you said in her last evaluation. Anything else?”

“I don’t...this is all so sudden...”

“Nicole, you’ve earned this. You work hard to make sure your employees get the praise and recognition they deserve. It’s time for you to accept the promotion you deserve.”

“When do I start?”

John chuckled. “Monday morning. Meet me in my office and I’ll escort you to your new office and introduce you to your staff. Pam is already packing up her desk. She knew you’d say yes.”

Nicole left the office and stood outside looking at the door with her name plate.

“What are you doing?” she asked when she saw John handing Pam a hundred dollar bill.

“She also bet me a hundred dollars you wouldn’t ask how much of a raise you got.” John shook his head and walked over to Nicole. He lowered his voice as he looked into her eyes. “I know you’d never ask, but in case you were wondering, he’s in pretty bad shape too. Don’t let your pride get in the way of your happiness. Tell me, can you honestly say you would have done things differently if you were in his shoes?”

Nicole watched the older gentleman walk down the hall.

Would she have done things differently?

No, I wouldn't have. I would have been grateful for every minute we spent together, dreading the time when he learned the truth.

"Pam, you'd call us friends now, right?"

"Of course."

"Then would you do me a huge favor?"

Nicole took Pam's arm and led the woman toward the elevator, whispering her plan in Pam's ear as they walked.

Conner signed on to his message program. Kitty was on, but he had given up hope that she would give him a second chance.

I don't deserve a second chance. I used her private thoughts against her... I'm no better than Roger. I just didn't have to hack into her computer, she gave me a free pass.

He left the computer to look inside his fridge. Sighing he poured himself a glass of tea and walked back over to the table, ready to work on the new firewall program he was writing.

He was surprised when he saw a message blinking on his screen.

netktn39: Knock knock?

Unable to resist, he replied.

tchnogk527: who's there?

netktn39: Boo.

Conner laughed, but continued to play along.

tchnogk527: Boo Who?

netktn39: Don't cry. I forgive you.

netktn39: But you better never lie to me again!

Conner's heart beat a little faster as he reread the previous line.

tchnogk527: I won't, I promise!

netktn39: I'll hold you to that.

tchnogk527: What are you up to?

netktn39: getting ready to go out...

He was disappointed. He had hoped she would want to come over, or maybe he could go back to her place. But either way, he wanted to show her how much he appreciated the second chance.

tchnogk527: Oh. I hope you have fun...

netktn39: I will. Some horndog has been after me for months to take my picture...

Conner's mouth fell open as he read her message.

He was about to type a response when someone knocked on his door.

tchnogk527: Damn, someone's at the door.

netktn39: maybe you should get that...

tchnogk527: it's probably just one of my neighbors.

netktn39: But it could be important. Don't worry, I won't go anywhere. I'll be waiting right here when you get back.

tchnogk527: BRB!

Conner got up and scrambled to the door, ready to say whatever necessary to get his neighbors to leave him alone.

He opened the door and impatiently asked "What!"

"I can leave if this is a bad time."

Conner looked at Nicole then back at his computer and back at her. She was wearing a long overcoat that reached just below her knees.

"May I come in?"

He nodded his head and watched as she made a beeline for his laptop.

Nicole sat down in his empty chair and began to type. Curiosity got the best of him, so he followed and read what she typed.

tchnogk527: Thanks Pam. Am here now. Don't forget to lock up and get plenty of rest this weekend.

tchnogk527: I have a feeling we're going to need all our wits on Monday.

netktn39: N/P Nicole. Glad to help. Give Conner a big kiss from you, for me.

And for heavens sake, make sure you two have everything settled this time!

Nicole laughed as her fingers flew over the keyboard once again.

tchnogk527: Yes ma'am. And Pam....

tchnogk527: If I'm not at work on Monday...

tchnogk527: stay the hell away from my house because I'm enjoying a long weekend with Conner! :-D

Nicole turned to him and smiled. "So, Geek, is that offer still available?"

"What offer?" he asked, his throat suddenly dry.

“The one where you asked me to model for your new camera and you promised to take pictures of me. But if any of them get on the net, nipples airbrushed out or not, I will kick your butt...”

Nicole pulled him close and kissed him deeply, her tongue thrusting into his mouth only once before she pulled away.

Slowly, deliberately, she unfastened each button on her coat until it hung open. Beneath the coat she wore only the red nightie he had asked her to wear for their photo session.

“I love you too, Conner,” Nicole said as she let her coat hit the floor. She leaned in close to him and whispered across his lips. “And don’t think I’ve forgotten about that bag of yours. You still owe me a peek at what was inside.”

Conner kissed her gently, putting his entire heart into the kiss.

“Has anyone ever told you that you are one demanding woman?”

“Only the man of my dreams. Now, let’s go into that bedroom so you can show me just how much you missed me,” she teased.

“Yes ma’am!”

Picking her up, Conner quickly carried her to his bedroom.

“I love you so much, Nikki.”

“I love you too, Conner,” she told him again.

“I promise, I’ll never...”

Nicole pressed her finger to his lips and spoke softly next to his ear. “Shhhh.... You’re thinking too much.”

He groaned when she grasped his earlobe between her teeth.

“Now, let’s see if we can keep your neighbors awake all night...” she said mischievously.

“Why?”

“So they’ll complain, you can get out of your lease, and move in with me.” She handed him a key ring from between her breasts. “I believe you left these at my house.”

Conner didn’t give her a chance to say another word.

Epilogue

True to her word, Conner's neighbors complained about Nicole's screams all weekend.

He was smiling when the management told him he would be forced to either cease his activities at all hours of the night or they would be forced to terminate his lease. Conner heartily refused to give up Nicole, so he nodded and signed the papers effectively terminating his lease, and promising to be completely moved out before the following weekend.

Nicole laughed when Conner and the manager left the room to speak in private. It had taken some finagling, but she had finally been able to convince his neighbors to complain. They all loved Conner so much, appreciated how much he helped them all so much, that no amount of screaming or noisy sex was going to make them complain.

They were all too happy that he had finally found someone he seemed to care about.

Once they found out why he wanted out of his lease, they were all more than willing to help him out, though they all agreed they would miss him.

She smiled when she remembered Conner's response when she told him about the conversation.

He had promptly gone to each of his neighbors and given them her number and address and promised they could still call him anytime they had a problem with their computers.

Nicole groaned. She didn't want to go to work.

"Time to get out of bed, sleepyhead."

"Have I told you how annoyingly perky you've been the last couple of days?"

"Yes. Come on, we don't want to be late."

"I'm calling in sick..."

"Don't make me call Pam, Nikki."

Nicole groaned again and complained. "But no ones afraid of me anymore. Everyone tries to talk to me. Can't I just go back to being the Ice Queen?" she asked trying to pull the sheet over her head again.

"You could, but then everyone would think it was weird the way we have those long meetings in your office a couple times a week..."

“No fair.”

“Is it really so bad not being the Ice Queen anymore? Does it bother you that bad? Are your employees revolting and running amok?”

“No,” Nicole sulked. “Fine. But if Doris tries to tell me about her plantar warts or Gladys complains about her impossible-to-housebreak-puppy again, I’m going to punch someone.”

“Then I’ll just have to be sure to stop by for a long lunch, to relieve any tension that may be building up...” Conner kissed Nicole deeply. “And you know, if you need me earlier, all you have to do is text me ‘milk’.”

Nicole laughed. She never would have guessed her life could ever resemble a fairy tale ending.

“Get dressed, I’ll make breakfast. Do you want doughnuts or a bagel?”

“Bagel, please.”

“One bagel coming right up.”

Ten minutes later, Nicole was dressed and her hair fixed in the slightly messy style that would be easy to resume after lunch, when Conner pulled it down.

“Thank you,” she told him with a quick kiss.

Nicole was pouring herself a glass of juice and picked up her bagel without looking at it and took a bite.

Her hand flew to her jaw when she bit down on something hard.

“What is...” Nicole pulled the item out of her mouth and stared in shock. “What is this?”

“Well, you weren’t actually supposed try to eat it...” He took the ring from her and rinsed the cream cheese and saliva off of it then held it in front of Nicole. “Does that help any?” he smiled.

“What...You can’t be serious...I...Conner?”

“You know, I love it when I make you tongue tied.” He dropped to one knee and asked, “Will you marry me?”

“Yes,” she told him, tears filling her eyes.

Kissing her deeply, Conner slipped the ring on her finger.

“Conner?”

“Yes?” he asked as he nuzzled her neck.

“We are gonna be so late for work.” Without waiting for a response, Nicole grabbed him by his jeans and headed for the stairs.

Conner smiled as Nicole led them into their bedroom. *Yep, they were going to be late for work, if they even went in at all*, he thought heatedly before Nicole's mouth was on him again, cutting off any further thoughts.