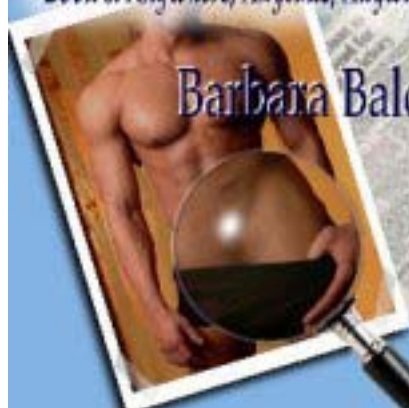


Fantasies Undercover

Book 3: Anywhere, Anytime, Anyway Trilogy

Barbara Baldwin



**ANYWHERE, ANYTIME,
ANYWAY
BOOK 3: FANTASIES
UNDERCOVER**

by

Barbara J. Baldwin

WHISKEY CREEK PRESS

www.whiskeycreekpress.com

Published by
WHISKEY CREEK PRESS

Whiskey Creek Press
PO Box 51052
Casper, WY 82605-1052
www.whiskeycreekpress.com

Copyright © 2006 by *Barbara J. Baldwin*

Names, characters and incidents depicted in this book are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of the author or the publisher.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-59374-585-1

Credits

Cover Artist: Jinger Heaston
Editor: Chere Gruver

Printed in the United States of America

**WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT
ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, ANYWAY
*BOOK 1: FANTASIES DELIVERED***

“This is a wonderfully written story filled with good laughs, incredible sex and fantasies that do come true.”

Coffee Time Romance

“...the best part about this story has got to be the sizzling hot sex. It is well written and often!”

Mayreviews.com

“*Fantasies Delivered* delivers big time! From the moment Keva and Gage meet, the heat and sparking sexual chemistry explodes from the pages. ...This satisfying and just plain wonderful romance is truly the stuff of dreams. ... You'll laugh, you'll tear up, and you'll smile.”

The Romance Studio

“*Fantasies Delivered* is a wonderfully entertaining book.”

Euro Reviews

**WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT
ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, ANYWAY
BOOK 2: *FANTASY ROAD***

“Chase’s chivalry and protectiveness toward Katie is enough to melt your heart.”

Euro Reviews

“*Fantasy Road*...is an outstanding story, riddled with emotions, passion, suspense, and above all else amazing characters.”

Fallen Angel Reviews

“*Fantasy Road*...will grab the reader from the very first page.”

LoveRomances

“*Fantasy Road* is...another fast-paced and dynamic romance. ...Chase is a great character. He's funny, caring, oh-so-sexy,... I was very surprised with the twists and turns Ms. Baldwin plotted out and I was definitely led on a merry chase.”

The Romance Studio

**WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT
ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, ANYWAY
BOOK 3: *FANTASIES UNDERCOVER***

“Barbara J. Baldwin hits the ground running with a hot sexy readThe trials and tribulations of Morgan and Travis are humorous, fun-filled, and also exhibit a raw and sensual side of the delightfully strong and sexy characters. ...Barbara Baldwin has filled the book with excitement, mystery, romance, and tension thick enough to cut with a knife. This is a fast read that you will not be able to put down. It is romantic suspense at its best...a good murder mystery mixed up with a hot steamy romance.”
Reviewed by Rose for Romance at Heart

“Looking for a sexy hero, a feisty heroine and a mystery of a story that baffles and endangers them both? ... Ms. Baldwin has another winner with *FANTASIES UNDERCOVER*. The dialogue is snappy and at times amusing enough to have this reader on the floor in laughter, especially when all of the McVicker brothers get together. And there is that thread of tension that waxes and wanes yet never fades. This reviewer recommends *FANTASIES UNDERCOVER* to any reader who enjoys romantic suspense and contemporary romances with a twist.”
Reviewed by Shaiha for Loves Romances

“Absolutely wonderful! Ms. Baldwin has penned a story with such vivid reality you feel part of the tale. Exceptional characters, you will love Travis as he is such the typical male, and cheer Morgan on for her strength and independence. Light and sometimes funny dialogue, I could not help but snicker at some of Travis’s remarks. Brimming with steady action and intrigue, these two are constantly on the go. Sensual love scenes are woven in to all of this, creating an exciting and entertaining read, you will not want to put down. An absolute delight.”

Reviewed by Wateena for Coffee Time Romance

“Instant attraction between Travis and Morgan sets the pages on fire with witty bantering and sizzling desires. The chemistry they share is wonderfully written giving readers an opportunity to witness each tender moment mixed in with all the searing hot moments...This is one trilogy this reader would recommend... Barbara Baldwin demonstrates time and time again why she is an author readers will want to place on their ‘auto-buy’ list. I assure you she is on mine. 5 Angels and a Recommended Read!”

Jessica, Fallen Angel Reviews

“Travis and Morgan are a great pair. I loved their verbal sparring, and the way both handled each other. Ms. Baldwin crafts believable characters and a mystery that will keep you guessing until the very end. The romance and action work well together, keeping the story moving along at a quick pace. I also liked the fact that even though this is part of a series, the book stood on its own. I didn’t feel as if I was missing anything, but now I do want to read the other books.”

Reviewed by Astraea for Enchanted Ramblings

“*Fantasies Undercover* is just as action-packed as *Fantasy Road* and as fun to read. It was entertaining to watch Travis try to pick-up on Morgan’s subtle clues on how to proceed in their relationship.”

Reviewed by Kerin for Euro Reviews

Dedication

This one's for my brother-in-law, Ben.
Remember when Dad's 'talking watch' alarm would crow
at midnight? We thought it would be fun to write
a story called *The Rooster Crows At Midnight*, so I let Travis
start it for us.

Chapter 1

Travis McVicker plunked his laptop case onto his desk at the *Boston Chronicle* and began sorting through a stack of mail. He'd just returned from Africa, where he'd gone with his brother, Chase, in the hopes of a great story. They'd been held hostage and threatened with death, and now he couldn't even write the story since it involved a small group of tribal people trying to eke out a living. If he wrote about the scavenging for gold tailings after mines were shut down, *Big Corporate* would post guards and the tribes would become even more impoverished than they were now.

He let out a sigh as he dropped into his chair. Hell, he would have written the story anyway, if not for Katie Jo, Chase's new wife, who was the basic reason for the trip in the first place. She wouldn't allow him to endanger people, who at one time, had been her father's friends.

"Oh, well," he said to no one in particular, "there'll be other stories that'll get me the Prize."

Travis only took the toughest stories Ned Chancy dished out at the weekly assignment meetings in the editorial office of the *Boston Chronicle*. The reason? There was nothing Travis wanted more than to win the Pulitzer Prize for journalism.

Nothing, that is, until he looked across the newsroom when the elevator dinged and Morgan Gentry walked back into his life.

Flashback to his senior year in high school. He had the hots for her so bad, he had almost gotten kicked off the football team

because he spent his time watching her at cheerleading practice, instead of paying attention to the coach. But she had never seen past the fact that he was a whiz at algebra and could help her pass.

Now here he was, nine years later, staring at her again as she walked into Chancy's office; again fantasizing about what he'd like to do with those long legs and voluptuous breasts. She looked better than he remembered, even in his dreams. *What had she been doing since high school?* He tried to see past a potted palm in the editor's office so he could read their lips. *And what was she doing here?*

It wasn't long before he found out. Chancy, news editor at the *Chronicle* for the past hundred years or so, walked Morgan out of his office and directly toward Travis. For once, he wished he had worn something other than a ratty tee shirt and holey jeans. If his current story didn't depend—

"McVicker, Morgan Gentry," Chancy boomed as if TJ couldn't hear. "She's new; been working at the *LA Sun*. Show her around." With that, he returned to his office. Chancy talked like the news—who, what, when, where, and why—just the basic facts in as few words as possible.

Travis rose from his chair and leaned over his desk to offer his hand. She looked at him as though she knew him, but couldn't place him. Travis decided not to remind her of the geek with glasses who all but stalked her nine years ago.

"McVicker? That name sounds familiar. Have we met?" She accepted his hand and Travis noted how soft and smooth hers was. He also felt a frisson of excitement burst inside his chest at her touch.

He watched her eyes. Yep, she felt it, too. She tilted her head, and he knew she was trying to assess him; trying to pick up the intangible information everyone gives off through their body

language. It was an attribute of a good reporter, and not everybody had it.

“Hello?” Her voice brought him back to the newsroom.

“Sorry. I was contemplating your question. I’m sure I would remember if I had met you recently.” He bent the truth because he didn’t want her to know he had fantasized about her for years. “Name’s Travis, but my friends call me TJ.”

“Mr. Chancy said I was your desk mate. That’s not exactly a word I’ve heard before. Would you mind explaining?”

Travis shrugged. “Just that our desks face each other—saves space and all.” He wasn’t going to tell her that it also meant they were reporting partners. Chancy knew he preferred to work alone. He’d have to talk to the boss before he let loose with that information.

“How long have you worked here?” Morgan asked as she sat down, shifting the pencil holder, the scrap paper and the computer mouse to better suit her. She dropped her purse in the side drawer.

“Looking for a story?” Travis asked. The trouble with having her sit across from him was that he couldn’t see her legs, which he had noted were bare beneath the knee length straight denim skirt she wore. Her pink blouse was a standard oxford style, except on her, it looked sexy as hell. She had the back of the collar up and two buttons were undone so when he tilted his head to the side just right, he caught a glimpse of cleavage.

She smiled at his question, removing the clip from her hair and shaking her head to let down waves of glorious blonde hair. Her gesture was wanton and seductive and Travis immediately got a hard-on. She combed her fingers through the shoulder length strands and with an effective twist, had it reclipped in a knot. Damn, he wished she had left it down.

“Just being neighborly. I’m sure there are more interesting topics to find for stories.” She turned to the computer, flipped it on, and began typing.

Talk about a put-down. Travis sat there and looked at her, thinking nine years from high school had made her more beautiful, but she still ignored him like he was eighteen. And he still had the hots for her body. *Damn.*

His phone rang, giving him something else to think about. It was one of his informants, trying to make money giving him information that was old news to Travis.

“Call back when you have something worthwhile, Brickman,” he said and dropped the phone back into the cradle.

“McVicker, get in here!” Chancy yelled from his door. The man never talked in a normal voice, regardless of how far a person happened to be from him.

“Christ, and it’s only Monday,” he grouched as he rolled away from his desk. His comment brought a smile to Morgan’s face and he tucked it away in his file on her, which was already overflowing with memories. He sorted and filed things in neat compartments in his brain, always having details at his fingertips. He decided as he walked away to start a new file—*Morgan in my sights.*

* * * *

Morgan sighed as she watched TJ walk to Chancy’s office. He looked so good. She had tried to pretend she didn’t know him, but there was no way she could ever forget any of the McVicker boys. There had been enough years between the six of them that not more than one or two had been in high school at any one time, but between her and four sisters, most of her family had gone to school with a McVicker. And like her, all of her sisters had panted after at least one of them during any given time of the year. Not only were they extremely good looking,

but they all competed in school sports and had *very* athletic bodies.

When she had moved back to Boston last week, her mom had told her that Gordon, Michael, Steve and now Chase were all married. She hadn't talked to her sisters so didn't know how they felt about that, but to Morgan, it was only Travis James who mattered. When her mom mentioned that he still lived in town and worked for the very newspaper where she had just accepted a job, she had fallen asleep dreaming about him. That dream had been vivid enough to give her a sleeping orgasm and she had awakened with a very unsettled feeling.

"Let's go," Travis said, jerking her out of her daydream. He walked past his desk without stopping, picking up his cell phone along the way. "We've got a story."

"We?" Morgan grabbed her purse and hurried after him.

"Boss says I need to show you the ropes."

Morgan huffed. "I've been a reporter for four years. I think I know how to write a story."

The elevator doors closed behind them.

Travis raised a brow, a trait Morgan remembered as part of every one of the McVicker boys' charm. "If you're so good, where's your notebook?"

Morgan tapped her forehead. "Photographic memory."

Travis shrugged. "I don't think Chancy meant anything by telling me to take you along. He just figures you need to get to know the town."

Morgan rolled her eyes. She had grown up here and Chancy knew that from her resume.

They reached the underground parking lot and Morgan followed Travis to his car. "No company cars?" she asked, sliding into the passenger side of a rather old Monte Carlo.

Travis snorted. "You kidding? Paying us twenty cents a mile is a helluva lot cheaper."

They drove to an outlying section of town and parked in front of a rundown house. Travis turned the car off and slouched down in his seat.

“Aren’t we getting out?”

He shook his head. “Surveillance. There’s been some high-powered men coming in and out of Boston lately and we got a tip there’s a buy going down.”

“Buy for what?”

He shrugged. “Don’t know. Drugs, counterfeiting, weapons. That’s the problem with informants—they don’t always have all the details.”

“Which house?”

“Third on the left. Let me know if you see anything.” With that, Travis tipped his head back against the headrest and closed his eyes.

Morgan smiled. If he thought he’d intimidate her or make her feel like she was some cub reporter, he had another think coming. She was used to undercover work. In fact, that was one of the reasons she had decided to leave the *LA Sun*. Her boss thought she was too pretty to be doing stories about dirty criminals and police brutality so he had assigned her the society section. Talk about crap. She was after a Pulitzer, and a reporter didn’t get that by writing up wedding announcements.

Morgan kept an eye on the house, but she also took time to study Travis. His hair was longer than she remembered, swept back from his forehead and just reaching his collar. It was wavy and dark brown and she itched to run her fingers through it to see if it felt as silky as it looked. He still wore glasses, but had gone from dark frames to rimless, the round lens accenting his deep-set, brown eyes.

When she had followed him out of the office, she hadn’t missed the way his jeans fit tight across his butt, or the fact there was a rip just below the back pocket and she had seen skin, not

boxers or briefs. The tee shirt he wore had some rude saying about golfers having longer shafts, but she was more interested in what it covered. Travis McVicker had filled out quite nicely over the years. His arms were muscled, but not to the obscene point of the bodybuilders on Ventura Beach. The tee shirt fit snugly across his chest, leaving little doubt that the rest of his body was just as muscular as what she could see.

She glanced out the window again, paying careful attention to the house they were watching. Nothing moved. There were no lights on, no car in the drive. She wondered if there was really anything going on, or if this was part of some hazing she got as a new reporter.

She turned her attention back to Travis and found him staring at her. Those eyes that didn't miss a thing slowly moved from her face, down her throat, across her shoulders and then lower. It was as though his hand caressed her, and she could feel her face heat with a blush. She wanted him to touch her; wanted him to do way more than that.

"See anything going on?" he asked, his voice low and husky.

"Not outside," she answered, just to see if he would take the bait. He did.

"What about inside?"

"The house, this car, or me?" she shot right back.

He gave a low whistle. "Are all California girls as forward as you?"

She shrugged. "I didn't make a habit of checking out the girls."

He laughed. "That's good to know. I would hate to think—"

His words were cut off by the sound of gunfire. Before she had time to react, Travis grabbed her and pushed her down on the seat, his body covering hers. She found her face hidden

against his crotch, his arms crisscrossed over her lower back. He grabbed his phone out of the cup holder and dialed a number.

“Shots fired, 154 East 22nd.” A pause. “You got it covered? Where?”

Just then, sirens went off, but they were a few blocks away. Morgan tried to sit up but Travis held her down.

“Don’t get up yet. I’m not sure what’s going on. This place was apparently under surveillance by more people than us.”

Morgan didn’t mind her position at all, but she was sorely tempted to turn just a little so she could get a closer look at what her head was laying on. She didn’t have much experience with men, regardless of being twenty-seven years old, but she sure knew what was creating a bulge beneath the zipper of his jeans.

Even as she thought that, she felt him swell and throb. Did he know what she was thinking, or was it a natural reaction in a man to pop up whenever a woman had her head in his lap?

She did turn her head then, *accidentally* letting her teeth graze against the fabric of his jeans. She heard him groan and she grinned. She hadn’t been brave enough in high school to go after what she wanted. She was definitely not going to let that happen again.

“I think you can let me up now,” she said, her voice muffled by his stomach.

She couldn’t hear his answer but it sounded like a moan.

“Travis?”

“Huh? No, you’d better stay down there until the police—come.” He definitely groaned on the last word.

She wiggled around on the seat. Ignoring his warning, she slowly slid up his body, trying to brace her hands on him, but careful not to touch anything too sensitive. She ended up with her hands on rock-hard thighs, her face inches from his.

“Are you going in?” she asked, noting the breathlessness of her voice. She inhaled, her breasts brushing against his chest.

His eyes dilated. "I would love to get in. You wanna come?"

She just about climaxed, the emphasis he placed on his words giving them a double meaning she couldn't mistake. And suddenly, she didn't know how to answer him. She had wanted Travis McVicker desperately in high school, but now, nine years later, was he the same? Was she? If she gave in to her desires, would he be disappointed?

She tried to push away from him, but he grabbed her upper arms and held her still. His liquid gaze went from her eyes to her lips and she knew he was going to kiss her. She also knew she wouldn't stop him.

Travis' lips were firm and hot, his breath minty fresh. He traced the outline of her lips with his tongue, wanting inside and she opened for him. He deepened the kiss, his tongue mating with hers in an age-old dance. *God, he tasted good.*

His hand covered her breast and Morgan shivered in anticipation. The reality of having Travis kiss her beat her fantasies all to hell. She pushed against his palm and he gave her more, gently molding her breast like a sculptor with warm clay.

His thumb grazed her nipple, and she groaned. Her fingers dug into his thighs. If she hadn't been supporting herself on her arms, she would have slid a hand closer and touched him. Even so, she could sense a throbbing pulse and feel the heat of his erection. When a cop car whizzed past, sirens blaring, Travis finally released her but she couldn't move. Hands still braced on his thighs, thumbs dangerously close to his erection, she stared into dreamy eyes.

"I don't remember the girls in high school bragging about how well you kissed."

"So, you do know who I am."

She smiled at him. "I remember. I wouldn't have passed algebra without your help."

Travis frowned. "That's it?"

“What else was there?” Morgan asked. She wasn’t ready to tell him how she had really felt. Even without her photographic memory, she would never have forgotten his mesmerizing brown eyes or his hands. Hands that she had longed to have caress her, instead of jotting algebraic equations on their homework.

“Now that you mention it,” Travis said, “I remember you, too. You were the cheerleader with the snug sweater and the tight-ass panties under your skirt.”

“That’s what you remember about me?” She let go of him and plopped down on the seat, scooting toward the door. “My short skirt and boobs?” She felt somewhat indignant. She was a product of the new generation where women wanted to be considered equal and viewed for more than their bodies, even if the first thing she had noticed about Travis was his body. The sexist standard had become reversed.

Travis just chuckled at her indignation. “Honey, at eighteen, there’s not a boy alive who prefers a girl with brains over one with boobs.” With that remark, he got out of the car and started walking. Morgan scurried to catch up with him.

The house they had been watching was being emptied, the police bringing out several men in handcuffs. Travis stopped a police officer. “What’s up, Tanner?” he asked.

“Thought we had the ringleader of this outfit, but all of them,” he nodded to the captured men, “are just middlemen. No big suitcases of money, no cache of cocaine. Just some small stuff and a meth lab.”

“That’s enough to bust them,” Morgan put in.

“Who are you?” The lieutenant looked at her and she could feel his gaze slide down her length, stopping at the points where men always stop when assessing a woman. For some reason, Morgan felt uncomfortable under his scrutiny, whereas when Travis had looked at her, well, it was different.

She saw Travis straighten. “Morgan Gentry. She’s new at the *Chronicle*, Tanner, so back off and give her a break. I haven’t had a chance to tell her yet what a scumbag you are.”

The lieutenant just grinned. He was handsome, in a slick, almost too perfect kind of way and he reminded her of some actor playing at being a cop. Even so, he was on the police force, and she knew it was important to have contacts. So she gave him her most gracious smile and held out her hand.

“It’s nice to meet a member of law enforcement. I’ll feel safer knowing you’re *on top* of things.” She said the words, knowing he would read a different meaning into them than she intended. Travis certainly did, for she heard him snort beside her.

Another policeman came up and spoke quietly to the lieutenant. He turned back to them. “If you would like the story on this, Miss Gentry, come down to the station and I’ll be happy to visit with you.” He gave her his card, touched his finger to his forehead in salute and left with the other officer.

Travis turned and headed back to his car. “What the hell was that? Is that how you get your stories, handing out favors?” She heard the anger in his voice but couldn’t figure out where it came from. It wasn’t like they had any kind of history that prevented her from playing the field. Where did he get off saying something like that?

She jerked him around by the arm. “Just wait a minute, blockhead.” She was suddenly mad at his highhanded attitude. She poked him in the chest, emphasizing her words. “Don’t ever—ever—think that I get stories any way but through hard work. I’ve earned every award I’ve gotten and I will not—”

His lips cut off her words. A quick, hard kiss, certainly effective in shutting her up. Morgan stood on the sidewalk and stared at him.

“What was that for?”

“You’re cute when you’re mad,” he said.

She narrowed her eyes at him. “Cute?” She didn’t want to be cute for Travis, she wanted to be seductive and hot and impossible to ignore.

“Come on. There’s really nothing here we can’t get from the police blotter tomorrow. The big fish is still out there, and chances are, the police will withhold facts in hopes of ferreting out someone higher up the crime ladder.”

Morgan’s emotions were on a roller coaster ride and she didn’t understand how Travis could be so cool about kissing her. A mere touch from him and she fell apart, and here he was, walking back to his car as if nothing had happened between them. She began to think going to work for the *Chronicle* might not have been the best of ideas.

* * * *

A week later, Travis sat at his desk thinking that having Morgan work at the *Chronicle* wasn’t the best of ideas. Chancy had already ripped him twice for sloppy reporting, something he never did. But his concentration was gone and he blamed it on her.

Every waking minute was either filled with her presence or thoughts of her. Remembering the one kiss they had shared her first day on the job was enough to make him hard. At night, he dreamed of taking her to bed, not to sleep but to plunder her sweetness and explore the passion he knew she had inside. If he could just find a way of unleashing it.

While he would have liked to rapidly advance their relationship, she had tended to shy away from him. She made it a point not to go on any more assignments with him, explaining to Chancy that she had a great city map and they could cover more stories if they worked independently. Chancy had readily agreed since he knew it would also save the paper money. And where

once Travis liked working alone, he now would rather go on stories with Morgan.

His senses came to full alert. He could usually tell the instant she came into the newsroom, even without looking up at the elevator doors. A part of him was constantly aware of her. Always before, that part had been his sense for a good story and knowing exactly where and when to get the information he wanted. Now that sixth sense was totally tuned to Morgan.

“Morning, TJ, what’s up?” She asked the question casually as she dropped into her chair and tossed her purse in her drawer.

He wanted to say *his dick*, since that was in a constant state of arousal whenever she was around. He decided that using the direct approach—like kissing her in the car—wouldn’t work on Morgan. He needed finesse.

“Morning, Morgan, you look cute.” He eyed the tailored suit she wore, noticing how it rucked up her thighs when she crossed her legs. Damn, he was glad miniskirts were again replacing the ankle-length peasant style of a few years ago. As far as he was concerned, any woman with legs like hers should be showing them off.

“Cute? What is it with you and that word? Do I look twelve years old?” She actually thrust out her chest as she spoke, as if he wasn’t already totally aware of her breasts.

“Sorry. How’s sophisticated, charming, attractive—”

“Quit while you’re only behind by a mile, McVicker,” Morgan cut him off as she turned to her computer screen.

Travis had decided over the last week that Morgan was ignoring him because she was afraid of the combustible—what? *Damn*, he hated it when he couldn’t think of just the right word for what he wanted to say. Combustible emotions, feelings? Neither word seemed right for the chemistry between them.

He scowled at his watch, noting there was only fifteen minutes until their editorial meeting. Not enough time to get

anything written, so he might as well finish reading the paper. Most of the newspapers he read were on-line, but he took time every morning to read the *Chronicle* from front page to back. It wasn't as if he didn't already know the news and who was reporting what, but he avidly devoured anything of a literary nature, and that included the advertisements for groceries. Besides, one way he had found to improve his own work was to read others. Except when it came to Matthew Dugan.

"That's the worst piece of bull I've read. Where does Dugan get off writing like that and getting paid for it, no less?" Travis threw the paper across his desk. The sheets of newsprint scattered in every direction by the time the section came to a stop when Morgan slapped a hand on it.

She looked up, screwing her face into a frown. "You expect me to read it now?"

"Hell, no, you don't have to read it. It's not worth reading."

"Travis, you say that every day. Why bother reading Dugan's column if you never agree with him?"

"Because I read the books he's reviewing and just once, I'd like to see him tell the truth about them."

Morgan watched Travis rock back in his swivel chair and prop his feet on his desk. She knew he was the best investigative reporter in Boston, probably one of the best on the eastern seaboard. She had often seen his name on the AP wire service even before she came to work for the *Chronicle*. He could ferret out details and come up with angles that no other reporter in her experience could come close to mirroring. But he did tend to be rather rude at times.

Professionally, he had the patience of Job while working on an assignment, but with Matt Dugan and his book reviews, Travis usually wanted to strangle the man. Morgan thought he

went a little overboard at times, and after listening to him rant and rave every other morning, today she had just about had it.

She supposed part of her ire this morning came not from his comments but from her long and emotionally draining weekend. She had spent Saturday and Sunday dealing with her family again. It was a five hour drive to Wind Gap, Maine and the weekend, as usual, had ended up in arguments with her sisters. Just the thought of Carolyn's continuous jabbering set Morgan's teeth on edge. And now here was Travis, whining about a book review.

She quickly scanned the article in question. "What's wrong with this? It says Harrison's new book, *Stonemason's Clock*, is an artfully crafted suspense thriller."

"What he should have said was the book was full of bullshit and a ten year old could write a better—"

"Okay, buster," she stopped him in mid-criticism, tossing him a yellow tablet. "Let's see you do better."

Travis caught the pad of paper against his chest, raising an eyebrow as he looked at her. "Hormonal imbalance? PMS?"

Morgan was discovering sarcasm was his answer to just about everything.

She tried to skewer him with a cutting look but he just grinned. That was the trouble with TJ—his grin could always make her forget she was mad.

"FSM," she finally replied with a sigh, propping her elbows on her desk and running her fingers through her hair.

Travis nodded in understanding. "Family stress to the max, huh? I can sympathize. When my brothers—"

"Come on, hotshot, let's see you write a novel." She didn't want to talk about her family, so she waved a hand toward the notepad.

"Novel?" Travis sounded like he was choking. "I thought you meant a review of that sorry piece of trash Harrison calls a literary masterpiece."

Morgan shrugged. “Why waste your talent writing a review? Go straight to the big time and do the book.”

Travis gave her an assessing look. “Why so testy? You dating Harrison or something?” Before she could answer, he gave a hoot of laughter. “Christ, you’re not dating Matt Dugan, are you?”

Morgan rolled her eyes. “Get real, McVicker. Just write the damn book.” She turned away and started checking her e-mail, but her thoughts were on Travis. After kissing her like he wanted to devour her the very first day on the job, he hadn’t pursued her since. Oh, he made sexual comments, like her dating Dugan, but she wanted *him*.

She had finally asked Chancy to work separately because being in close proximity to TJ revived all her adolescent daydreams. She didn’t have a wealth of experience with men, but she did know what her body was screaming for. Frustrated, she just didn’t know how to get TJ to give it to her.

* * * *

After the editorial meeting, TJ settled down to work and by midafternoon, he had put his latest story to bed. He’d argued with Chancy over the cannery exposé because they both knew taking potshots at the largest industry on the bay could have some far-reaching repercussions, but Travis had the facts and wouldn’t back down.

Now, as he tried to find his Rolodex in the clutter that claimed his desk, he spied the yellow tablet Morgan had thrown at him that morning. Could he do it? Morgan had inadvertently tapped a hidden desire of Travis’—one that he had tried to forget because he usually didn’t take on things unless he knew he could win.

“*The Rooster Crows at Midnight?*” Morgan read over his shoulder. “What kind of stupid title is that?”

Travis groaned, not having heard her approach. She walked around his chair and sat on the corner of his desk. He wished she

wouldn't do that—hips canted, her skirt up above her knees and with a faint scent of perfume that sent all the blood rushing to his boxers.

He didn't know why she was trying to avoid working with him, but he couldn't take much more. The air crackled with tension whenever she was around and his body ached just to touch her. He had given her a week to adjust to work. He'd only allow her another week, or less, before he got her into his bed.

He leaned back in his chair to distance himself from her scent, if not from the view of her long, sexy legs.

"It's a code."

Her lips quirked.

He went on to explain. "See, there's these two detectives and when they get in trouble, they use that as a code."

She shook her head. "That's dumb. Roosters don't crow at midnight."

"What's the difference? It's just a code."

"A code has to make sense, otherwise your bad guys will *know* it's a code."

Travis stared at her lips, glistening with just a little color. He always wondered how women made their lips moist and inviting all the time and Morgan's were more inviting than most. They always curved up slightly at the corners, as though she knew a secret others didn't. Her bottom lip was fuller—pouty—except if she nibbled on it like she did when she was writing a news story.

"TJ."

"Huh?"

"Meet me at *O'Malley's*."

"Okay, but it's a little early for a beer." He leaned forward, ready to get out of the newsroom.

"Where were you? That was an example of a code."

Travis shrugged into his Sox jacket. “You wouldn’t make a very good mystery writer, Mork. There’s nothing secretive about meeting at a bar.”

She didn’t like the nickname he had given her and let him know it by sticking out her tongue. Boy, what he wouldn’t like to do with *that*.

“It would make a great code,” she said, “when one of your detectives never drinks because he had an alcoholic father and lost his wife to a drunk driver.” She grabbed her bag and headed to the door with him.

“I haven’t even written the first chapter and you’re already turning my suspenseful, murder-mystery thriller into a damn soap opera.”

Morgan just laughed as she swung her purse over her shoulder, sauntering away from him to her little Honda Accord.

Travis’ breath puffed into the crisp fall air like a dialogue bubble in a cartoon strip. He wasn’t thinking about his novel; he was wondering if he could move up the timetable for getting Morgan into his bed. Everything about her intrigued and enticed him—her laugh, her glorious blonde hair, her sense of humor, and her long legs, which he desperately wanted wrapped tight around his waist as he made love to her. He sighed as he watched those damn sexy legs disappear into her car before he punched the alarm button on his key ring.

It was then he saw the note from an informant under his wiper blade.

* * * *

Unable to sleep for thinking about Morgan, Travis was at the office before dawn. Now, hours later, he looked at what he had written. It had all the right elements for a novel—guy, fast car and girl.

He tossed the notepad aside and went to refill his coffee cup. By the time he returned to his desk, Morgan had arrived and was reading his story.

"You are pathetic," she said, dropping the yellow pad back on his desk.

"Since when did you turn into Dugan?" As tough-skinned as he was, he still took exception to her comment.

"I should have figured," she said, circling his desk to get to hers. He followed close behind her.

"Figured what?"

"Your *story*—cars and women. I suppose by chapter two, he gets her into bed?"

"Yeah, and what's wrong with that?"

"Where's the relationship?" She raised her brow at him just so.

"The what?"

Sagely, she nodded her head. "I thought so."

Travis decided Morgan didn't understand men's fiction and changed the subject.

"I got a note from Brickman last night."

She flipped on her computer before commenting. "Good thing he knows how to write so he doesn't have to leave his calling card on your pretty car."

Travis grimaced. Morgan had discovered the first day of work that the beat-up Monte Carlo he drove was for investigating only. His personal car was a red Corvette. That hadn't been so bad, but when he caught her reading the little black book he had accidentally left on his desk, her attitude toward him had changed. He wasn't sure if it was disinterest or jealousy and decided to find out.

"Hassle me about my wheels if you want, but it's extremely good for picking up chicks."

"Exactly." She looked down her nose at him as she sipped

her coffee.

Travis couldn't tell from that one word if it was jealousy, so he egged her on. "You know, I wouldn't be out cruising for babes if you would go out with me."

She barely raised a brow. "That's the most asinine thing I have heard out of your mouth since..." she pursed her lips in thought, "...since you were sniffing about Dugan's review."

"You know we'd be good together," Travis whispered close to her ear. He knew it just from the way his body reacted anytime she was near. He just had to get her to capitulate.

"Like oil and water; sugar and salt; arsenic and old lace?" Morgan made a face and sat down, her back to him as she propped her heels on the desk. Travis was disappointed she had worn slacks today.

Deciding to save his suit for another day, he reached across her to get the note off his desk. Her hair tickled his nose. He breathed in her scent, only too aware of what the woman did to him. Why did he have to get all hot over Morgan anyway? She had quickly learned about all his bad habits—not that *he* considered them bad—and had since been trying to ignore him. His brain said to do the same, but his body refused to listen.

"Brickman says there's something going down at the harbor tonight."

Morgan raised a brow. "Did he say exactly *what* was going down?"

While he had complete faith in his informant, he could see she was skeptical. Of course, that made a good reporter. Travis grinned, knowing if there was one way to get Morgan alone, it was the offer of a story.

"Guess you'll just have to go with me tonight and find out."

Chapter 2

Damn, this writing stuff was harder than he thought. Travis chewed the end of a pen as he stared at what he had written. If not for a full moon, he wouldn't have been able to see enough to write.

Morgan squirmed on the seat next to him. It was probably a good thing he had brought the notepad. Sitting in a parked car at midnight with a full moon and Morgan beside him, well, the only way it could get better would be if she would have sex with him.

"Yes," Morgan whispered in the dark.

Had he spoken his thoughts out loud?

"TJ, look over there." She pointed as she handed him the binoculars she had been peering through for the last half an hour.

Travis raised them to his eyes, the infrared lenses allowing him to see as though it were day. Hmmm, maybe he should use that in his next chapter.

He didn't have time to think about his writing as all hell broke loose. Six men came running out of the warehouse in a barrage of gunfire. Before any of them could get to their vehicles, police cars careened around the corner, sirens blasting.

* * * *

An hour later, Travis dropped Morgan off at her apartment and headed for home, disappointed that Brickman's information had led to an ordinary drug bust. While they had gotten the story they wanted with names and inside information that would

make Chancy grin, Travis longed for the ultimate story—the one that would win the Pulitzer.

He tossed his notes onto the table and reached into the frig for a beer. As he took a swig, he contemplated the yellow notepad that had slid halfway out of the manila folder. It was too late to call one of the many numbers in his little black book, and Mork had refused to let him into her apartment for a nightcap, so he might as well write.

* * * *

Chancy pulled Morgan and Travis into his office right after lunch on Wednesday. She wondered at Travis' blurry-eyed look, but didn't have time to ask him. She figured he had stayed up all night with some babe from his infamous little black book.

Since Chancy was on the phone when they came in, she took the time to study her partner. He wasn't in the least subtle about his come-ons and while she professed to find him distasteful in that regard, secretly, she wondered what it would be like to make love to him. Some of the girls whispered over colas in the breakroom, but Morgan had always figured they were just gossiping and none of them had actually gone out with him.

She had been unreasonably upset about finding his date book. Intellectually, she knew she had no claim on him, but emotionally, she had hated seeing all the names and phone numbers, some of whom she remembered from high school.

She looked at his hands, thumping a pencil on his notepad in that impatient gesture she knew so well. They were strong and brown, the fingers long. Just thinking about what he could do with those hands had her skin tingling and her nipples peaking. Maybe she should take him up on his offer. She wanted to. She had dreamed about little else since their kiss in his car. So why did she hesitate? Because she didn't want to share, that's why.

"What's wrong?" Travis asked her.

“Nothing, why?”

“You snorted.”

Morgan grimaced; thankful that at least she hadn’t spoken her thoughts out loud. “Did not.”

“Did, too,” he taunted her.

“Knock it off, you two.” Chancy slammed the phone down in its cradle and glared at them across his desk.

“What’s up, boss?” Travis immediately leaned forward, all investigator. Morgan knew he had an uncanny ability to smell a good story. That was the reason she liked working with him.

“I just found out Doctor Richard Sharpe was arraigned on charges yesterday.” He scowled again. “Damn, he was my kids’ dermatologist.”

“What’d he do, fail to clear up a case of acne before prom?” Travis joked and Morgan inwardly groaned. Chancy didn’t appear to be in the mood for jokes.

“Smart ass. Sharpe killed his wife.”

“Hell,” Travis swore.

“He was divorced, wasn’t he?” Morgan asked. Even here at the *Chronicle*, she had gotten stuck with writing some of the society page, and had begun learning about the lives of Boston’s prominent citizens.

“Yeah, that’s what doesn’t make sense. Why kill her when he was already rid of her?” Chancy mused out loud.

Morgan took exception to his terms—*rid of her*. “Excuse me, but don’t you think that’s a little presumptive to assume *he* got rid of *her*?”

“I’m not arguing semantics with you, Gentry. They’re divorced, she’s dead, and Sharpe is accused of shooting her. But that’s only half the picture.”

Travis jumped in. “Damn, you’re right. I heard at the courthouse that the defense is presenting its case today on Doctor Dirk Greineder’s alleged bludgeoning of his wife last

fall.”

“Dirk? That sounds like a name out of some male fiction book.” Morgan slid the wisecrack into the conversation slyly, or so she thought.

“I wouldn’t name anyone Dirk, for Christ’s sake,” Travis shot back.

“What the hell are you two yammering about? You’ve got work to do,” Chancy cut in. “I want to know why two esteemed doctors from Boston hospitals have suddenly decided to create mayhem and flush their careers down the toilet.” Chancy stood up, which was a signal that their meeting had come to an end.

As they walked back to their desks, Morgan couldn’t help but ask, “So, how’s it going, Mr. Know-it-all-who-thinks-he’s-a-writer?”

Travis threw her a look. “I did write last night. I actually think I could do this full-time and make money at it.”

Morgan stopped in her tracks, mouth open. He couldn’t have surprised her any more if he had said he wanted to become a priest. Not about making money writing, but about the fact he hadn’t had a hot date last night. He had spent it writing. Perhaps he was reformable after all. Still...

“I suppose you had your detective and the babe at the airport making the mile-high club in the lavatory or something?”

He grinned at her, a lecherous, sexy, I-want-to-do-erotic-things-to-you grin. “I didn’t think of that, but maybe he can on his trip home. You know, Mork, you could be an inspiration to me. We could try some really sexy things and then I could put them in my book.”

“In your dreams,” Morgan fired at him as she grabbed her purse and headed for the door, her face burning at his comments. Her stomach clenched and her heart beat faster. Regardless of what she said out loud to him, his words conjured up a fantasy as vivid as watching an X-rated movie and Morgan

longed to be the actress playing opposite him. She wondered how much longer she could hold him at arm's length. The voice in her head asked her why she even wanted to.

* * * *

Morgan was already at her desk when Travis arrived the next morning.

"Hey," she said as he dropped into his chair. "I've been doing some research on our doctors. They seem to have a history." She turned toward him, her face animated, her blonde hair swinging from a ponytail. She was dressed casually in jeans and a sweater, but Travis thought she looked beautiful. He figured she would look just as good in a sack, or without anything but a sheet draped over her, or...

He groaned. He was becoming obsessed with Morgan Gentry. He hadn't had a date since the day she started work, and he hadn't gotten laid since long before that. And the dumb part was he didn't want to just get laid; he wanted Morgan.

Give it up, he told himself. She wasn't having anything to do with him, even after she had practically eaten him alive in the car the first time he kissed her. That kiss still singed the file he'd stored it in every time he thought about it.

It wasn't that she was indifferent, far from it. She still ragged on him about his writing, taking a very feminist view of his hero, and they exchanged sexual banter in a setting where any kind of sex remarks could be construed as harassment. But ever since she had found his little black book, she had been even more reserved.

He looked up from his coffee to find her staring at him and a thought struck him out of the blue. *Was she jealous? Wouldn't that be a trip!* Maybe there was hope after all. He figured it wouldn't hurt to test his new theory.

“You’re here early. I would have been but I had a really, really busy night,” he taunted, throwing in a loud yawn for good measure.

She immediately scowled and turned back to her desk. “Keep your love life to yourself, McVicker, I could care less.”

Travis grinned. He hadn’t said anything about having a date; only that he was busy. Knowing that she was just blowing smoke anytime she made caustic remarks about his personal life, he decided to crank up the heat simply by telling the truth, not that he figured she would believe it. “I don’t have a love life. Of course, if you would go out with me, we could change all that.”

“Do you want to know about the doctors, or not?” She deliberately changed the subject, but he noticed a light blush creeping up her neck to her cheeks.

He decided he had teased her enough for the time being, but he would find a way to get her alone and explore this jealous streak of hers. Then he would tell her there was nothing to be jealous about. She could have anything she wanted from him; hell, she could have all of him if she wanted.

“Shoot,” he said, kicking back in his chair and putting his feet on the desk.

“We know Doctor Greineder is currently on trial. He was a plastic surgeon. Doctor Sharpe was arraigned two days ago. He was a dermatologist.”

“Yeah, so. We already knew that.”

“Well, it seems that our doctors have a partnership of sorts.”

Travis’ feet hit the floor as he leaned across his desk. “What do you mean *of sorts*?”

“I checked all the corporate listings, the applications for limited partnerships, etcetera, and couldn’t find anything to connect them. So I checked phone records. In all the cop shows and *CSI*, they always check phone records.”

“How did you get the phone records?”

Morgan decided to give Travis a little of his own medicine.

“I called Lieutenant Tanner down at the police station. For a possible date in the somewhat hazy future, he gave me everything I wanted.”

He immediately scowled. “Stay away from him, Morgan. He’s bad news.”

She shrugged. “He seemed very nice to me.”

“He’s got two ex-wives.”

“So, I don’t want to marry him,” she replied, secretly pleased with the vehement way TJ was putting the guy down to make sure she wasn’t interested.

“Yeah, well, they’re ex-wives because he beats them up.”

She was a little disappointed that was the reason for his warning, but still, she took note of his savage look and his jealous tone of voice and decided it was enough for now.

“Do you want to know what I found out when I compared their phone records?”

He gave her a look she couldn’t decipher before nodding his head.

“There’s one number that kept appearing on both sets of records, but when I called, I got an answering service.”

“Shit.”

“Wait a minute, I’m not done. I checked all the doctors listed in the vicinity of and in Boston proper and no one else has that number in their listing, you know, like to be called in case of emergency. So I called to see if I could use them for my answering service for a new business I was forming and I was told that they were private and didn’t accept new clients.”

Travis narrowed his eyes, following her line of thinking perfectly. “What business wouldn’t want new clients?”

“Exactly.”

“So we have two doctors who have murdered their wives, both of whom use the same service. Wait a minute.” He snapped his fingers. Reaching across the desk, he grabbed the phone records and punched in the number. “Why would the service still be in business if both doctors are in jail?”

Before she could answer, he spoke into the phone. “I need to speak with the doctor. What? No, call me at 555-8542 instead.”

He smiled triumphantly when he hung up. “Apparently there’s more than Sharpe and Greineder involved. She said she’d get a message to the doctor and asked if I wanted to be called at the usual number. That means the service is a middleman, so to speak. Someone calls it, then the service contacts the doctor.” He thumped a pencil on his desk. “Hmm, but what does the doctor do then?”

Morgan slumped in her chair. “I just don’t see any connection.”

Travis’ cell phone rang and he pulled it from his belt. “No display,” he commented before connecting. “Yeah.” He paused, then asked, “What do you mean ‘no more’?” He pulled the phone away from his ear and looked at it, then laid it on his desk.

“Is there a Kartell listed under physicians or surgeons?” he asked.

Morgan flipped through the listings in the phone book on her desk. “Anthony Kartell, plastic surgeon.”

He nodded his head. “There’s the connection. All the guy on the phone said was ‘This is Kartell—no more.’ When I asked why, he hung up. He must have known it wasn’t the usual caller.”

He stretched his arms above his head and Morgan’s mouth went dry when his shirt came up to show a strip of tight, muscled belly. *Damn*, everything the guy did was sexy.

“Hey, you with me here?”

She jerked her gaze up at the sound of his voice.

“Why would two skin doctors kill their wives? And how does Kartell, also a skin man, fit into the picture? What did those women know that got them killed?”

Morgan shrugged. “I think you’re making too much out of this. Maybe it’s just a coincidence that two doctors killed their wives.”

Travis bounded up from his chair heading for Chancy’s office, talking as he went. “There’s one way to find out. We need to see what Doctor Kartell is up to, and whether he still has a wife.”

Morgan followed Travis into the editor’s office.

“Okay if we do some undercover work on your doctors?” Travis asked.

“What have you got?” Chancy answered his question with one of his own.

Travis shrugged. “Not much. Three doctors in an undisclosed partnership, of whom two are up on murder charges. I’d...we’d like to see if there’s a wife number three still around, and maybe find out what else the doctors have been up to.”

“Fine, just don’t spend any money doing it.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Travis muttered as he turned and exited the office, Morgan right on his heels.

They drove Travis’ old Monte Carlo over to the hospital and cruised the doctors’ parking lot. A shiny black Porsche occupied Doctor Kartell’s spot. Travis drove slowly past, reading off the license number, which Morgan jotted down, and then he pulled away.

“Where are we going? Aren’t we going to wait and see where he goes after work?”

“This old Chevy would look a little conspicuous if we park here, don’t you think?” He pulled across the street, shut off the

car and got out. It was then Morgan realized they were in a hotel parking lot.

“Come on,” he said.

“Where?” The single word squeaked out, her voice several octaves higher than normal.

“We get a room on the top floor where we can see the doctors’ lot,” he said almost casually as he scanned the hospital building across the street.

She started to ache in places that shouldn’t be aching.

“Got your phone?”

When she nodded, he gave her his number, which she punched in and saved. “While I check us in, you go into the hospital and see where the good doctor has his office. Find out if you can see the hotel from whatever side of the building he’s on. Stand by a window as close to the office as you can and call me.”

Morgan thought Travis knew way too much for an ordinary news reporter, and she began to wonder if he had spent all of the past nine years at the paper. For some reason, she felt there might be something more dangerous than basic undercover investigating in his background. She walked back across the street, glad for a momentary reprieve.

She didn’t know what she was thinking, following Travis blindly into a hotel. She thought of the word she had used—dangerous. There was definitely something dangerous about Travis and it wasn’t the work he did.

All the doctors’ offices were located on the third floor of the hospital, and she didn’t have any trouble walking along the corridor and finding the door with Doctor Kartell’s name on it. Right next to it was a small waiting room, and although the nurse behind the counter gave her a look, she didn’t ask Morgan any questions.

Morgan tried to look as though she were just waiting, perhaps for a patient who was seeing one of the doctors. She sat

down, casually flipped through a magazine, then acting impatient, got up and went to the window. She scanned the area, spying the hotel. She didn't even need to call Travis, because she could see him clearly standing in front of a window in a room almost directly across from her. He gave her a wave to indicate he had seen her.

As quickly as she could without drawing attention, she left the hospital and hurried across the street. She called Travis to find out the room number and stepped into the elevator.

It wasn't until she had punched the third floor button that she actually *thought* about going into a hotel room with Travis McVicker, the man of her fantasies.

"We're here on a story," she whispered to herself, tapping her foot nervously as the elevator stopped on the second floor. A couple and two small children, along with their suitcases, maneuvered their way in. The children immediately started arguing about who got to push the button for their floor.

"Excuse me," Morgan said when the doors opened on the third floor. She almost didn't get off before the doors started to close. *Maybe it was a sign.* Maybe someone was trying to tell her not to go into that room with Travis. Her stomach flip-flopped.

Knowing she had no choice, she turned and started down the hall, gripping her purse in both hands. *We're adults*, she told herself. *We'll just act like adults and do our job.* She knocked on the door.

He opened the door and she made the mistake of catching his gaze. From the look in his eyes, she immediately knew he was having the same thoughts she did.

"Maybe this isn't such a good idea." She said the words even as she stepped into the room.

He didn't say anything; didn't take his gaze from hers as he reached behind her and closed the door. She heard the lock click into place.

Don't panic, she told herself. It's just Travis' regular, everyday look. But she didn't need a lot of experience to know what that look meant. He was like an animal on the prowl. She just didn't know whether he was looking for a mate or a meal because his brown eyes coursed over her body as if he wanted to devour her.

"Come here." His rough whisper was like his hand touching bare skin. She could feel herself get damp; her legs shook. But she couldn't move.

"Doctor Kartell," she managed to croak out.

"Morgan, I don't give a fuck about the doctor right now and you damn well know it." He took two steps away from the door, bringing him within reach of her, but he didn't touch her. "I don't think you do either."

She let out an involuntary groan and that was all it took. They came together in a tangle of arms, his mouth covering hers before she had time to protest, not that she probably would have. He wasn't gentle as he jerked her up against him. She needed to feel his strength; his solid body against her softer curves.

His tongue plunged into her mouth, taking all she had to give and then some. He turned, pushing her up against the wall and stepping close so his hips rubbed against hers. His hands were everywhere—in her hair, sliding down her arms, curving around her breasts. And still he plundered her mouth, stealing her breath and giving it back, hot and moist and tasting of him.

Finally, he lifted his head, his gaze burning into her—asking her, begging her to let him continue. She couldn't speak; she could only return his stare, hoping he could see what she wanted in her eyes.

He whipped off his glasses and she heard them clatter against the dresser when he ran his fingers through her hair.

“Travis, your glasses,” she gasped between kisses that were so hot and wet, she immediately felt the heat clear down to her core.

He swept her up into his arms, heading for the bed. “Forget the specs, I don’t need them for what I’m about to do.” He laid her on the coverlet and swiftly unbuttoned her blouse. “I can find everything I want by touch alone.”

Before she had time to take a breath, he had slid his hands into her bra, cupping her breasts and freeing them from their lacy restraints. Every inch of her skin throbbed from his touch, but when he sucked a nipple into his mouth, she came apart.

“Oh my God!” she shrieked, her back arching off the bed. She tried to get at his clothes, but he grabbed her wrists and pinned them above her head. She writhed, she panted, she pleaded, but he wouldn’t relent. He only sucked harder, grinding his pelvis against her pubic bone.

“Travis, I can’t stand it!”

“What do you want, baby? More?” He transferred his attention to her other breast. He captured both her wrists with one large hand and then reached down between them to push a finger against her, maneuvering it until the seam of her jeans rubbed against her clit. Each time he pressed against her, he nipped her nipple, then sucked, and even through two layers of clothes, it was enough to make her come.

She screamed. It wasn’t a dainty mew or a feminine moan. She came so undone, that if she had cared at all, she was sure the neighbors a block away heard her. But she didn’t care. The rapture shooting through her body was enough to send her soaring. Her body was so sensitized that when Travis flicked her nipple with his tongue, she came again, this time so quick, she gasped.

Before she was even aware, Travis had stripped off her clothes, his tongue tracing a heated path down her body.

“Could you have envisioned this, Morgan, all those years ago in high school when you teased me with your short skirts and tight sweaters? Did you ever think the dork with the glasses could make you come like there was no tomorrow?”

She could only roll her head from side to side on the pillow. She had never thought him a dork, only studious. In fact, his glasses gave him an air of mystery that had only made him more unapproachable in school. She couldn’t tell him that, though, because she wasn’t able to talk. The sensations he was creating with his mouth focused all her attention on her body. Never in her life had she known such ecstasy.

His hot hands traced tingling paths up her inner thighs, pushing her legs further apart. Dazed, her body was pliant to his wishes and she was sure she looked like a sex-crazed fiend lying so open to his gaze. It didn’t matter. All that mattered was that he didn’t stop what he was doing.

The moment she thought that, she felt his hands lift her hips and she knew what was coming.

“No, Travis, don’t.” She tried to wiggle out of his grasp, but he wouldn’t let her.

“Sh, let me taste you.” He murmured against her skin, scattering little kisses across her belly, stopping to tongue her navel and nip the sensitive area on her inner thigh. “You are so beautiful. You smell so sweet.” More kisses, more soft words meant to break down her defenses. Like she didn’t already lie in ruin before him.

Then his tongue was where his fingers had been—pressing, teasing, lapping against her clit and then deeper.

This time she cried. Overwhelmed by the tenderness he showed her and by the exquisite sensations he caused throughout her body, she started shaking.

He didn’t let her come this time, although she was sure he knew she was on the brink of another orgasm. He lowered her

hips to the bed, and even with her eyes closed, she could hear the zipper of his pants and then his groan as he rubbed his penis against her opening.

“Are you ready for this, baby?” His voice had lowered to a growl. She could feel him throbbing against her. He felt huge. He pushed a little more and her body tightened around him.

“Open for me, sweet Morgan,” he whispered, coming down on top of her, trapping her beneath his weight.

She felt the pressure build as he pushed harder and she realized she should have told him. But things had spiraled out of control so rapidly, she hadn’t thought. And now it was too late.

Chapter 3

“You’re so hot, so wet. I can’t wait, sweetheart.” With those words, Travis thrust his hips forward, pushing to the hilt in one stroke and realizing in some far corner of his mind that something wasn’t right.

Morgan cried out, but the sound was one of pain, not pleasure. Travis clenched his teeth as he fought the need to thrust into her again. He was throbbing so hard and she was so tight, his body threatened to explode. He forced himself to keep his hips still, but leaned up on his elbows to look at her.

“I’m so sorry,” she cried and he watched huge tears seep from the corners of her eyes. “I should have told you, but I wanted you so badly.”

He was at once chagrined and ecstatic. “Christ, Morgan, you’re twenty-seven years old. Who would have thought you’d still be a virgin?”

She pushed against his chest, but he wasn’t ready to be dislodged from her soft, curvy form. Especially not when he was buried deep inside her hot sheath.

“I told you I was sorry, although why I’m apologizing is beyond me.” Her lower lip trembled, and Travis bent down and gently kissed her.

“I’m the one who should be apologizing. I just never thought—” He shook his head in wonder. He didn’t know anyone her age who could claim virginity. And then he recalled the second part of her confession.

The thought that Morgan desperately wanted his body made him harder than he already was. Given her tender emotions at the moment, Travis didn't think it would be a good idea to gloat, or even to mention what she had said. Instead, he decided to give her what she wanted—all of him.

He wasn't about to pull out of her, but he didn't move his hips as he began his seduction all over again. He kissed her nose, the tears from her eyes, her cheeks, gradually working his way to her lips. As his mouth worked its magic, he leaned on one elbow, freeing the other hand to caress her soft skin.

His hand traveled from shoulder to wrist, back up and across her collarbone. He watched her nipple peak, knowing her body was crying out for attention. Oh, he would give it to her, but in his own sweet time.

He looked up to find her warily watching him but as his hand closed over her breast, he could see passion soften her gaze until her eyes were liquid blue, the color of the sea in a storm. He tugged on her nipple and she gasped. He could feel her clench around him and he held his breath, hoping he could control his urges until she was ready.

"Do you know how bad I want you?" he asked as he bent to kiss her breast. "You are even more beautiful than you were in high school. I had a hard-on all four years every time I saw you."

His words were answered with a sigh.

"I used to watch you during cheerleading practice, hoping your halter top would slip, or that I could catch a glimpse of your panties under your skirt." He licked her skin, ever so slowly making his way to her nipple, which he tongued lightly. He couldn't help but smile when she began squirming beneath him.

"Travis?" His name was a breath of sound on her lips but he heard the pleading behind it.

“Hmmm?” He continued working his magic on her breast as his hand traveled lower.

“Could you...that is, would you—”

He knew what she was asking for even if she didn't. He still couldn't believe she had never been with a man. She had kissed him like she knew what she was doing, and she had turned him on like no other woman he had known.

His hand continued its forays lower and lower, finally reaching the point where they were still joined. One finger slid between her folds, finding the nub of her sex. When he touched her, he could feel her muscles contract, squeezing him hard.

It was time. He lifted his gaze to hers.

“Are you sure, Morgan, that this is what you want?” He had taken her virginity, but that didn't mean they had to finish. He immediately called himself all kinds of a fool, knowing he probably couldn't stop if he wanted.

She wiggled her hips, her lips curving upward into a smile. “Isn't that a rather foolish question, given our current position?”

“I didn't mean to hurt you,” he said.

She raised a hand to his lips, stopping his words of apology. “It's not your fault, TJ. I know I started this, but I wish to heaven that you would finish it.”

He chuckled, rolling over so they were chest to chest; his hips snug in the cradle of her thighs.

“Oh, baby, even after I make you climax and I come, no way in hell is it finished.” He sealed that promise with a kiss as he slowly thrust in and out. He tried to take it slow, knowing she wasn't used to this, but in seconds, he had broken the limits of his control.

She bit down on his shoulder. He sucked the sensitive area where her neck met her shoulder, all the while their bodies met again and again, the rhythm seeming to increase exponentially with his heartbeat.

When she grabbed his butt with both hands, nails digging into his flesh, he managed to lift his head enough to see her face. Her eyes were closed and she was biting her bottom lip.

“Okay?” he gasped, unable to form a complete sentence.

She nodded, and then moaned. “I...I think it’s happening again. Travis?”

She sounded in a panic, but Travis was having a hard enough time controlling his own escalating passion. He wasn’t in a position to reassure her about anything.

“Hang on, baby, and come with me!” He thrust into her, her ass-grabbing fingers egging him on. This time when she screamed her release, he was right there with her, his orgasm so explosive, so raw and carnal, he wondered for a minute if he was even going to survive. It burned through him like a live thing, singeing his nerves and causing his blood to boil.

Gasping, he collapsed on her, burying his face in her shoulder. He couldn’t have moved if an earthquake took the building down. His blood pounded in his ears to the pulsing of his manhood inside her. She wrapped her legs around his hips, keeping him lodged deep.

When his brain could form a thought, even if not a rational one, he wondered what in the hell had just happened. He’d had sex before, plenty of it, but never in all those years had he exploded the way he just did with Morgan. On top of that, he was still hard.

“Is it always like that?” Morgan gave voice to his thoughts.

“Hell, no, or I would have died long ago,” he replied without thinking. He felt her stiffen beneath him.

“Do you do this often?”

Was it sarcasm, or hurt he detected in her voice? Either way, he was in deep shit.

He turned his head, kissing her slick neck, moist from exertion. “Can we talk about this later?”

“No, I think now is good.” She untangled her legs from around him, pushing on his ribs when he didn’t immediately lift himself off her.

He rolled, his body silently screaming at the sudden loss of warmth and intimacy their joining had provided.

When she started to get up, he grabbed her arm, pulling her back down on the bed. “If we’re going to talk about what just happened, we’ll do it right here, where it happened.”

She looked down at where he held her arm, then up to meet his gaze. “Fine, but let go of me. I can’t think when you touch me.”

Travis wondered if she even realized what she revealed, both when she had told him she wanted him badly and now, letting him know that regardless of what she thought about his sex life, he still affected her with a mere touch. He kept her comments tucked in a little side folder in his brain and tried to concentrate on the current discussion. That proved difficult, given Morgan had flipped the coverlet over trying to hide her assets, but it barely covered her nipples, which only made her look more enticing.

“Well?” She raised a brow in question.

He sighed. No trying to get out of it. “Look at it this way, Morgan. If I didn’t have a little experience, I would have fumbled around and it wouldn’t have been nearly as good for you.”

The eyebrow rose even further.

“I don’t mean to sound egotistical, but cut me a break here. At least admit that it was good.”

“Well, I don’t have anything to compare it to, not like some people, you know.”

“I don’t recall you asking me if I was a saint before all this started,” he grouched. “And I certainly didn’t pretend to be.”

Her face cleared. "I'm sorry. I know I'm making a big deal out of this. Being the novice, I'm not really sure how I'm supposed to react."

"Be honest," Travis replied. "If I do something you don't like, tell me." He leaned closer and lowered his voice. "And if I do something you really, really like, tell me that, too, so I can make sure to do it again."

"Are we talking sex here, or anything?" She didn't move away from his roving lips and Travis considered that a good thing.

"We are talking anytime, anywhere, and anything your heart desires," he stated, punctuating his words with kisses down the side of her neck.

"Honest, huh? Do you really mean that?"

Travis wasn't sure he liked her tone, and wondered if his ego could take brutal honesty with regard to his performance. He pursed his lips, ready to hear the worst.

"Yep, I mean it."

She shoved him hard on the shoulder, causing him to fall on his back on the bed. In the next heartbeat, she was on top of him, her breasts bouncing dangerously close to his mouth. She braced herself above him, her hands on his shoulders.

"In that case, let me be honest and perfectly clear." She paused, pushing her beautiful backside back until his ramrod stiff length pressed against the cleft of her bottom. "I liked what we did. In fact, I loved having several orgasms in a row. But if we are going to expand my sexual knowledge, my being the novice here, it has to be on an exclusive basis. I don't like to think about sharing a gold mine."

"If that's how you feel," Travis whispered, reaching up and capturing her nipples, gently pulling her toward him, "then let me show you my assets." He sucked her into his mouth, lathing the pebbly tip with his tongue and she moaned. He would never

tire of that sound, he thought. As far as exclusivity went, that was fine with him because it worked both ways and he intended to make sure Morgan found out she couldn't live without him.

* * * *

Morgan still quivered deep inside from her last orgasm, and she thought that if she had known sex felt this good, she would have tried it a long time ago. Rolling onto her stomach, she watched as Travis walked naked across the hotel room to the bathroom. He was the most beautiful creature she had ever seen. From his broad shoulders down to his tightly muscled butt and sculpted legs, he was all male. And all hers, she sighed, closing her eyes, the sound of running water lulling her to sleep.

"Damn!" Travis' expletive brought her awake from a nap. Still groggy, she struggled to sit up but her legs were tangled in the sheets and several of her muscles felt tight. She dropped back onto the bed.

"What?" she asked, her voice muffled in the pillow.

"Kartell's gone."

That did wake her up, realizing while they were madly exploring each other's bodies, the reason they were here had disappeared. She turned her head to see Travis standing by the window, the curtains parted to let in the evening light. She wondered what time it was.

When she started to get up, Travis was there, his large warm hand pushing down on her lower back.

"Nothing we can do now; it's past quitting time."

"But—" She thought one of them should make at least a token effort at doing their job. However, not only was Travis' hand doing delicious things to her bottom, he was now kissing down her spine.

"Travis." His name came out a sigh and she wiggled beneath his explorations.

“Hmmm?” The sound he made vibrated against her skin as he kissed his way down the back of her thigh, then started up the seam where her legs were together.

“We should go find him.” She made one last attempt to get up.

“The room’s paid for,” he murmured, sliding his hands between her knees and urging her legs apart. “No sense wasting it.”

This time, he showed her something new, taking her from behind, covering her back with his chest and cupping her breasts with his hands. Morgan’s skin was so sensitized to his touch, that in only seconds, she was gasping for breath, thrusting her hips back against him, urging him faster and harder.

“Arch your back,” Travis whispered raggedly and Morgan complied, lifting up to grasp the headboard with both hands. Her movement allowed him even deeper penetration and she gasped. He slid his hands down her sides, curving over her hips to find her most sensitive spot. He splayed one hand against her stomach to keep her tight against him as he thrust.

She cried out.

“What do you want?” He teased her but she could hear that his voice was just as shaky with passion as hers. She answered him by pushing her hips back hard against him. She was so close. She could feel it deep inside, and craved what he could make her body feel.

“Please,” she begged, hearing the desperation in her voice but not caring.

He reached down, sliding a finger into her and applying slight pressure to her clit. That was all it took, her convulsions cresting like waves against the shore in a hurricane.

Travis thrust forward, hard and fast, again and again until she thought she would faint from the pure ecstasy of it. With an animallike growl, he gripped her hips to keep her fast against

him and she could feel him throb his release deep within her. Her muscles squeezed around him, the contractions slowing, but the pleasure still radiating through her body.

Sometime later as they lay side by side, Travis turned to circle a finger idly around her breast, not touching the nipple, which peaked anyway. Morgan sighed, sated and content.

"You're going to kill me if we keep this up," Travis said, but she could hear the teasing in his voice.

"Not if Chancy does it first," she replied.

"We're off for the night."

"But we were here earlier," she argued.

He rolled to his side, pulling her against him spoon fashion; his face nestled in her hair. "You going to tell on us?"

She smiled. This was one secret she would guard with her life.

* * * *

Somewhere in the early morning, Travis woke to the feel of a warm, soft hand wrapped around his penis, which lay at half-mast. Without moving except to turn his head, he glanced over to see that Morgan was still asleep. He smiled, thinking there were worse ways to wake up and wondering if he should return the favor.

Morgan's thirst for knowledge, now that he had initiated her into the ways of sexual gratification, was inexhaustible. Last night, she had touched him everywhere, having no preconceived notions about what was proper. He'd had to make a quick trip to the convenience store at the corner for snacks just to keep his energy level up.

He had come back to find her in the shower, wet and slick and inviting and that had meant yet another lesson that involved a lot of slipping and sliding around and nearly drowning them both. But it had been worth it to hear her cry out his name as she climaxed.

He looked down to see his penis coming to life. Morgan moaned softly in her sleep and he seriously thought about waking her, but decided that she had to be sore. Christ, he was, even though he knew he would make love to her a thousand ways and times if he thought she could handle it.

He eased himself from the bed and climbed into the shower, letting the water sluice over him and trying to take his mind off the luscious woman in the other room. He was suddenly glad that he hadn't had the nerve to ask her out in high school. If they had dated; if they had made it in the backseat of his car back then, he doubted it would have been as satisfying as making love to the woman she had become.

He shook his head. He still couldn't believe that she had never had sex. Her comments had led him to believe she had somehow waited for him. Could that be possible? Why had he never seen her interest back then? He snorted, knowing that at eighteen, he had been a prime jock who had been more concerned with getting laid than in any girl who might be interested in him for any other reason.

He toweled off and dressed near the window, peering past the crack in the curtains to the parking lot across the street.

"It appears our doctor is an early riser," he said out loud, picking up the binoculars on the table and taking a closer look.

"He's not the only one," Morgan grumbled from behind him.

The doctor disappeared into the building, so he turned to find her sitting up at the edge of the bed, the sheet barely covering anything. He felt his sex stir. Damn, he wanted her all over again, regardless of what had transpired last night.

She stretched and ruffled her hair before she realized he was staring at her. She quickly jerked the sheet up to cover her breasts.

He raised a brow. "Little late for that, don't you think?"

She blushed, glancing to the side, probably wondering how she could get to the bathroom without him seeing her naked. Like he hadn't already. He liked her modesty in a way, because it meant she didn't flaunt herself around men. Although when he thought about her lack of sexual experience, he knew that wasn't the case anyway. He frowned, realizing their relationship was going to be a lot different from ones he'd had in the past.

He watched her frown at him, so being the considerate lover he was, he turned his back and again looked out the window, immediately hearing her feet padding past him.

When she returned from the shower, she was completely dressed. He smiled. No amount of clothes could prevent him from seeing her naked in his mind's eye from now on, but he refrained from saying so. Let her have her modesty during the day. He now knew what would happen once the sun went down.

"The doc doesn't look too happy," he commented as he watched the man in the office across the street pace back and forth, the telephone at his ear. From this distance, it was impossible for Travis to determine any of the conversation, but his body language spoke volumes.

Morgan came up and took the binoculars from him, adjusting them to her vision. "*Why...haven't you gotten enough...I can't do this by myself.*" She stopped, lowered the glasses, and then raised them again. "*No, it's too soon, it's—*" She shook her head, handing him back the binoculars.

"He turned his back and then hung up, so I don't know what else he said."

"You read lips?"

"And sign language," she said, "in English and Spanish." She pulled a comb out of her bag and began running it through her hair.

Travis looked at her with new respect. "Any other remarkable traits I should know about?"

She gave him a sexy smile. “There’s some I just recently learned. Would you like me to demonstrate?”

He fought the urge to take her up on her offer, letting his professional interest in getting a story take over. “Tonight,” he promised, which earned him another smile.

“I called Chancy and told him to sign us out for the day since we’re still on the story,” he said as he wrapped the strap on his binoculars and put them back in the case.

“Damn, I can’t do that,” she said, looking at her watch. “I have that stupid society column to write for the weekend edition.”

That gave Travis an idea. He opened his laptop, which he had good intentions of using last night until Morgan entered the room. He spoke as he set it up. “Let’s see what we can find out about Mrs. Anthony Kartell.”

A few minutes on the Internet scanning back issues of the *Chronicle* and Travis was ready to hit the road. They checked out of the hotel, hopped in the car after getting some coffee and he drove out of the lot.

“Seems the Missus is on a number of committees, including the new Children’s Hospital, Arts Council, and the Boston Symphony. We’ll go out to their place and you can do your thing.”

“Do my thing?” Morgan echoed, although she didn’t sound happy.

He glanced over at her. “Are you not a morning person?”

She scowled. “How can you tell?”

“I never would have guessed. You always seem ready to take on the world when you come into the newsroom in the morning.”

She sighed. “Yeah, well, I always get a good night’s sleep, too.”

That made him grin. “Can’t say I’m sorry for contributing to your lack of sleep. As for myself, I feel quite—” He paused, searching for the right word.

“Egotistical, studly, Don Juan-ish?” she supplied.

“Sated,” he finished and then gave her a wolfish grin. “For now.”

* * * *

Morgan thought that if she lived to be a hundred, she wouldn’t get enough of Travis McVicker. His every touch, every word, every movement last night had turned her on and kept her enthralled. Even this morning when she woke up naked in the same room with him, she didn’t feel as much embarrassment as she did satisfaction. She wasn’t sure what that said about her morals.

Travis pulled up in front of a huge brick house with white columns rising two stories.

“Here’s what we do. You get information for your society news and maybe we find out something about the doctor all at the same time.”

“That doesn’t sound exactly ethical.”

“You never got a story that way?” he asked. “What kind of reporter are you, anyway?”

That got her back up for sure. She slammed the door to the car and stomped up the walk to the front door.

She had just reached up to knock when the door opened. A striking woman in her mid-thirties with highlighted hair and very red lips stood on the threshold.

“Mrs. Kartell?” Morgan asked.

She looked flustered and hesitant; wary of their appearance on her porch.

“Yes?”

“Morgan Gentry with the *Boston Chronicle*. I wondered if I might have a minute of your time.”

“Do you have some identification?”

Morgan showed her press pass. She looked instantly relieved, but still hesitant.

“I’m really in a hurry. Is this important?”

“Well, I’d like to do a story on the Arts Council and I know you’re on the board.” Morgan said the first thing to pop into her head.

The woman’s eyes narrowed. “I just resigned from that board.”

Damn. “But you’ve given so much time to various charities, and I thought—”

“Perhaps you should call my secretary the first of the week. I may have time to talk to you then. You’ll have to excuse me now.”

She stepped out, pulling the door shut behind her, effectively dismissing them.

Morgan and Travis had no choice but to leave. As they got in the car, the woman pulled out of the circular drive, turned away from them and drove off.

“Follow her,” Morgan said.

“It’s not her we’re interested in,” Travis countered.

“Something tells me she’s going somewhere she shouldn’t,” Morgan replied. “Did you see how relieved she was to find out we were from the *Chronicle*, almost as if she might have been expecting someone else.”

Travis looked at her sideways. “Woman’s intuition?”

She shrugged. “Call it what you want. Let’s see where she goes.”

They followed the red BMW across town, staying far enough back that they wouldn’t be noticed, even though Morgan figured the woman wouldn’t be expecting a tail.

“There’s someone else tailing her,” Travis said after they turned into a side road. “Don’t look, but there’s a car behind us.”

They watched as the BMW turned into a motel parking lot. Mrs. Kartell got out, glanced around, and walked straight to one of the rooms. She knocked and it was opened to her, but Morgan couldn’t see who was on the other side.

“Ah, a secret assignation,” Travis smiled, then frowned. “But that doesn’t tell us if it has anything to do with the doctor. Let’s go inside that café.”

They took a booth at the window. Morgan shook her head as Travis ordered the trucker’s special, which included hash browns and pancakes, as well as eggs and sausage. She got a cup of coffee and some fruit.

“Look,” Travis nodded.

It was then Morgan saw a man sitting in a car to the side of the road. When she looked closer, she saw that he had a camera trained on the motel.

“Don’t bother,” Travis said when she started to write down the license plate. “I know him. *Percy Investigations*. He’s a two bit hack who makes most of his money doing just what he’s doing.”

“Spying on doctors’ wives?”

“Spying on anyone he gets paid to. I’ve dealt with him before. I even think some of his photos are doctored.”

They continued to keep an eye on both the hotel room and the car. As soon as Travis finished his breakfast, he got up from the booth.

“Wait here.”

Morgan watched him saunter over to the car, lean against it and begin a casual conversation with the man inside. From her position, she couldn’t tell what they said.

Within minutes, he was back. “Something strange is definitely happening. Percy is keeping tabs on Mrs. Kartell, but I

don't know if it's for her husband. He was very evasive on that question." He picked up the check. "Ready?"

Morgan slid out of the booth and followed, wondering what Travis was thinking. They got into his car and drove away, apparently not concerned that the doctor's wife was still in the hotel room with an undisclosed man. Well, Morgan assumed it was a man. If she had been meeting a woman, why wouldn't they have met out in the open?

Once they got back to the newsroom, Travis said he needed to catch up on another story and left. Morgan knew she had to get her society column written, so she didn't press him for details.

The afternoon went by incredibly fast. Morgan deliberately concentrated on not thinking of Travis or what had transpired last night, but when she put her article to bed, thoughts of him surfaced. He hadn't said anything when he left about seeing her again. She felt a flush creep up her neck and into her cheeks as she wondered if he considered them finished. He had gotten what he wanted since high school. Was that all there was to it? Knowing he kept a book of women's names and phone numbers, she wondered if he was turned off by her request for exclusivity.

Morgan had never engaged in sexual activity before, even though she had dated. She just couldn't jump into the sack with any guy who asked her out. She had always figured she would know when the time was right to give herself to a man. Travis McVicker had been her secret fantasy in high school, but it wasn't until she had seen him at the *Chronicle* that she had started seriously thinking about him again.

When she had walked into that hotel room, well, maybe when he had said *come here* in that sexy voice of his, she had realized that he was the man she wanted to initiate her into the world of sex. And she had been right. He had been a tender and

considerate lover. She felt no remorse for having given herself to him.

In fact, the problem was the things they had done had only whetted her appetite. Even thinking about it now made her squirm in her chair, a tingly, damp feeling invading her. What would she do if Travis didn't want to continue what they had started?

She sighed as she grabbed her jacket and called good night to Chancy. Travis still hadn't shown up or called. *Well, so much for being easy*, she thought as she walked to her car. Damn him anyway, for taking her virginity and casually walking away.

Opening her apartment door depressed Morgan even further because stacked boxes were all that awaited her. She had been so busy with her job that unpacking her things since the move hadn't been high priority. She looked in the fridge. Neither had shopping for groceries. With a sigh, she glanced at the phone—no messages, which was no wonder. Nobody knew her here, and the one guy who did apparently didn't care.

She had changed to flannels and a loose tank top when someone knocked on the door. She clipped her hair up as she went to see who was there. Peering through the peephole, her heart dropped.

Morgan hesitated; hand on the door, not wanting to appear eager. Taking her time, she opened the door to see Travis leaning against the doorjamb, arms crossed over his chest. The bright light from the hallway glinted off his dark hair, creating a halo effect. She knew he was anything but angelic. In fact, he was more likely the devil in disguise, tempting her to do things she had never contemplated.

Now, thinking of those *things* had her aching and wet, confused and uncertain. She said the first thing that came to mind.

"I don't have any groceries."

He grinned. “We can order pizza. I brought the beer to go with it.”

“Sure,” she answered, backing up and opening the door wider so he could enter.

His eyes widened when he saw her disheveled apartment. What had she been thinking, inviting him in? The furniture was all shoved to one side and boxes were stacked in the middle of the room; newspaper from what little she had unpacked still piled on the floor.

“Sorry,” she said, yet she knew it wasn’t the mess in the apartment that had her hands trembling as she turned to close and lock the door. She had just thrown the chain when she felt his breath on her neck. His body heat warmed her entire backside even though he wasn’t touching her.

His sexy whisper tickled her ear. “Have you unpacked the bed?”

Chapter 4

Morgan nodded and that was all Travis needed to know. He braced his hands on either side of her, effectively pinning her between him and the door but not touching her. He knew she couldn't turn around without brushing against him, and for the moment, he wanted that anticipation to build.

"Um, could I ask you a question?" she whispered breathlessly.

"Mmmm." He answered her with a kiss to her shoulder, then more kisses across her bare neck and back.

"About us."

Uh-oh. The relationship thing again. "We're fantastic together. What else is there to know?"

He knew he had to distract her. "Don't move." He leaned in to nip her earlobe, then quickly jerked off his Sox jacket and tee shirt. Taking a step closer, Travis rubbed his hips against her soft bottom. God, he wanted to strip her and take her right there, up against the wall.

He had left the office, and her, today in order to get some work done. He had thought if she wasn't sitting right across from him, he wouldn't keep thinking about her naked, in bed, straddling him, kissing him, doing all the incredible things she had done last night.

Needless to say, it hadn't worked. If he closed his eyes, he saw her face, smiling at him in sexy adoration as he made her come. When he looked at his notes for the story he was writing,

he found her name scribbled in the margins of his pad and he didn't even remember doing it. He had finally climbed in the shower, hoping cold water would cool his ardor. Wrong again. They had done the shower thing, and he would never again feel the same about a washcloth coursing over his body.

Now he had her right where he wanted her. Her tee shirt was soft as he caressed her sides, and he knew she wore no bra. Taking it as slow as he could manage, he slid his hands up her sides, bringing the shirt with it. She fit perfectly in his hands, her breasts high and firm, the nipples already hard nubs beneath his thumbs.

"TJ," she gasped, "we need to talk." She had turned her head sideways and he took full advantage. He nibbled on her earlobe and licked the shell of her ear. Reluctantly, he let go of one breast and removed the clip from her hair. She smelled of sunshine and flowers. He tucked some strands behind her ear before returning to her breast, kneading gently.

He didn't want to talk. He wanted her mindless and horny, just the way he was. He wanted her screaming his name as he took her against the wall or on the floor. Hell, he'd make love to her on top of a pile of boxes if she wanted.

He stepped closer so his hips pushed hers against the wall. He tongued her ear in rhythm to the motion of his hips and she groaned. Yep, the talking could wait. He couldn't, and he didn't think she could either.

"Take your pants off," he breathed between kisses. She wiggled against him trying to comply and he loosened the pressure of his hips. "Can you reach my zipper?" His hands were full of warm, willing flesh and he wasn't about to let go if he didn't have to.

"It would be easier if I turned around," she said.

"That wouldn't make it near as much fun," he replied, sliding his hands down her sides to bare hips. She had dropped

both her flannels and her panties, if she had been wearing any. That thought had Travis straining at his fly.

While he continued caressing her belly, her hips, her breasts, she managed to get her hands to his waistband. The minute she released the zipper and tugged, his manhood popped out, hot and stiff and ready for action. His jeans dropped to his ankles and he toed his shoes and then his pants off, never letting go of her.

Slipping a knee between her legs, he pushed them apart at the same time his hands slid down her arms and he entwined his fingers with hers. He pulled her arms out, spread-eagling her against the wall, moving closer until they were skin to skin from chest to knee. His penis rubbed against her cleft and they both moaned.

She squeezed his fingers as she tried to curl her hands into fists. "I have to touch you," she gasped.

"Baby, we are."

"TJ, please. Let me turn around."

He continued to rub his hips against her backside, biting lightly on her shoulder. "I kinda like you this way; at my mercy, so to speak." He wasn't into bondage, but he did like being in control.

"But I ache for you," she gasped, and her words were his downfall. When she wiggled again, he released her hands and she turned before he could even step away, which was okay because every inch of her slid against every bit of him as they came face to face.

Morgan immediately reached down and circled him, her hot hand making him even harder. As she stroked, she leaned forward, kissing a trail across his chest to his nipple, which she tongued as he had done hers. He groaned, bringing his hands up to cradle her head, urging her on.

He knew she had no experience with men, other than what she had learned last night. But he hoped she knew she could touch him anywhere.

Travis braced his hands on the wall, his head lowered between them as Morgan slid down his body, leaving a heated trail of kisses in her wake. His eyes closed to better absorb the feel of her caressing his hips, then moving lower. She might not have any experience, but it didn't matter. Her tentative explorations were enough to make Travis jerk and push against the hand that circled and squeezed in rhythm with her hot mouth.

He knew he had to stop her. He desperately wanted inside her.

"Put your arms around me," he managed to gasp as he reached down and pulled her up. He slid his hands under her bottom and lifted her, carrying her over to where he had seen a stack of boxes he figured were just the right height. He sat her on top but when she started to slide away, resting her back against another higher box, he shook his head.

"Scoot forward." He drew her knees toward him, opening her legs. "Hook your legs around my back." She locked her ankles as he rubbed himself against her opening.

"Oh, God, now, now!" She arched her back, pushing against him with the heels of her feet.

Travis needed no further urging. They came together in a rush, his hands on her fanny and her legs locked tight around his waist. The high was instant, as it had been every time he made love to her. Color flashed behind his eyes as he thrust his hips forward and back. Morgan had her fingers in his hair, tugging his head down so she could kiss him. Her breath was warm; her kiss wet and minty, and he clung to her like a man dying of thirst.

Too soon, he felt the rush of impending orgasm. He raised his head, gazing into stormy blue eyes. "Are you with me, babe?"

He slid a hand down between their bodies, his finger rubbing her sex. She gasped, her tongue slipping out to rub along her lips; her legs squeezing harder around him.

The room exploded in light and Travis felt himself burst along with it. His ears rang and he wondered if his legs would support him.

Morgan opened her mouth to scream, as she seemed to have the habit of doing, and he covered her mouth with his, stealing her breath as his tongue mated with hers just as his male body had penetrated her female core. He could feel her climax against him, her sheath still virginal and tight. Man, he couldn't get enough of this woman!

When the tremors subsided and he could breathe again, he pulled out and leaned forward, resting his forehead on her shoulder. With a squawk, she suddenly wasn't under him anymore. In a tumble of arms and then legs, they collapsed into the box as it gave way beneath their weight.

* * * *

As the box top caved in, Morgan's body bent in a vee, her knees almost under her chin. If that wasn't bad enough, when Travis untangled himself and reached down to help her, he burst out laughing.

"It's not funny!" she exclaimed, arms and legs flailing. "Ouch. The flaps of this box are pinching me."

"Where?" He snickered.

Morgan glared at him. "You damn well know where, now get me out of here."

"Tsk, ts. Morgan Gentry swearing?" He shook his head, still chuckling as he helped her out of the packing box.

"It's all your fault," she huffed as she finally stood up, rubbing her bare backside.

"I taught you how to swear?"

“No, but if we hadn’t been...doing it on the box, it wouldn’t have collapsed.”

Travis tilted her chin up, holding it gently until she looked at him. “It’s alright to talk about what we were doing, Morgan. We made love.”

She could feel a blush creep up her neck and she tried to look anywhere but at him. He took her face in both hands so she didn’t have a choice, then lightly kissed her on the lips.

“Making love to you is definitely better than eating pizza,” he said with a grin, “and I’m never one to turn down food.”

Morgan could only hang on tight as he picked her up and headed for the bedroom.

“Now can we talk?” she asked as Travis laid her on the bed. She’d had to wait until her breathing was back to normal and she could think. She didn’t know how he did it, but whenever he touched her, all she could do was respond to him on the most elemental level—with her body. It’s probably a good thing they hadn’t connected in high school. She probably would have flunked out. Or worse, gotten pregnant.

“Geez.” She slapped her hand to her forehead, realizing the possibilities for the first time. Her brain rapidly scrolled through all the times she and Travis had made love. Had he always worn a condom?

“What’s up, babe?” Travis levered himself up on an elbow and looked at her.

“Uh, don’t panic, but did we...have you...are we protected?” Exchanging sexual banter with Travis was entirely different than asking him something so personal.

He frowned at her question. “I don’t have anything contagious, if that’s what you’re asking.” He sounded affronted, but Morgan was looking at a bigger picture than his ego.

“I don’t mean that. I know you wouldn’t hurt me that way.”

“Well, what is it then?”

“It’s just that I—” Oh, God, how could she say this?

“You were a virgin last night, so I know you don’t—” His voice trailed off and she watched his eyes widen. He dropped back on the bed, his breath whooshing out. “You’re not on the pill, are you?”

It really wasn’t a question.

“There wasn’t any need.” She tried to shrug off his concern.

“I thought all women took the pill.”

“Why would they do that?”

“Christ, I don’t know. My brothers’ wives are always jabbering about regulating their cycles and crap like that.” He blew his breath out again.

“Look, there’s no need to worry. You wore condoms.”

* * * *

Fuck, he hadn’t five minutes ago, Travis thought, but out loud, he said, “Rubbers aren’t foolproof.” He thought about it, knowing if he asked his brother, Michael could probably give him statistics. The doctor in the family, he was always lecturing his younger brothers about sexual responsibility.

Morgan rose from the bed, her back to him. “I’m close to my cycle anyway,” she said, “so I’m sure it’s fine.” He could see a blush stain her cheeks as she disappeared into the bathroom.

He shook his head. Morgan was the most unique woman he had ever encountered. Totally uninhibited in bed, she blushed when talking about her body or anything of a sexual nature. He recalled asking her to tell him what she wanted him to do to her. She just couldn’t.

He thought about what she had said. He was only twenty-seven and had never been in a serious relationship before. Her comment about exclusivity didn’t bother him simply because he was always monogamous and had never two-timed a woman he dated. But did he *never* want to date again? He couldn’t answer that question.

Morgan came out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. She stood sideways at the dresser brushing her hair and Travis let his gaze casually slide down her body. *What would she look like pregnant?* He had been around when Gordon's and Steve's wives were expecting and remembered the special glow they had. He also remembered what saps his brothers had been, handling them with kid gloves, catering to their every need.

He snorted. That wasn't him. He wasn't going to give up a Sox game for the ballet or walk around the mall with a baby packed on his back. No way.

"What are you thinking?" Morgan asked as she slid across the bed to prop her chin on his chest.

"Trying to decide between pizza and you." He laughed, rolling over with her under him.

"Travis, be serious."

"Will you take the pill?" He figured that was still on her mind.

"Yes, but I think it takes a while to be effective. So maybe we shouldn't—"

He cut her protest off with a kiss.

"We'll be extra careful until then," he whispered as he kissed her chin, her eyelids, her neck.

And for the next hour, he showed her just how careful he could be in covering her entire body with kisses and caresses, until finally, he filled her with himself.

* * * *

When the cannery story hit the streets, an investigation immediately started and Travis spent his days talking to attorneys and then testifying. It took up more of his time than he would have liked and he was out of the office during the day. The only reason that bothered him was that he didn't get to see Morgan.

After court recessed each evening, he headed back to the office to do his other stories and his sports column. When he had

ragged on the previous columnist long enough, Chancy gave his name to the sports editor and he had started doing a weekly column. It was in addition to his regular news stories, but that was okay by Travis. He loved sports and knew what readers wanted to hear.

By the time he left the office at night, he was too tired to think of anything except grabbing something to eat and falling into bed. He usually called Morgan on the way home to see how her day had gone. Although he missed her warm body and her eager responsiveness to his lovemaking, he didn't tell her that. He wasn't sure why, except he worried that she would get too serious. Yet all he thought about—when he wasn't mentally writing his next column—was her being naked beneath him.

"Have you gotten any further with Kartell?" he asked as he pulled up at a fast food drive-through.

"No. Chancy has me busy on the school board issues, and along with writing the society stuff, I put it on a back burner. We don't know that there's really anything going on anyway."

"There's something going on, or Percy wouldn't be involved." Travis paid for his dinner and drove off, sliding into the traffic pattern as he headed for his apartment.

"TJ, cheating wives don't make the news."

"They would if there were a rash of them," he said as he thought about the other doctors already facing murder charges. "Doctor Sharpio divorced his wife. I wonder if you can see Doctor Greineder and find out why he killed his wife. I'll bet any amount of money she was cheating on him, too."

"How about if I talk to Percy? These doctors apparently knew each other. Maybe they used the same PI."

"I'll talk to Percy."

"Travis—" He could tell she was upset with him, probably figuring he didn't think her capable of asking the right questions.

"Percy's a scumbag. I don't want you around him."

There was a sigh on the other end of the line. “You think all men are scumbags. Remember what you told me about Lieutenant Tanner?”

Anyone who showed an interest in Morgan was a scumbag.

“I’ll have to talk to Greg if I want to see Doctor Greineder,” Morgan interrupted his thoughts.

“First name basis, are you now?” He didn’t know why that bothered him, but it did.

Another sigh. “Are you ever going to take me out on a date?”

It took Travis a moment to shift gears as quickly as she had. “Remember what I told you—I’ll take you anywhere, anytime, anyway you want it.”

This time she made a disgusting sound that he couldn’t decipher. “Is sex all you ever think about?”

“Babe, with you—”

“Just forget it. I’ve got another call coming in. Good-bye.” She hung up on him.

Travis dropped the phone on the car seat as he turned into the complex parking lot. He pushed the garage door opener. He was one of the few people in the building who paid for one of the enclosed parking stalls, but then he didn’t want to leave the ’Vette out in the elements.

He thought about what Morgan had said as he ate his curly fries in front of the TV, catching the late night sports. They were good in the sack and he couldn’t wait to see her this weekend to pick up where they left off. Wasn’t seeing her a date? He wondered if she was going to get all mushy and female on him now that they were spending time with each other.

The phone rang, interrupting his thoughts.

“Hey, Trav, what’s up?” His older brother, Steve, practically shouted over the noise in the background.

“Where are you?” TJ asked. Steve and his wife, Keva, lived part-time in both New York and Boston. Keva was an editor at a publishing company in the city and Steve had gone back to running his computer company here in Boston after a year hiatus. Not many people could balance the lives those two led, but of course, Steve being a millionaire didn’t hurt any.

The shouting disappeared and Travis realized it must have been the TV. “We’re in New York, but the twins have discovered the remote and the only button their chubby fingers can find seems to be the volume.”

“How are the little rascals?”

“Ornery, which they get from their mother.” His brother laughed.

Travis figured Steve deserved whatever kind of kids he got, because he had certainly gotten Travis and Chase in trouble when they were kids. And Travis knew, too, that Steve’s wife was a saint—especially since she put up with him.

“Whatcha need?” Travis stifled a yawn. Usually when one of his brothers called, the conversation lasted an hour or more. He wondered if he could stay awake that long.

“Mom’s birthday is next week.”

“Shit.” Travis had completely forgotten. Their mom never wanted her sons to spend money on her, even though every one of them could afford it. Well, except for him, Travis thought. He was not only at the end of the age chain being the youngest, but also practically in the basement of the financial security pyramid. Steve was definitely at the top. The only reason TJ had a great car and a little extra money in the bank was because all the brothers had stock in Steve’s company and the dividends paid well.

“We’re not going to make it home because Keva’s pregnant again and refuses to fly.”

Travis laughed, recalling how Steve and Keva flew between Boston and New York for their jobs, and had gotten caught in the air somewhere over the Long Island Sound when Keva went into early labor with the twins.

"I'll call Gordon and Mike and see what they have planned for Mom. I've been in court for over a week and haven't even thought of anything else."

"Any problems I can help with?" Steve sounded concerned.

"No, it'll wrap up tomorrow," Travis replied. He and his five brothers were as tight as they could be, given fifteen years separated the first from the last. Being the youngest, Travis sometimes felt smothered by his brothers' good intentions, but there wasn't anything that one wouldn't do for the other. Which gave him a thought.

"Hey, Steve, before you got married, when you started making it with Keva, did you have to turn around and take her out on dates and stuff?"

Before Steve could answer, a female voice interrupted. "You are a moron, TJ." Keva had picked up the extension.

"Hey, that's my line," Steve laughed.

"The twins want you to tuck them in," she told her husband. "I'll talk to Mr. Sex-is-all-I-think-about."

"I want to hear this conversation," Steve replied.

"Do you two want me to hang up so you can talk?" Travis asked.

"Night, little brother," Steve said, but as the phone clicked, Travis heard him say to his wife, "Don't be too hard on him. After all, he hasn't had the benefit of my years of experience."

"And who taught you?" Keva's muffled reply came across the line. Then Travis heard her kiss him.

"You'd think you two were newlyweds," he said. "Hell, you've got kids." Travis ragged on his sister-in-law, even though he really did like her.

“And you never will if you don’t learn to treat a woman with respect,” Keva fired right back at him. She had learned quicker than some of his brothers’ wives that if she was part of the McVicker clan, she had to give as good as she got.

“I’m only twenty-seven. Don’t saddle me with a herd of rug rats yet.” Even as he said that, he recalled his conversation with Morgan the last time they had made love. His stomach tightened. He hadn’t asked her in the weeks since if they had been careful enough, and now a niggling worry crept into his brain. *File it*, he lectured himself.

“Now, tell me about this woman,” Keva said.

Travis felt a moment of embarrassment, which was unusual for him. It was one thing talking to guys about sexual exploits. It was another matter entirely talking sex with his sister-in-law, even though they hassled each other on a friendly basis. It was kind of like asking his mom questions.

“Let me tell you then,” Keva continued when he didn’t answer right away. “You like her but you don’t want to get serious about anyone. You like playing the field.”

“Yeah, so what’s wrong with that?”

“Nothing, but any woman wants to feel like she’s more than just a night in the sack.”

“Steve had you out at the cabin for a week before you two were married. Don’t tell me all you did was fish?”

“Travis McVicker, we’re not talking about us. Besides, your brother is very romantic. There was this time—”

“I really don’t want to hear this,” Travis interrupted.

He could hear Steve yell something in the background, and the next minute, childish giggles came over the phone. “Lo, Unca Ejay,” one of the twins said.

“Hey, squirt,” he answered, not knowing which one he was talking to.

"You kids get upstairs with your father." He heard Keva lecture them, but noted there was only laughter in her voice. Then she was back on the phone with him. "I've got to go. Your brother is worthless when it comes to making those two mind."

"And you're having another?"

"As many as we can afford," she laughed.

"Christ, Keva, Steve's a millionaire!"

She laughed again. "Just a piece of advice, sweetie. Treat her with respect and show her a little romance. If that means going to a movie and holding hands, do it. And don't forget to take her over to your mom's. You know what will happen if your mom finds out you're seeing someone before you tell her."

They said goodbye and Travis hung up, thinking about what she had said. He had dated a lot during and since high school, and he didn't recall having any complaints. But the more he thought about it, he wondered if any of those relationships would have lasted longer if he had done things different. He guessed it wouldn't hurt to try.

He reached for the phone again to call and ask Morgan for a date, but then realized the time. Chances were, it wouldn't be romantic to call this late.

* * * *

Morgan was late getting to work, her doctor appointment taking longer than she had thought when she scheduled it. There was a sticky note on her computer monitor from Travis with a curt message asking where she was and that he was seeing Kartell.

"Damn," she said, tossing her purse in the drawer. She had wanted in on this story and Travis had gone without her. Of course, she hadn't told him she would be late, and especially that she was seeing her doctor about the pill. In fact, she hadn't said much of anything when they talked last night. He had made her mad with his comments and now she wondered if she would

even need the packet she had hidden in the zipper compartment of her bag.

She knew TJ had been busy with the cannery expose and she didn't blame him for not seeing her. She knew how important a story could be. But she wanted something more than sex from him, and she didn't know if he was capable of giving it to her. She thought about what the doctor had told her. It might very well be too late to start thinking of his attitude.

"Where you been, sexy?"

She jumped at the sound of his voice, bumping into him when she tried to turn.

"Don't do that!"

"Do what?" he questioned with a grin, going around her desk to his own.

"Sneak up behind me like that," she said, then added, "and calling me sexy." She lowered her voice on the last word, afraid someone would hear.

His eyes narrowed and she could see he was confused. "Well, you are sexy," he mimicked her whisper.

"Chauvinist." She plopped down in her chair and swiveled around, determined to ignore him. He confused her. She had wanted him so badly, and had no regrets about giving him her virginity. But she didn't want to use sex to hold him.

She wanted him to appreciate her other qualities. She wanted romance, she concluded, pursing her lips. But it wasn't something she could just tell him. He had to figure it out on his own or it just wouldn't be the same.

* * * *

Travis watched Morgan frown at her computer screen. He thought he was giving her a compliment, but she apparently didn't see it that way. He hadn't even been talking about sex, but rather, the way she looked. Today she wore a long, straight black skirt slit up to the knee that made her look tall and

willowy. The snug green turtleneck curved around her luscious breasts and trim waist and even though she was covered from neck to toe, she looked gorgeous. She looked sexy, damn it.

Travis didn't have a clue as to why Morgan was different, but admitted that she was. He looked over at her as she scanned her email. He would have to work on his lines, but he definitely wasn't about to give up on her.

"You missed my appointment with Kartell," he said, just to get her to look at him.

She turned. "I know, but I had an appointment, and you didn't tell me you were going over there."

He shrugged. "I decided to try and catch him before he went on rounds, or whatever high-priced plastic surgeons do in the mornings. Sorry."

Her face instantly cleared and she smiled at him. Travis rewound what he just said. *Apologize—often*, he noted and filed it upstairs where he kept all important facts about Morgan.

"Did you find out anything?"

"Depends. I noticed his office had connecting doors, so when I left, I checked both sides. Wanna guess who his roommates were?"

"Greineder and Sharpe?"

He nodded. "Their nameplates were still on the doors. Yet when I asked the good doctor what he knew about the other two, he told me that they were professional colleagues only. No private practice, no socializing, nothing."

"Well, we know he's lying about that."

Travis tapped his pencil on his desk as he thought. "Here's something else. I brought up Percy's name, but not what he did, just to see if I could get a reaction. Kartell knows the man, I'd bet my job on it."

"You may not have a job to bet," Chancy said, stopping beside their desks. "What the hell are you into now, McVicker?"

I'm getting calls from upstairs saying our liability insurance is going to be cancelled because of the cannery expose. Now the police are calling, wanting to know why your card is in some guy's pocket."

"My facts were right on the cannery, or they wouldn't have convicted the guy," Travis answered. "But what guy has my card? And why are the police involved?"

"Thought that would get your attention. The guy's name is Percy and he's dead."

"Shit!" Travis bounded out of his chair, grabbing his jacket on his way to the elevator.

"Wait for me." Morgan ran to catch up with him.

"What the fu— hell is going on?" Travis mumbled, catching himself when Morgan shot him a look that told him he shouldn't be using the "f" word. What was it about women anyway? Was swearing something else he now had to avoid?

"Do you think he's dead because of this case?" she asked as they got off the elevator.

Travis shrugged. "Right now, he's just dead. If we find out he was *murdered*, that's a whole other ballgame."

Chapter 5

“Murdered?” Travis asked.

“How else would you explain three bullet holes in his chest?” Tanner replied sarcastically.

Morgan had come down to the police station with Travis and now shifted uncomfortably in a chair as Travis paced the small confines of Lieutenant Tanner’s office. Greg sat behind his desk, elbows on his chair arms, fingers steepled. Though he was talking to Travis, he directed his gaze at her—assessing, smiling. Even with Morgan’s limited experience, she understood that he was saying he was interested in her. Very interested.

“Where did you find him?” Travis probed.

“Down at the *Carriway Resort*, near Cape Cod.”

“That’s not your jurisdiction.”

“Yeah, but the guy’s got a Boston address, so we were called. Especially since he was murdered. Why the interest, McVicker?” Greg turned his gaze on Travis and Morgan noted the instant hostility that seemed to charge the air.

“Hey, you’re the one who called my boss.”

Greg nodded. “That’s right. We found your card on his bloody body.”

Morgan made an inarticulate sound and tried to shrug off the image Lieutenant Tanner portrayed.

“Sorry, Morgan,” Tanner apologized.

Travis narrowed his eyes.

“Lots of people have my business card,” he said and Morgan

was glad he kept his remarks on the case, instead of the looks the lieutenant kept giving her.

“Have you seen Percy recently?”

“Don’t recall.” Travis looked directly at her when he answered and Morgan knew she had to keep her mouth shut. She wondered how Travis was defining *recently*.

“That so? You just started writing your sports column a month ago. How come it’s listed on the card we found if you haven’t seen him recently?”

“Wow, you actually read, Tanner?” Travis grabbed his coat from the arm of her chair and said to her, “Let’s go.”

“McVicker.” The lieutenant called him back as they reached the door. Travis squeezed her elbow as he turned slightly.

“Your card wasn’t actually on the body when we found it. It was on the ground beside it. One of the shots that killed Percy had punctured the card. That means someone searched him after the fact.” He paused, then added, “And they have your name.”

Morgan couldn’t help the gasp that escaped at his words. Her gaze flew to Travis’ face, but it revealed nothing. He turned and walked away.

As soon as they were in the hallway, Morgan asked, “Why were you so sarcastic in there? He was only trying to help.”

“Yeah, right.” He held the door open for her and they walked out into an overcast day, a cold wind blowing leaves and dirt along the sidewalk.

“Travis, talk to me.” She pulled him to a halt.

He shrugged. “He stole a girlfriend of mine.”

“Oh, come on, TJ. You’re not in high school any more.” When he didn’t immediately have a snappy comeback, she narrowed her eyes, searching his face, but as usual, his gaze revealed nothing about what he was feeling. She was finding that she could read him better by listening carefully—to what he said and didn’t say—than she could trying to understand his body

language. In this case, she knew there was more than he was saying, but he got on the phone with Chancy before she could pursue it.

“We have to go to Cape Cod,” he said into the phone and Morgan’s mouth went dry. He was including her and it was already late in the day, which meant they might be spending the night. She wasn’t sure how she felt about that. She told herself she wanted more from Travis than sex but the thought of spending another night with him had her heart thumping and her body aching.

Travis clicked his phone shut, opened the car door for her, then got in the other side. He didn’t say anything as they started out of the police parking lot.

“Don’t you think you should ask me before you tell Chancy I’m working all weekend?” Morgan felt she’d offer a token protest at least. “Maybe I have something to do.”

He looked surprised that she would question him. Then he looked worried. “Do you?”

“That’s not the point.”

He didn’t say anything else; just looked at her. She finally sighed, knowing she couldn’t lie and that made her mad.

“No, I don’t have anything going on.”

Travis pulled into a parking lot, put the car in park and turned to her, sliding his arm along the seat. One finger stroked her neck. Morgan thought if he was trying to break down her defenses, it was working.

“Look, maybe we put the cart before the horse in our relationship and I won’t apologize for that because I wanted you that bad. But if you want, I’ll slow it down.”

Was that what she wanted?

“Anyway, you’re right; I should have asked. So, will you ride down to *Carriway* with me?”

“Will we get home tonight?”

“Probably not.” He grinned and Morgan knew he just couldn’t help it—he was a guy. But something had changed his attitude and she wondered if perhaps there was hope for him after all.

Travis dropped her off at her apartment to pack a bag and promised to come back within the hour. Morgan had mixed feelings as she tried to decide what to take. *Would he get them two rooms?* She wasn’t sure, so she threw in her long flannel baggies and an oversized tee shirt.

Would they go out to eat? She laughed at that question, deciding on slacks and a sweater rather than a dress. Travis lived for food—and lots of it. She didn’t know how he stayed so slim because it seemed he was constantly eating.

“Ready?” he asked when she answered the door at his knock. He looked past her into the living room, where boxes still remained. “Not unpacked yet?”

She snickered. “I would be if you didn’t keep dragging me off on assignments.”

“You can stay here,” he said as he took her bag and slung it over his shoulder so she could lock up the apartment.

“You wish,” she replied.

He stopped her with a look, his gaze caressing her face as though he were touching her. Then he did put one finger under her chin and tipped her head upward. He kissed her, his lips brushing across hers for only the length of a heartbeat, but she still felt her legs shake from the physical impact his touch had on her.

“I’ll tell you what I wish,” he said, his voice low and sexy. “Later.”

With those few words, he left her hanging on an emotional high wire, her insides quivering, her brain telling her to be careful and her heart shrieking—*now, not later*.

“Wow, what’s this?” she asked as he stopped at his

Corvette.

“I figured if we were going to a fancy resort, we should look like we belong.”

Morgan sighed as he closed the door on her side. Here she thought he was taking the 'Vette because she was special. She should have known better.

“How can you afford a car like this, anyway?” Given she and he were both reporters for a small paper, she couldn't help but wonder.

“I worked for my brother's computer company for awhile during college. When he went public, he gave all of us shares. The dividends help a lot when you work for Chancy.”

“I can imagine,” Morgan replied as she tilted the seat back and relaxed to enjoy the ride.

* * * *

Travis decided as they drove down to Cape Cod that he could get into this slow romance thing. He had barely touched Morgan in the hallway but he could tell from the way she looked at him now that she was still thinking about that kiss, and that she wanted him—badly.

And the funny thing was, he felt it, too. His gut ached with unfulfilled lust, and all he could think about was getting her undressed and touching every part of her body that she now had covered. There must be something to the possibility that she *wouldn't* let him touch her that had him wanting her even worse.

It had been killing him not to have time for her after the two nights they had shared, or even the fact he hadn't been seeing her during the day. Maybe he should tell her.

“I've missed you this past week, what with the trial and everything,” he said cautiously. He glanced sideways to see how she reacted to his words.

Surprised would have been an understatement. Her expression indicated she wondered what he was up to.

“Why?” she asked.

Uh-oh, this is slippery ground. He missed her body, her fierce responsiveness to his lovemaking, but if he said that, would it sound romantic? Then he thought of the other things he had missed by not seeing her.

“You and I think alike, and that helps when we’re trying to figure out a story angle. Besides, you’ve got a cute smile and I’ve gotten used to seeing it from my desk.”

“Cute? I really do need to get you a thesaurus,” she said and he thought he’d blown it but a quick glance her way found her smiling. He was discovering that even though Morgan ragged on him, her face was the gateway to her emotions, not what she said. And right now, they were on the same wavelength. He could see it in her eyes and she had turned slightly on the seat toward him, a sure indication that she was experiencing the same desire he was.

Saying a few things isn’t so hard. But he realized that they hadn’t just been words—he meant them. His first thought in the morning was seeing her, and while he was always ready to go to work because he loved his job, she was the bonus that now had him arriving early rather than late.

He certainly wasn’t discounting the sex, because that had been spectacular and he intended to pick up where they left off as soon as they got to the resort. But he was finding that he enjoyed spending time with Morgan, even if it wasn’t in the sack.

The time sped by as he asked her questions about her family, something she seemed reluctant to talk about. Travis recalled that she had quite a few sisters. Most of them lived in the surrounding areas, but her parents and at least one sister, Patti, lived in Pennsylvania.

“Everyone wants something different for the folks,” she said. “I don’t think we have the right to move them to a

retirement home, but Carolyn, who of course knows everything since she's the oldest, is determined to take over."

"What do your folks say?"

"Neither of them is in good health anymore, and admittedly, they need some help, but Patti is right there in town and she is more than willing to look after them."

"I guess I'm lucky in a way. Although Dad died when I was still in school, Mom is feisty enough that she still tells us what to do, not the other way around." He chuckled at the thought. "Speaking of which, you need to come with me and meet Mom. If she finds out I'm seeing you and she hasn't gotten a formal introduction, I'm in trouble."

She laughed. "You still get in trouble with your mom?"

"All the time." He switched off the car under the canopy of the resort entrance.

"Wow," Morgan said when she looked around. "Mrs. Kartell didn't believe in sparing expenses to have her affair, did she?"

"Mrs. Kartell wasn't here; Percy was."

Morgan looked at him. "And I'll bet a home-cooked meal Percy was here following Mrs. Kartell, which is why we're here." She gave him a sideways look. "Which is something you neglected to tell the police lieutenant."

"What's there to tell? Kartell hasn't done anything wrong. We just *suspect* he's involved with someone who did." Travis opened the car door for her and they walked into the resort. Red marble tile ran the length of the lobby. A fountain stood in the middle, the water spraying from the mouths of dolphins. The dome ceiling, which had to be at least three stories, was painted with a variety of seascapes.

"One room, or two?" Travis asked as they walked toward the reservation desk. He had decided on the way down here that he would give her control of the speed of their relationship. He

didn't want to, but he would try.

She stopped dead in her tracks and stared at him.

"I just thought—" Now he wasn't sure what he thought.

"Thank you." She gave him one of her bright, sexy smiles.

Okay, so she appreciated him asking, Travis thought, but she hadn't answered. He raised a brow in question.

Color rose in her cheeks and it made him grin. Even after the sex they had shared, she was shy around him when it came to discussing it.

"One." Her answer was barely audible, but Travis was acutely tuned to her and that was the answer he had been listening for.

"Good evening, is room one twenty-eight available?" Travis asked the clerk. "The one with the little patio that overlooks the indoor garden?"

The man gave him a very strange look, and Travis didn't wonder.

"As a matter of fact, it is," the man said.

"Great, we'll take it." Travis gave him his credit card and accepted the key to the room. He grabbed their bags and headed for the doors that led to the indoor gardens.

"Why did you ask for that particular room?" Morgan followed him.

"It was the one Percy had."

He turned the corner and glanced behind him, but Morgan wasn't there. He backtracked to find her sitting on a bench, head between her knees.

He dropped the bags and squatted in front of her. "Hey, what's wrong?"

She mumbled something he couldn't understand. He put his hands on her knees and squeezed lightly. "Mork, talk to me."

Her head shot up, almost cracking him on the chin.

"Mork?" She practically squawked.

“Well, it got you to look at me anyway,” he said, but he actually kinda liked the name. “Now tell me what’s wrong.”

“You want to stay in a room where a guy was murdered. Doesn’t that seem just a little—weird, morbid, kinky?” Her voice rose higher on each word.

“How come you always think of at least three words for everything, and all I can come up with is *cute*?”

“I have a thesaurus,” she blurted out, then closed her eyes and sighed. “Would you just answer my question, please?”

Travis slid his hands up and down her thighs. “He didn’t get killed in the room, okay? I think it was in the parking lot.”

He watched as her body instantly relaxed. He continued to gently caress her legs, feeling the muscles tighten and relax beneath his palms. His gaze met hers.

Her pupils dilated, and a pulse beat rapidly at the base of her throat. Travis stopped his hands, his fingers spread along her hips, his thumbs pointed inward toward her crotch. He leaned forward and kissed her, feeling her lips quiver slightly beneath his. When he slanted his mouth, she opened for him and he was lost, the heat instantly engulfing him. He squeezed her hips, but she pulled back.

“What?” he asked, dazed. He had felt her response.

“Don’t you think we should get a room?” She gave him that shy smile of hers.

He didn’t move right away because he knew it was going to pain him to stand. He had a hard-on that strained the fabric of his pants. Finally, he stood with a groan, turning to grab the bags before Morgan could see the evidence of his need.

They came into the room from the patio door. All the rooms on the main floor opened onto the indoor garden. Recalling what Morgan had said about Mrs. Kartell being here also, Travis figured he would have to check that out.

"This is quite elegant," Morgan said as she turned slowly in the middle of the room. While all one space, the room had a bed on one side and there was a small sofa, a table and chairs, and a minibar on the other. A short counter held a coffee pot and ice bucket.

"Oh my, TJ, come look at this," Morgan called from the bathroom.

He came up behind her and stared at the sunken marble tub, which had Jacuzzi jets on the sides and was big enough for four people.

"Christ, I'm in the wrong job," was his immediate reaction. "How could Percy afford to stay here?"

"Don't investigators usually get their fee plus expenses?"

He shrugged. "Yeah, you're right. If the doc's wife was here, he would have to get a room across or close by in order to keep an eye on her."

Morgan started digging through her bag. "You go snoop around and see what you can find. I'm going to take advantage of that tub."

"Don't you want to get something to eat?" Travis looked at the stuff she had thrown on the bed. His bag contained little more than a toothbrush and clean boxers. She looked like she had packed for a week.

"You always want to eat." She laughed. "We can eat later," she said as she closed the door to the bathroom.

Travis went out on the patio, surveying the rooms that could barely be seen across the garden. Chances are, if Mrs. Kartell had been here, she had taken a room on the ground floor or Percy would have been on an upper floor. He couldn't tell from where he stood whether the rooms across the way were occupied. He decided to start by simply calling down to the front desk and asking for her room.

They didn't have a Kartell listed. Travis turned to go back outside and check the room numbers, figuring he could call direct and see who was in them. That's when he heard the water running into the tub. Because he had been thinking about a story, Morgan's initial comments about taking a bath had somehow slipped right past him. How the hell that happened, he couldn't figure, because right now, all he could think about was her behind the closed bathroom door.

He started toward the patio, listening to the water splash. He should check out the room numbers.

He walked to the bathroom door instead.

He should search the room; maybe the police had missed something.

She turned on the Jacuzzi jets, the sound of pulsing water beckoning him. He closed his eyes and leaned his forehead against the door. He imagined her lying back against the tub, letting the water move against her body. Her naked body.

How did she expect him to take their relationship slowly when she did this? She had agreed to one room, knowing full well what that meant. Then she had decided to take a bath. It was more than a man could take.

"Morgan, I'm coming in," he called through the door, listening intently. She didn't answer.

"Morgan?" *This is her last chance*, he thought, turning the knob and finding that she hadn't locked the door.

He couldn't have spoken her name again once he entered the bathroom. He could only stare at the goddess reclining in the bubbling water. She had pulled her hair up on top of her head but a few stray strands curled around her temples. She had her head back, eyes closed, her arms resting along the rim of the tub. The water glistened over her creamy skin and swirled around her breasts, just barely covering her nipples that were still visible beneath the waterline.

* * * *

“What took you so long?” Morgan asked, keeping her eyes closed as she heard Travis undress. She had decided that if she was going to do this, she would do it first class. That meant seducing Travis, but along the way, teaching him that while sex was great, there could definitely be more to their relationship than that. When she had seen the Jacuzzi, she had decided that was a good starting point, even though she wasn’t sure exactly how to go about a seduction. She could only hope that if she could get Travis into the tub with her, he would take over.

“You are a witch, you know that?” he whispered in her ear as he knelt on the step leading to the tub. His hand dipped into the water and captured her breast, and she sucked in her breath. He nipped her earlobe, then she felt his tongue swirl along her ear, darting in and out. The ache between her legs intensified.

“Lean forward,” he commanded and when she did, he stepped into the tub behind her, sitting down and sliding his legs along the outside of her hips. His hands cupped both breasts and he pulled her back against him. She could feel his erection against her buttocks, his breathing heavy in her ears.

“I think we just raised the water temperature ten degrees,” he said, the husky timbre of his voice sending vibrations through her.

“Do you want some cold?” she asked, raising one foot out of the water to push her toe against the touch buttons that turned on the water.

“Honey, it wouldn’t make any difference if there was ice in this water. I’d still be so hot for you, I’d make steam.”

He began kissing across the curve of her neck and shoulders as his hands caressed a slow path down her body. When he got to her hips, he lifted her and closed his legs under her so that she sat on him, his erection pushing between her legs. She reached down and touched the tip of him and heard him groan.

“Turn around so I can reach you,” he whispered raggedly.

It wasn't as easy to maneuver in the tub as she thought. She had her knees bent, legs spread as she turned. The pulsing jet of water hit her vulva and she gasped. She tried to untangle her limbs but Travis moved a hand to her knee to stop her.

“Wait.” He lifted her legs and draped them over the side of the tub, pushing her knees apart and leaving her open and vulnerable on his thighs. “Lean back.” She looked at him and saw the mischievous glint in his eye and wasn't sure if she should trust him.

He took her hand and slid it down his chest to close around his penis. Once she clutched him, she was content to let him move her at will. She slowly moved her hand up and down, rubbing her thumb over the crown as she leaned back. He opened her legs wider and in the next instant, she felt the water jet again pulse against her clit.

She squeezed him tighter, trying to concentrate on the silky hot feel of him but all her senses were focused on the incredible sensations between her legs. The water beat against her sex, but because the jet had an intermittent pulse, she would start to climb toward orgasm, only to be denied when it slowed for several seconds before pulsing again.

Travis kept her in place with a hand on her breast, kneading softly. The other hand was between her legs from behind, and she felt him slide two fingers into her. The combination of his thrusting fingers and the pulsating jet had Morgan careening out of control.

“Look at me, baby,” Travis called to her through a sensual fog. Her eyelids didn't want to open; she could hardly control her breathing. All she could do was feel, and it was so wonderful, she was afraid if she moved a fraction, and that included her eyelids, it would end too soon.

“I want to see you come.” He captured her nipple and tugged gently.

“It feels so...so...” She didn’t know how to describe the vibrating, hot achiness that was gradually taking over her body but she knew where it would lead.

Morgan slowly opened her eyes, turning her head slightly to find Travis. His chocolate eyes glittered with passion and his lips curved upward in a sexy smile. Just his look was enough to make her go all liquid inside. Now added to that, his hands on her body made it all just too much.

Travis saw the look in Morgan’s eyes and knew she was right on the edge of the precipice. He tilted his legs up just slightly and the water jet hit her more fully. He thrust his fingers harder, all the while keeping her gaze captured in his. She cried out, her back arching, her hand pumping him faster. Her body squeezed around his fingers, her eyes glazed with passion as she climaxed.

“You’re so beautiful,” he said, his hand brushing damp strands of hair back from her brow. “You let loose so completely when you come.” He shook his head in awe.

Her tongue snaked out to lick her lips, making them slick and glistening and oh, so kissable. He leaned forward and took her mouth with his, his tongue delving deep to possess her. She was his, he thought, whether she knew it or not. The basis of their relationship was complete, utterly satisfying sex, and he would just have to build on that.

He felt Morgan move, even though their lips were still locked in a possessive kiss. She brought her legs down and turned, floating slightly above him in the water. The Jacuzzi jets had stopped in the last few seconds, but the hot water still swirled around them with her movements.

“It’s your turn,” she cooed as she brought her knees up along his hips. She kissed his neck and across his collarbone,

nipping his skin, then licking it with her hot tongue. Travis' cock throbbed as she guided him into her.

Very slowly, she sank down on him, taking his length within her body. Travis leaned his head back and sighed. *Life couldn't get any better*, he thought before something else intruded in his thoughts. He grabbed her hips and stopped her movement.

"No protection," he managed to gasp out. *Shit*, they were in a tub of water for Pete's sake. How the hell was he supposed to think of anything but taking her sweet body?

She leaned forward, brushing her lips across his. "Don't worry," she said. Then she sank down, taking all of him and Travis forgot everything except how wonderful she felt.

"Oh, you're so big," she moaned, grinding against him before lifting her hips slightly to do it all over again. Each time she slid down his length, her muscles clutched and he throbbed harder. She moved slowly, taking him deep again and again.

"You're driving me nuts," he said, grabbing her hips to try to speed up her movements. She circled his wrists with her small hands and forcibly pulled them away, placing his hands on the sides of the tub.

"I'm in charge at the moment, if you don't mind." She tried to give him a mock scowl.

"You think," he growled, thrusting upward hard. Her nails dug into his wrists as she rode his bucking hips, her knees squeezing against him.

Travis' stomach muscles tightened each time he thrust into her. He twisted his wrists free of her hold, turning his hands and lacing her fingers with his. He needed to hold onto her, not just physically, but with all the passion he could muster. He didn't think beyond that as he exploded, his climax hot and wild. His hips jerked as he throbbed inside her.

As his body slowly came back together, he gazed up at the wonder of a woman who gave him so freely of her passion. The

rapturous expression on her face should have caused him concern over the seriousness of their relationship, but all he could think was how wanton she looked and how she had only given herself to him—Travis James McVicker—no one else before him. *Or after*, a voice in his head added, but he ignored those words.

Morgan collapsed against his chest, her hands still entwined with his as he draped them across the small of her back. Her hot breath burst in little gasps against his neck.

“I’m new at this, but isn’t what happened a little unusual?” Her voice shook as she voiced his very thoughts.

He wasn’t new at making love to a woman, and yet he knew what he and Morgan shared was indeed very unique. He just didn’t know how to put it into words.

“Unusual, how?” he hedged.

She shook her hands free, levering herself up with palms against his chest. “Don’t play word games with me.”

“Hey, you’re the one with the dictionary, remember?”

She grinned. “Thesaurus, Mister, and that doesn’t answer my question.”

Travis sobered, gazing intently into her stormy blue eyes. “I don’t have an answer for you, sweetheart, except to say that what you do to me is totally unique and new to my experience.”

She tilted her head to the side, her eyes narrowing as though inspecting him like a specimen on a lab table.

“I can live with that,” she said. Then she tightened her muscles around him and he could feel himself growing larger inside her.

“Aren’t we going to eat tonight?” he asked as his stomach growled, even in the midst of the incredible things she was doing to him.

She gave him a mock frown. “Travis, what is a synonym for two or more?”

“Multiple,” he immediately responded, and then caught on to what she meant. “As in multiple orgasms?”

She gave him a sexy grin. “Maybe you don’t need a thesaurus after all.”

* * * *

The water had cooled considerably by the time Travis lifted Morgan out of the tub and they dried each other off. Morgan shrugged into her tee shirt and flannel pants against Travis’ protests.

“Flannels?” Travis frowned. “Didn’t you think I could keep you warm?”

“When I packed, I wasn’t sure of the sleeping arrangements,” she answered.

“Who’s sleeping?” He gave her a wolfish grin, then flopped down on the bed beside her as she brushed her hair. “Call room service; I’m starving.”

Morgan looked around, found the resort directory and skimmed the menu. “Hungry for anything special?” she asked as she dialed.

“Mmmm.” Travis tugged her sleeve down, baring her shoulder which he began nipping. “What I want isn’t on the menu.”

“You’re insatiable,” she hissed just as a voice answered her ring.

“I need a BLT on wheat toast, and one of your biggest hamburgers with the works. Oh, and fries with both and a carafe of coffee.”

“And a can of whipped cream,” Travis whispered in her free ear.

She giggled, his breath tickling her ear. She turned. “What do we need whipped cream—” She clamped a hand over the phone, suddenly realizing what he had in mind. She could feel her face get red; worse, the man on the other end of the line was

chuckling.

“That’s all.” She slammed down the phone. “He heard you...me! I’m so embarrassed,” she wailed, covering her face with her hands.

Travis laughed out loud, the sound rich and deep. He reached for her and she tried to get away. Together they tumbled across the bed, her leg knocking everything off the nightstand and tipping over the lamp. She barely set it upright when he had her again, pulling her down and pinning her shoulders to the bed. He towered over her upside-down, and time stood still as their gazes locked.

How could I have fallen so fast? she wondered. A month ago, she had started a new job and had rediscovered an old fantasy. *Now?* She thought about what she had told Travis in the bathtub when he had been worried about protection. She didn’t worry about STD. As for pregnancy, she was almost afraid that it was too late to worry about that, either.

“What are you thinking?” Travis kissed her nose.

“I was just wondering what’s on TV,” she answered, although television was the farthest thing from her mind.

With a single movement, Travis rolled over, bounded off the bed and grabbed the remote.

“Where’d I drop my glasses?” he asked, but apparently didn’t need them because it took him approximately thirty seconds to find a football game.

She sighed. “I was thinking more like ‘The West Wing’ or maybe an HBO movie.”

He scowled at her. “Not when there’s football on.” He made the statement like he thought she was joking, either that or out of her mind.

It wasn’t that she minded watching sports, especially when she was tucked up against his side with his arm around her like they were now. She rested a hand on his bare chest, feeling the

steady beat of his heart.

A knock at the door interrupted Travis' ballgame, which luckily, was at a commercial break. He squinted at the bill as the young man put the tray on the table. "Do you see my glasses?" he asked her.

She quickly looked around. "Just give me the bill; I'll sign for it." She walked over and took the ticket, looked at the total and signed her name and put the room number. She thanked the man and closed the door behind him.

"Fifteen dollars for a hamburger is ridiculous," she said as she walked back over to the table. "Travis?" She turned back toward the bed when he didn't answer her.

He was standing by the nightstand, which he had pulled away from the wall. Apparently, his glasses had dropped behind it when they were wrestling around, because he had them on and he was looking at something in his hand.

"What's that?" she asked, coming closer.

"A canister of film." He snapped the rubber top off the small black tube. "Exposed film."

"Oh, dear. It must have accidentally dropped behind the nightstand. Someone's going to get home and realize they lost some special pictures they took while they were here."

"If they ever got home," Travis said, his voice low and thoughtful. He grabbed the phone and punched a button. "Is there anywhere here to get one-hour film developing?"

There was a pause.

"Damn." He hung up the phone. "Nothing's open until morning."

Morgan had picked up a section of sandwich, and had to finish chewing before she could speak. "Travis, why would you want to develop someone else's film?"

"Who was the last person to stay in this room?" He slid the film into the pocket of his jeans.

“How would I—” Morgan’s mouth fell open. “Oh my God. You think that’s Percy’s film, don’t you?”

“Could be,” he smiled, shaking ketchup from a miniature bottle onto his burger. “We’ll find out tomorrow. Once we see the police report, we’ll have a better idea of how this whole thing went down.”

Travis dug into his dinner as he flipped through the TV channels, seemingly unaffected by Percy’s death. Morgan had lost her appetite and in fact, felt sick. She went into the bathroom, ran a washcloth under cold water and patted her face. She felt queasy, even though Travis had told her the man hadn’t been shot in this room.

“Are you going to eat the rest of your sandwich?” Travis called to her.

“You can have it,” she replied, knowing that was what he was really asking.

Travis looked up when she came back into the bedroom. “What’s the matter? You’re white as a ghost.”

She tried to shrug it off.

“Come here.” He got up from the table, took her hand and tugged her toward the bed.

“Travis, I can’t,” she began.

“I just want to hold you,” he replied. He pulled her down with him to snuggle. He kissed the top of her head before adding, “I’m not horny all the time.”

They settled together in companionable silence, unusual given the volatile passion that always erupted whenever they touched. Morgan’s eyelids drooped, the drone of the TV lulling her.

“You know investigative reporting isn’t always reading a police report or finding a robber,” Travis said. “Sometimes it’s murder and blood and guts.”

“I know,” she answered with a sigh. “It’s just so horrible,

and I don't think I will ever get used to it."

He kissed her forehead, hugging her close. "Sweetheart, you don't want to get used to it. When it's painful, it makes you want to get the bastard who did it, and that makes you look in all the corners, under all the trash, searching until you find the truth."

Morgan hugged him tight. She yawned and closed her eyes, resting her head on his chest. "I'm glad I have you to show me the ropes."

* * * *

Travis heard her sigh and felt her relax against him. He didn't know how she could go to sleep so fast. His mind was still sorting through the possibilities, trying to stick them in the files where they belonged, but questions kept popping up. He knew there was nothing they could do until they talked to the police and got the film developed tomorrow, but that didn't keep him from thinking.

He pulled the covers up over Morgan and slid down beside her. She looked so fragile in sleep and he felt very protective. She wanted to do investigative reporting but he wanted to keep her from seeing the seedy side of life. Those were two directly opposite objectives, and he knew being her boyfriend didn't give him the right to dictate her life.

Boyfriend? That made him feel like they were back in high school. What would he call their relationship? They were lovers, but was it more? She had him confused, to say the least. Her naïve Jacuzzi seduction had him smiling, because he knew she hadn't tried to seduce a man before. In fact, he had been the one doing the seducing when they first met.

The fact that she wanted him that much was a real turn-on. She had even been willing to go on the pill so they could have sex without worrying about condoms, which denied him the pleasure of feeling her the way a man was meant to feel a woman

when they were making love.

Travis slid a leg over hers and curled up against her backside, content for now to be close to her. He would just have to see how their relationship progressed, because he was learning that Morgan Gentry wasn't like any other woman he knew, and none of the rules he had lived by seemed to apply anymore.

Chapter 6

Morgan woke with a start when Travis swatted her on the fanny.

“Wake up, sleepyhead, we’ve got work to do.”

“Go away,” she groaned into her pillow, which promptly got snatched from under her head.

“Okay, that does it.” She rolled over, grabbing the other pillow and swinging it with all her might at his backside.

She didn’t knock him down, but she definitely got his attention. He turned slowly, his eyes narrowed, hands on hips. He might have looked fiercer if his beautiful bare chest hadn’t been stroked with sunlight from the window to his side. Instead of scooting away as he stalked toward her, she scrambled to stand on the bed and then leaped at him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist.

His hands automatically went to her bottom to support her.

“Gotcha!” She sank her teeth playfully into his neck.

He squeezed her bottom. “Who’s got who?” he questioned as he tilted her down toward the bed, holding her tight so she didn’t fall, and following her down.

The position she had been in was quite conducive to him settling snugly between her thighs, the button on his jeans gently abrading her sex through the silk of her panties.

“Mmmm, this is a much better way to wake up than being smacked on the butt.” She sighed as she nibbled his ear. She squeezed her legs, which caused her to rub against him.

“Definitely much better.”

Travis kissed her, lingering gently, his tongue tracing the seam of her lips. “I love the taste of you. I would love to take you right here and now, but we’ve got to get to the police station.”

It would seem that Travis McVicker, on the trail of a story, was not to be deterred.

Morgan reached up and tugged her shirt off over her head, letting her arms fall wide as she arched her back. She saw Travis’ eyes darken as he took in her naked breasts, jutting up within inches of him, offered only for his pleasure and taste.

Morgan Gentry, newbie on the road to sexual enlightenment, was not to be denied. She threaded her fingers in his hair and tugged him down, and he went willingly.

His morning beard was scratchy against her sensitive skin, and it only served to heighten her pleasure. She instantly began to ache in all the right places as he sucked her breasts and caressed her belly.

“Now.” She moved her hips against his. She was so ready for him; she couldn’t believe how fast her body had awakened.

Travis released her just long enough to unbutton his pants and jerk them down to his knees as she tore off her panties. With a single stroke, he was deep inside her. He took her legs and hooked them over his arms, opening her completely.

Her climax came quickly, overwhelming her with its potency. She screamed his name as she flew apart, and still he pumped into her, his strokes hard and quick until with an oath, he met her completely, his face a mask of erotic intensity.

She looked up at him, his bare chest gleaming with moisture, the sun glinting off his gorgeous hair. His eyes were closed, his lips pressed tightly together. She let her gaze drift over his nipples, hard and pebbled in his orgasm, down his chest, which rose and fell with his rapid breathing, clear down to where they were joined, dark against light, hard muscles against

soft flesh. She thought there was nothing more beautiful than this man in the throes of sexual ecstasy.

Slowly, he bent down and kissed one breast, then the other.

"You are beyond wonderful, do you know that?" he said in awe as he slowly withdrew from her body.

She smiled, wishing they had more time, but knowing she couldn't keep Travis to herself twenty-four/seven. "I learned from the best," she said.

He raised a brow. "Sweetheart, you can feed my ego all you want, but I'm not letting you stay in that bed another minute."

She gave an exaggerated sigh. "You have to give me credit for trying."

There was a knock at the door to their room. She started in surprise.

"Scoot. I ordered breakfast right before you sidetracked me. You've got five minutes to take a shower." He must have read her mind because he added, "And no Jacuzzi. We really don't have the time."

Travis did allow her time to drink some coffee and eat the delicious fruit plate he had ordered, but then he whisked her out of the room and to his car, where they drove to the little police station that served the area of Cape Cod, dropping the film off along the way.

When Travis flashed his press pass, the police captain clammed up and told them to get out. He didn't need any bad press that would make people think Cape Cod wasn't a safe place to visit. The majority of the area income came from tourism, he said, and that was that.

"My card was found on the body. Don't you want to question me?" Travis asked.

Morgan elbowed him, not believing what he just said. *Was he crazy?*

"It was found near, not on, the body, and I already talked to

Lieutenant Tanner in Boston about you. He said you might be a lousy reporter but you weren't a killer."

Morgan could see Travis' eyes narrow, and if possible, steam would be coming out his ears. She grabbed his arm.

"Thank you for your time, Captain," she said. Travis resisted her tug, so she slyly reached down and pinched his butt. That got his attention.

"Let's go, now."

Reluctantly, Travis followed her out of the building.

"Lousy reporter? Fuck him," he mumbled as he got in the car.

"TJ, let it go."

"Why? If Tanner had called you a lousy reporter, I would defend you. What's the deal anyway?"

"The deal is, he probably just said that to get your goat. It's such a macho, ego thing for you guys. You know you're a great reporter, so don't pay any attention to what he says."

Travis grumbled some more and Morgan decided to let him stew if he wanted. It was Saturday, the weather was unseasonably warm for November, and they were driving close to the ocean. When she had lived in LA, she had walked on the beach almost every day. She decided that she would have to make it a point of visiting some of the waterfront areas in Boston. There was something about the salt air, the birds and the sounds of surf that appealed to her inner sense of peace.

She glanced over at Travis, thinking she should get him to take a walk with her and develop some of that inner peace. He still wore a frown.

"Need anything?" he asked as he pulled into the pharmacy parking lot where they had left the film. At least he remembered she was with him.

She shook her head, checking her watch. "No, just make it quick. Checkout time is noon and we need to get our stuff out of

the room.”

He stopped, halfway out of the car. “Who says we’re going back today? It’s the weekend and we’re off work.”

“You can’t afford that resort without Chancy paying for it,” she replied.

“You’d be surprised,” he said cryptically and disappeared.

When he came out a few minutes later, he was flipping through the pictures, which he had asked to be developed as five-by-sevens.

“Damn! We hit the jackpot.” He tossed her the packet as he got in. “See what you think.”

Sure enough, there were photos of Mrs. Kartell and a young, athletic-looking man. Several were apparently taken at a restaurant as they sat with their heads close together, hands clasped across the table. There were others in front of the door that Morgan recognized as being a room across from them at the resort. The fountain in the edge of the photos was distinctive enough that she doubted there was more than one of them.

“What’s with the rest of these?” she asked as she scanned the remaining photos. They had apparently been taken from the same area—again part of the fountain was visible—but these were of men and they didn’t look happy. The last photo from the roll had one of the men looking directly at the camera. Both men were huge and mean looking.

“Percy must have gotten into something way over his head,” Travis said. “That police captain is going to be sorry he pissed me off.”

“We have to show these to him, Travis.”

“Why? There’s nothing that says this is Percy’s film, or who these people are. So what does it prove?”

“You know good and well these pictures could be a lead or evidence.”

He sighed. “I know you have this moral ideal, and I agree, *if*

we find out these are leads, I'll give them to Tanner. Hell no, *he* pissed me off. I'll give them to one of the new guys. Ha! That would make their career, and Tanner would have to stand on the sidelines."

Must be a guy thing. Travis and Greg weren't even in the same business, yet they acted like fierce competitors.

"Pack up, we're heading back to Boston," Travis said the minute they got in the room.

"I thought we were going to stay."

"That was before we got those pictures. I want to get back to the paper and scan them into the computer and see if we can find out who those two thugs are."

"What about the young man?" Morgan stuffed her worn clothes into her bag, then gathered her toiletries.

"That one won't be hard. We know he's Mrs. Kartell's lover. I just wonder if Percy had gotten any pictures to the doc before he died."

"You don't think Doctor Kartell would have killed him, do you, to cover up his wife's indiscretions?" She swung around, her mouth open. "What about Mrs. Kartell? Could she have found out Percy was taking pictures of her and stud muffin and killed him so her husband wouldn't find out?"

"Stud muffin?" Travis gave her a where-did-that-come-from look.

"What do you want me to call him? The guy with the tight butt and the incredibly sexy hair?" She raised a brow, teasing him just to get a reaction.

"How the hell do you know?" He sounded very jealous and Morgan's heart beat faster thinking he just might be.

"You know what they say—a picture is worth a thousand words. And those pictures definitely showed him to be a real first class—"

Her breath was knocked out of her as he tackled her from

behind and they fell together on the bed.

“What would you know of first class gigolos?” He rolled over, still holding her so she landed on top of him.

She turned, lifting a hand to brush her hair away from her face. It fell forward again. This time Travis threaded his fingers through it as he cupped the sides of her face. He pulled her head down to receive his kiss.

She loved the way he kissed her. His lips were always firm and hot, even if he just brushed her lips with his. And when he slanted his mouth across hers, taking her deeper into the erotic pleasures of his thrusting tongue, she came completely apart.

Someone knocked at the door just as Travis’ cell phone rang. She ignored the knock, even though Travis pulled his phone out, one hand still clutched in her hair, his lips only a breath away from her own.

“Lo,” he growled into the receiver. She watched as he frowned in concentration, their kiss completely and quickly forgotten.

“Housekeeping,” she heard the muffled call through the door. With a sigh, she decided their time was over for now. She pushed herself up and headed for the door while she could hear him asking questions to whomever he was talking with.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I thought you checked out,” the maid said.

“We’re in the process. If you could give us a few more minutes.”

The maid turned away when Morgan had a thought. “Excuse me, could I ask you a few questions?”

The woman hesitated, looking up and down the hallway before her gaze found Morgan’s.

“Do you always clean the same rooms?”

She shrugged. “Most of the time, our schedule is the same. Depends on the number of guests.”

“Did anything unusual happen in this room recently?”

Morgan didn't want to come right out and say murder, given the reaction of the police captain.

The maid reacted anyway, grabbing the handle of her cart and attempting to move down the hall. Morgan stopped her with a hand on her arm.

"Please. We're trying to find out what happened. Anything you can tell us would certainly help."

Again the woman looked around as though worried about being overheard. When she spoke, her voice was so low, Morgan had to strain to hear her.

"I came to clean and found the room torn apart. The cushions were off the couch, the bedding off the bed. I thought whoever had the room maybe had gotten drunk or something, so I started to clean. Then the police came and told me not to touch anything and not to say anything about what I had seen."

"Do you know what happened?"

"Rumor in housekeeping was that someone was murdered. Maybe not in the room but on the grounds. Nobody's supposed to say anything because it's bad for business."

Morgan nodded her head at that, having recalled the captain's remarks about tourism.

"Do you remember anything about the room—what was in it, how things were laying—anything at all that might help?"

"I remember seeing a broken camera against the wall." She frowned in concentration. "The police asked me if I had picked up anything, but I hadn't."

The elevator bell sounded just down the hallway and the maid immediately distanced herself. Morgan stepped back into her room as she peeked cautiously down the hall.

"I must go," the maid said in a whisper. Then in a normal voice, she added, "I'll come back after you check out, ma'am."

"What's up?" Travis asked when she walked back toward the bed to finish her packing.

“The same maid was on duty the day of the murder, but the police wouldn’t let her clean the room. She said she noticed a broken camera on the floor. Perhaps like someone threw it against the wall.” She zipped her bag. “Who was on the phone?”

“An anonymous tip. I think it was a policeman but he wouldn’t give his name. Probably afraid the prick of a captain would find out. Anyway, he said Percy was killed in the parking lot, not the room. And he thought the room looked ransacked, not that there was a struggle here. Your maid say anything about any blood in here?”

“No.”

“Come on. I want to find out who those guys are in the photos.” Travis grabbed the bags, gave a cursory glance around the room and headed for the door.

“Even if it’s a definite that Percy got murdered, we still don’t know who did it.”

“I know, and the suspect list may have gotten a little longer.”

“Who?” Morgan was fascinated at the way Travis’ mind worked.

“The police here aren’t saying anything. That tells me they’re trying to cover it up.”

“We know that. The police captain said it was bad for business.”

“Yeah, well, there’s cover-up and then there’s *cover-up*.”

* * * *

“You still willing to work the weekend?” Travis asked as they pulled into town Saturday afternoon.

“Might as well. I don’t feel much like unpacking, and I’ve decided I want to paint the walls before I put everything out anyway,” Morgan answered. “Why?”

“Kartell wouldn’t tell us anything, and his wife is messing around and probably doesn’t much care. Have you talked to

Greineder yet?”

She shook her head.

“Tell you what. You go down to the jail and see if you can talk to him and Richard Sharpe. See if they know what’s going on. I’m going to the newspaper office and see if I can identify the guys in those photos.” Travis knew he could tap into the police mug shots and therefore, wouldn’t have to let Tanner know he was looking. At least until he had something.

“I suppose I could do that, but then you have to help me paint the apartment.”

“Ah, you drive a hard bargain,” Travis said, but he really didn’t care. He was going to have to think of an excuse to see her again anyway. He pulled into the lot by her apartment building and put the car in park.

“Do you want me to walk you up?” He reached behind the seat and grabbed her bag.

The look she gave him would have melted the polar cap. Her blue eyes turned dark and mysterious, and her lips curved upward in that sexy smile he loved.

“If you walk me to the door, I somehow doubt either of us will get any work done today.”

He reached over and curved his hand around her neck, pulling her close. He meant for the kiss to be light and lingering, yet a reminder of what they shared. But the minute his lips touched hers, she leaned into him, opening her mouth and sneaking her tongue between his lips as if she wanted to devour him. Her hand slid beneath his jacket to rub his chest, finding and flicking his nipple with a fingertip.

“Damn, woman, I’ll never get any work done if you keep that up.”

She laughed, popped open the door and got out. “Told you so.” And she was gone.

Morgan’s apartment was on the blue line, only ten minutes

from the *Chronicle* office. Travis spent the entire ten minutes, plus the time it took to park and take the elevator to his office, thinking about her. She was driving him nuts. The instant magnetism he had experienced when she started working here hadn't diminished in the least since they became lovers. If anything, it had intensified.

No matter how many times he made love to her, he still wanted her with a hunger that defied the imagination. After the first time when he had taken her virginity, she had caught on quickly to where he was the most sensitive and how far to push him before he exploded. He had found her a sensual creature and more than willing to give totally of herself.

He flipped on the computer at his desk and sat down, looking around at the nearly deserted newsroom. Even on a weekend, the paper still had to be written, sent to press and distributed. He looked across at Morgan's desk, seeing the proof sheet taped to her computer monitor with Monday's society column.

That was another characteristic he liked about her. She didn't want to do the gossip column, attending teas and musicals and all the society type things Boston offered, but she didn't complain. She was a true newsperson, and did what she was assigned so that the *Chronicle* could be the best paper in town. The fact that Chancy let her work with him on other stories attested to the fact that he saw those same traits and was a good enough editor to utilize them.

He decided if he wanted to get over to see the woman he spent all his time thinking about, he'd better get busy and see what he could find. He stuck the photo of the two men in the scanner, cropped one at a time and sent them to his desktop. Then he hacked into the police mug shot file and started a comparison search.

The police department kept changing the password on their

files, but Travis hadn't worked for his brother through college and not come away from the computer company without a certain level of skill. Unfortunately, even after he got into the files, neither picture came up with a match. That only meant the men weren't wanted; it didn't mean they were law-abiding citizens.

He stuck the photos back in the packet and shut down his computer. He called the *Oyster Bar* downtown and ordered some take out, which they didn't do, but he knew the owner. Then he stopped by his loft to take a quick shower and change, grabbed a bottle of Chardonnay, hit the restaurant on the way, and pulled up at Morgan's around six. He wondered if Morgan had been able to find out anything from the jailed doctors.

He juggled the food and wine as he rang her bell at the front entrance. She buzzed him in and he took the stairs two at a time, bypassing the little old lady pulling a shopping cart who waited by the elevator.

"Hey," he said as he walked in, depositing his bounty on the table. "Don't you know you shouldn't leave your door unlocked?"

"So my neighbor, Mrs. Gillespie, tells me. She asked what all the noise was the other night and worried that some unsavory character had broken into my apartment."

Travis walked over to where she stood on a short ladder, paint roller and pan on the top step.

"Unsavory, huh?" He slid his hand up her leg beneath the plaid flannel pants she wore, wondering how many pairs of those she had. He would rather see her in nothing at all.

She twisted at the waist to look down at him. Her hair was pulled up in a ponytail and it swayed with her movement.

"Well, I can see she's right. Are you here to molest me?" She gave him that wicked smile of hers.

"No, I thought I had to help paint." He teased her, keeping

his voice serious.

“Oh.” Her face fell and she stuck her bottom lip out in a pout.

He lifted her off the step stool, letting her slide down his chest until they were eye to eye. She looped her arms around his neck.

“Well, okay, I guess you could talk me into molesting you, but only after we eat. Do you like oysters and clams?” He let her go with a pat on the butt.

“I love them,” Morgan said as she followed him back into the kitchen. She dug in the cupboard for plates and silverware.

“Got a corkscrew?” Travis asked.

“What kind of screw?” She circled his waist from behind, sliding a hand down the front of his pants.

“Damn, woman,” Travis hissed as she squeezed, making him harder than he already was.

“I’m just helping,” she replied, opening the drawer where he stood with her free hand and pulling out the corkscrew.

“You are so going to get it,” Travis told her as he pulled the cork and filled the two wineglasses she had set on the counter. He would never have believed when they began their relationship that Morgan Gentry would be so bold. He had always been in charge in all of his relationships, but Morgan had him jumping through hoops on a whim.

He followed her to the table, pulling containers out of the bag. Even in the baggie pants and old white shirt with the tails hanging almost to her knees, she looked sexy as hell. He just hoped he could make it through dinner.

* * * *

They ate in companionable silence. Morgan had never had seafood like this in LA and found each new dish delicious. “What’s that?” she pointed with her fork to some small fried rings.

“Calamari.” Travis dipped one in sauce and fed it to her.

She chewed carefully and found it surprisingly good. “Usually anything with a foreign name is something you wouldn’t want to eat if they said it in English.”

“Are you referring to snails and fish eggs?”

She made a face. “Yeah, something like that.” She got up to clear away the table and load the dishwasher. Travis poured them more wine, although Morgan thought she’d had enough. She enjoyed a glass now and then, but what she bought wasn’t high priced like the bottle Travis had brought over.

“What do you think?” she asked when she came into the living room and found Travis thoughtfully staring at her newly painted, poppy-red wall.

“Hmm? Actually I like it, but I was wondering what you found out from our two incarcerated doctors.”

She set her wineglass aside, handed him a paintbrush and pointed to the ceiling where white still showed in uneven lines at the top of the wall. She picked up the roller.

“I just happened to get there during visiting hours,” she said as she started on a new section of wall. “And since they both have allegedly killed their wives, you can figure they didn’t have anyone waiting in line to see them.”

“Allegedly?” Travis stopped painting and looked down at her.

She shrugged her shoulders. “I spoke with both of them separately, and they both said they are innocent.”

Travis scoffed. “And I saw Elvis just last week.”

“That’s what I thought at first, but you know what? There may be something to their stories.” She continued rolling paint on the wall as she told him what she had learned.

“It was as though they had rehearsed, although I don’t know how they could. Basically, their stories were the same. Yes, together they had begun a small partnership with Kartell, but

they wouldn't tell me for what purpose. They both asked if he and his wife were all right, almost as if they expected something to happen to them, too. When I asked them who they thought killed their wives if they didn't, they both clammed up."

"You mean they don't know?" Travis asked.

"No, I mean they didn't say another word."

Travis gave her a thoughtful look. "So maybe they know but aren't telling?"

"That's kind of what I thought."

"Who in their right mind would take a murder rap for someone else? Especially a doctor." Travis shook his head. "Something's definitely cooking here."

"There was one other thing." Morgan had almost forgotten to mention their odd behavior when she first sat down in front of each of them. "The minute I told them I was from the paper, Sharpe looked real panicky and asked if it involved his daughter. Greineder panicked, too, but he asked if his son and granddaughter were okay."

She watched as Travis narrowed his eyes, his jaw moving back and forth as if he were chewing over what she had told him.

"What did they think had happened to them?"

She shook her head. "I asked and all I got were blank stares."

"They're hiding something," Travis thought out loud, "but what? If they're innocent, who did it? And why are they worried about their kids?" He was quiet for a few minutes, staring at her deep red wall.

Morgan intended to paint the other three walls a cream color, and the whole would be accented by the black leather furniture and chrome and glass tables she had under the plastic.

It would be very chic and modern, and a hundred and eighty degree change from the pastels she usually favored. She had decided when she moved from LA that she would start over

in more ways than just her new job.

“You don’t suppose they’re not talking in order to protect their kids?” Travis’ voice broke into her thoughts. He put the paintbrush in the tray and took off his glasses, wiping them on his shirttail. “Try this on for size. Suppose they really are innocent, and they know who did it. And whoever killed their wives know they know, so the killers threaten the doctors with bodily harm to their children if they rat them out.”

Morgan had to think about what he had just said because he had talked fast and there were a lot of ‘theys’ in his sentences. When she finally understood, another question immediately came to mind.

“But why would someone kill the wives in the first place?”

“Motives for murder—jealousy, greed, revenge.” Travis ticked them off on his fingers. “Or a threat. You know, *the next time, it’s you*. All we have to do is figure out which one applies to our doctors.”

“What about Percy?” Morgan couldn’t see how he figured into the equation.

“Percy saw something he shouldn’t have and he got killed for it. I think he hid that roll of film behind the nightstand on purpose.”

Morgan shook her head. “Percy gets killed for spying on Kartell’s wife. Sharpe and Greineder know something they shouldn’t and maybe that’s why their wives are killed. I just don’t see how it’s all connected.”

“I don’t know, but I think it would be a good idea to warn Kartell.”

“Yeah, unless he’s the one planning to murder his wife.”

Travis came up and put his arms around her, pulling her close. “I *think*,” he emphasized the word, “that we’re thinking entirely too much for a Saturday night.”

“Oh? Would you like to clean up and go out dancing?”

Morgan slid her arms around his neck, the doctors and her painting immediately forgotten as Travis' hands slid up her back beneath her shirt.

"Maybe a little lap dancing, or a slow strip tease," Travis murmured as he kissed her neck, then her chin, and finally her ear. His breath was hot and Morgan could feel his heart rate increase as she skimmed his chest with her palms.

"Would you rather go see a movie?" she asked, scraping her nails lightly against his skin, around to his back where she slowly meandered down his spine until she could slide her hands into his pants. "I hear that one with—" She squealed as Travis swung her up into his arms and headed for the bedroom.

"I take it that's a 'no' to the movie?" She giggled as he plopped her on the bed and followed her down.

"You've got that right," he answered, his voice dark and husky as he slid her shirt up and kissed her breast. "I haven't had dessert yet." His lips nibbled around her nipple, never quite stopping, and Morgan felt the heat spiral down to her center. Hot, bone-melting fire began consuming her everywhere he touched.

"All you ever think about is eating," she complained, though she really didn't mind when it was her he was nibbling on.

Travis kissed a heated path down her belly, and then lower, pulling her flannels down as he went. "Sweetheart, some treats are just too good to pass up."

Morgan understood perfectly as he set about tasting her, sending her spiraling out of control with his tongue. When she was within seconds of climaxing, he lifted his head, spread her knees and surged into her, making them both come in record time. She hadn't quite gotten her breath back before he began a much slower seduction. By the time they were through, she drowsily wondered where in the world Travis got all his energy. She couldn't keep her eyes open. But he didn't seem to mind

when she curled up next to him and gave him a goodnight kiss. He cupped her bottom with one hand and the other held the remote, a distant foul call all she heard as she drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 7

Morgan woke to the smell of coffee brewing, and thought that next to an automatic timer for her coffeepot, Travis was nice to have around in the morning.

“D-day.” Travis frowned when she walked into the kitchen where he had just begun frying bacon. He clipped his phone to his waistband. She had to smile. Travis only had his jeans on. If not for the need to hook his cell phone somewhere, a completely naked man might have greeted her. Damn technology, anyway.

She finished pulling her hair up in a clip as he poured her a cup of coffee. She smiled her thanks, but asked, “What’s up?”

“Mike called. We are to be at Mom’s for Sunday dinner and no two ways about it.” He scooped the bacon onto paper towels and cracked some eggs into the hot grease. “Put some toast in. How do you like your eggs?”

“Over easy,” she answered, automatically doing as he asked. *What am I doing? This is my kitchen,* she thought as she buttered the toast. *But then again, what’s wrong with having a half naked man in my kitchen cooking me breakfast?*

“Tell me about dinner with your mother,” she said nervously. She didn’t know why she should be nervous, it wasn’t like she and Travis were engaged or anything.

“Oh, did I forget to mention most of my brothers and their families will be there, too? Every time Steve or Chase come into town, Mom thinks we need a family reunion.” He gave her a wistful look. “Do I feel feverish or look sick?”

“Travis, why would you try to get out of seeing your family?” Morgan asked. “I wish I got along well enough with my family for them to call and ask me to dinner.”

“You don’t understand. I’m the youngest and they all think I’m still twelve.”

She came over and gave him a hug. “All the more reason to go see everyone. I will be more than happy to attest to the fact that you know way too much for a prepubescent male.”

Travis set her breakfast on the table and grabbed two mugs of coffee.

“What are you more afraid of, TJ? That your brothers will say something to embarrass you, or that I will?” She couldn’t help but think that his attitude stemmed from reluctance for his family to meet her.

He immediately shook his head. “Don’t get me wrong. I’m not concerned about you at all. It’s just that my family can be a little overwhelming if you aren’t used to them.”

“So tell me about them.” She ate her breakfast with relish, wondering if it was the sex that gave her an appetite, the flavor of the food, or something else. That something else was beginning to gnaw on her nerves.

“Gordon is the oldest. He’s married with four kids and is an attorney. John and Michael are twins. John isn’t married but Michael is. He’s a doctor and has three kids. They all live here in Boston. Then there’s Steve, the computer guru who has twins and I just found out, another one on the way. He and Keva live in New York part of the time and here in Boston the rest. I’m sure they’re not in town because Keva won’t fly when she’s pregnant, so that must mean that Chase and Katie Jo are here.”

“What does Chase do?” Keva found his family interesting. It seemed for six men, every one of them had chosen a completely different path to follow.

“Chase owns limousine companies all around the country.

He and Katie Jo just recently got married, and God knows, they're probably having kids already, too."

He sounded rather concerned about the idea of children. Morgan's stomach began to churn and she hoped it was the eggs.

"Don't you like kids?" She hesitated to ask but figured she had better broach the subject, just in case.

He shrugged. "There'll never be a shortage of little McVickers running around, that's for sure. And yes, I love my nieces and nephews. I'm just glad they all belong to my brothers."

"You don't want any of your own?" Morgan could feel the bile start to form.

"Well, yeah, maybe some day. But hell, who wants to start a family at my age?" He gave her a wolfish grin. "Besides, I'm having too much fun practicing."

Morgan managed to give him a weak smile in return, then quickly excused herself and hurried to the bathroom. She turned on the faucet full force to cover the sounds of her retching. When she finished emptying her stomach, she brushed her teeth and tried to get her emotions under control.

He didn't want kids; at least not right now. And she hadn't had a period since she lost her virginity to him. She opened the medicine cabinet and stared at the EPT box and the birth control pills, neither of which she had used. She knew she was probably fooling herself, but she really thought that making love to Travis had probably messed up her cycle and she was just late, not pregnant. And it was probably too early for even the EPT test to prove anything conclusive.

So why borrow trouble? She decided that if she didn't start by the end of this next week, she would go to the doctor. Until then, she would continue to be an ostrich with its head in the sand.

"Hey, you want to get some of these boxes unpacked and

your furniture arranged before we have to go to Mom's?" Travis called to her from the bedroom.

Morgan took a deep breath, scrubbed her hands over her face, and turned to face the world again.

* * * *

Travis helped Morgan arrange her living room furniture and put together some bookcases before he left for his apartment to shower and change. He promised to return for her at four. He would rather have gone down to police headquarters and talked to Tanner about the case, but after calling, he was told the lieutenant was off that day. He might have problems with Greg Tanner on a personal level, but the guy was the best there was as far as police work went.

He drove back to Morgan's late that afternoon, wondering what was up with her. She had seemed sort of reserved that morning, even a little pale. He thought about the amount of time they were spending together and wondered if she had a problem with that. Personally, he wanted to spend all his time with her, which he found was a definite change from relationships he'd had in the past.

It had started to snow by the time he picked Morgan up, but it was light and gentle and they had no trouble getting across town. As he'd predicted, Chase and Katie Jo were visiting for Mom's birthday, so everyone except Steve and Keva were there. And gosh, no surprise, Katie Jo was expecting.

"Congratulations, Chase," he told his brother as he gave Katie Jo a kiss. "How long have you guys been married?" Katie Jo blushed and Chase immediately got him in a headlock.

"Behave," his mother said when she walked in from the kitchen. Chase immediately let go and Travis straightened.

"Hi, Mom. Happy birthday." He picked her up and gave her a bear hug. "I'd like you to meet my friend, Morgan Gentry." He pulled Morgan close, putting his arm around her shoulders.

"It's nice to meet you. Weren't there some Gentrys who went to school with you boys?"

"One and the same," Travis said. "Morgan recently moved back from LA and is working at the *Chronicle*."

"Mixing a little business with pleasure?" Michael whispered as he went by Travis. Travis elbowed him in the ribs, hoping Morgan hadn't heard.

* * * *

Morgan thought Travis' family was wonderful. They laughed and teased each other as they helped get dinner on the table and clear away the clutter afterwards. The men all displayed their best manners, seating their spouses, saying please and thank you, and toasting their mother's good health.

She wondered how Mrs. McVicker had done it—raising six boys, all of whom were professionals in their work and it appeared they were equally wonderful husbands. All the nieces and nephews ate dinner out in the glassed-in back porch, and it wasn't always the moms who helped when there was a problem. She had no doubt that Travis would be just as good a dad, once he decided that was what he wanted. She just wondered if his timetable was anywhere close to the one she might well be on.

Morgan had several sisters, but they didn't get along the way the McVickers did. Instead of pitching in and helping, each of her sisters seemed to think her way was the only one. It was all she could do to spend any amount of time with them, and there was usually at least one at her folks on any given weekend. That meant she didn't visit her parents very often.

All too soon, it was time to leave. Gordon and John rounded up the kids; Michael, Chase and Travis all wrestled them to the ground to put on mittens, coats and hats, which meant it seemed to take twice as long as it should. Morgan wasn't sure who did the most laughing in the process—the men, the kids, or all the wives.

Katie Jo hooked her arm through Morgan's as the older brothers left with the kids. "Come to the kitchen with me," she said.

Morgan had quickly taken a liking to all the women, but she had felt an instant bonding with Katie Jo, perhaps because they were closer to the same age.

"Don't be telling her any stories about me," Travis hollered after them. "It's hard enough getting her to talk to me when the guys at the office rag on me."

Katie Jo rolled her eyes and Morgan giggled along with her. Once they had a little privacy, Katie Jo took a seat at the kitchen table.

"Oh, dear," she said, snatching a saltine from a dish on the table and slowly munching. "One minute I'm fine and the next, I feel sick."

Morgan couldn't hide her curiosity. "How does it feel; being pregnant, I mean?"

"Well, I'm not even that far along, but I'll tell you one thing. Morning sickness doesn't just happen in the morning."

Katie Jo rubbed her still flat stomach. "Still, it's a scary, wonderful feeling to know there's a life growing inside you that was created out of love."

In that moment, looking at the serene expression on Katie Jo's face, Morgan actually hoped she was pregnant. The idea of Travis' child growing within her body made her heart beat wildly and tears come to her eyes.

Katie Jo laid her hand on top of Morgan's and she lifted her eyes to the woman's gaze.

"You love him, don't you?" Katie Jo asked softly.

Morgan sighed. "I don't know. There's so much to love, but sometimes he acts so...so—" She couldn't bring herself to explain what she wanted from a relationship and how it varied from Travis' perceptions.

“So male, so obsessed, so immature at times?” Katie Jo asked.

Morgan had to smile. Apparently she wasn’t the only woman trying to figure out a McVicker male. “Does it ever get any better?”

Katie Jo laughed. “Travis has always been the baby of the family. Even though he has a good job and can take care of himself, his brothers are very protective of him. Gordon and Steve treated Chase the same way. Believe it or not, they do grow up.”

“But will it be in time?” Morgan whispered, more to herself than with the intention that Katie Jo heard.

Katie Jo started to speak but Chase came into the kitchen, wrapping his arms around his wife and kissing the top of her head. Morgan could feel her cheeks grow warm, not used to such a public display of affection.

“Come on, sweetheart, time to get you home and to bed.”

“You live in Texas. That’s a little far to drive tonight.” Travis had followed his brother into the kitchen.

“Moron,” Chase said. “We’re staying at Steve’s since he’s in New York. That way we won’t keep Mom up all night.”

“Hey, that’s the second time in a week one of you idiots have called me that. What happened to protecting your baby brother?” Travis made a great show of pouting.

“Once you turned twenty-five, you were on your own,” Chase answered. He turned to Morgan with a sad shake of his head. “Morgan, you’re a really nice person and I’m very glad to meet you. I’m just sorry you have to put up with him.” He gave her a sly wink.

Morgan laughed, feeling part of the family and certainly happy she had come with Travis for a visit. “I’ll try to be brave under the strain.”

“Oh, man, you’ve turned her against me,” Travis

complained. “Mom!” He went looking for his mother and Morgan wondered if it was still a game. Chase must have noticed her worried expression, because he quickly came to her rescue.

“Don’t worry. Ever since TJ learned to talk, he tattled on us; most of the time, for things we really didn’t do. Mom has learned to ignore him, although she does have a way of doing it so he doesn’t even realize it.”

Morgan could only shake her head. “You guys are something else.”

Chase gave his wife a hug. “Yeah, we know. And the miracle of it is we still managed to find ourselves some wonderful women who are willing to put up with us.”

* * * *

Travis gave his mom a good-bye kiss and shuffled Morgan to his car, anxious to get her to himself. Being around his brothers did something strange to him. All night, he kept thinking about how well Morgan fit in, and how she laughed when she had played with his nephews, and how she was the first one to jump up and help clear the dishes from supper, even though she was, technically, the only real company there.

Everything she had done made him proud to have her by his side. It also made him want her desperately. When she turned the key in her lock and opened the door to her apartment, he followed her in. She started to take off her coat and he finished it for her, quickly pulling her into his arms and covering her mouth with his. No words were necessary as she responded to him like she was a highly combustible material and he was a flame.

She grabbed, he pulled and their clothes flew everywhere. She stroked, he sucked, trying to touch all of her at once with hands and mouth and body.

“You feel it, too?” she asked between drugging kisses. Travis reluctantly left her mouth to nuzzle her breast, her nipple hard and distended as he sucked greedily.

“If ‘it’ means I can’t wait to be inside you, then yeah, I definitely feel it,” Travis mumbled, trailing kisses back up her neck to her mouth as he backed her across the living room.

“Look out, the couch,” Morgan warned, but Travis knew right where he was going. When he had her butt against the high back, he grabbed her behind one knee, lifting her leg to his waist. He slid into her, her heat deep and satisfying. He stroked her fast and she brought her other leg up to lock her ankles around his waist. He slid his hands down her bottom to hold her tight against him.

“Faster,” she whispered raggedly, sucking on his earlobe and driving him nuts. But he gave her what she wanted until they both climaxed; the walls reverberating with her cries of pleasure and Travis’ moans of satisfaction.

Travis didn’t spend the night, though he made love to Morgan again before he left her sleeping sweetly. Every day he was around her, he wanted her more—physically, intellectually and emotionally. It didn’t exactly scare him, but it did confuse him because the feelings were new and they didn’t fit any of the neat little compartments he already had in his mental filing system. He thought to distance himself, if only by staying in his own apartment instead of with her.

His footsteps echoed eerily on the hardwood floors as he walked through the silent loft, flipping on lights and his stereo. He grabbed a beer from the fridge and stood by the floor to ceiling windows looking out over the harbor. Lights blinked from a few far off ships but for the most part, Boston Bay was quiet this Sunday night.

He had missed his fantasy football match on the computer, so would take an automatic forfeit. He knew he was hooked pretty deep when the thought of a forfeit didn’t even bother him. Up until now, he had literally lived for football—on television, in books, the newest craze on the Internet and the

sports column he was currently writing.

Speaking of which, he'd better get something down on paper before work tomorrow. Chancy would kick his ass if he didn't fulfill his obligations after he had given Travis the chance to write the column. He sat down at the computer and tried to block out thoughts of Morgan lying naked in her bed, sated from the wild bout of loving he had given her before he had left.

He scrubbed his hands over his face, seeing his career go down the tubes if he couldn't concentrate on anything except one petite blonde-haired, blue-eyed witch.

* * * *

Morgan was in the shower early Monday morning when Mrs. Kartell left a message on her machine. After listening to the answering machine, she called Chancy and told him she would be in after her interview. She thought about calling Travis, but decided against it. He had been with her before and Mrs. Kartell wouldn't say anything. Maybe, woman-to-woman, she could get Mrs. Kartell to talk.

Of course, she was only getting the interview on the pretext of doing a society column and Morgan wasn't sure how she would broach the pictures, or trouble with her husband, or any of the other dozens of things that kept popping into her head as she drove to the Kartell residence.

The secretary explained that Mrs. Kartell worked out of her home and would be with Morgan presently. In the meantime, she was invited into Mrs. Kartell's office, served coffee and left in silence as the other woman went about her business.

"Good morning, Ms. Gentry, isn't it?" Mrs. Kartell greeted her as she breezed into the office. "I really don't have a lot of time, but with the Children's Hospital benefit coming up, I thought it would be wise to speak with you. We can use all the publicity we can get to raise the funds we need for the new wing."

Morgan had stood when the lady entered the room and now followed her over to her desk near the window.

“Please, sit.” She waved to a chair opposite the desk.

For the next half an hour, Morgan asked all the appropriate questions for a high society interview, jotting notes in her pad.

“My husband works mostly with children in the burn unit and has done some remarkable work. I’ll tell you what,” she paused and called to her secretary. “Cynthia, bring me an invitation, please.”

The woman handed her a card, which Mrs. Kartell passed over to Morgan. It was a gold embossed invitation to the benefit to be held in a week. “If you want to speak to the people involved, as well as some of the beneficiaries of the hospital’s work, come to the benefit.” She gave Morgan’s wool slacks and blazer a cursory glance. “Of course, it is black tie.”

Up until now, Morgan had actually liked the woman. She appeared very dedicated to her husband’s work and Boston’s less fortunate children, and Morgan wondered if she and Travis had misread the situation. But the insinuation that Morgan either couldn’t dress appropriately or didn’t have the money to, rubbed her the wrong way.

At that point, Morgan wished she had the pictures of Mrs. Kartell and her lover, because she dearly wanted to bring the woman down a peg or two. As it was, she could at least ask some pointed questions.

“One last thing. Do you know anyone from *Percy Investigations*?” She watched for any surprise reaction.

The woman only raised a brow as she shook her head. “No, should I?”

Morgan leaned forward in her chair. “Well, he’s been following you, and now he’s dead.”

That definitely got a reaction. Her eyes widened and she quickly glanced across the room to where her secretary sat.

“How do you know he was following me?” Her voice was low and urgent.

“Pictures at the *Carriway Resort*.”

Her eyes narrowed. “Are you intending to blackmail me?”

Morgan was shocked the other woman would think that, but given the circumstances, perhaps she was justified.

“I would do no such thing,” she informed her. “However, once the police get the photos, they will probably want to ask you some questions, considering Percy is dead and you’re in the pictures he took.”

“You have the pictures? Just let me buy them from you.” The woman sounded panicky.

Morgan raised a brow. “Wouldn’t that be blackmail, Mrs. Kartell?”

“Not if I’m the one making the offer.”

Morgan thought fast. “Perhaps you could answer a few more questions instead.” When the woman looked as if she would protest, Morgan added, “Off the record.”

She glanced nervously at her watch, then back at Morgan. “You have two minutes.”

“What kind of relationship did your husband and you have with Doctor Greineder and Doctor Sharpe or their wives?”

She looked completely surprised by the switch in topics and quickly shook her head. “None whatsoever. My husband is the department chair and it’s just not proper to socialize with the people who work for him. Besides, my husband is no murderer.”

Well, so much for empathy for a fellow professional.

“I thought perhaps they had formed a partnership of some sort.”

“Hardly, Ms. Gentry,” she said as she stood. “My husband has been a surgeon for years and makes a very good living at it. Why would he go into partnership with two doctors who had only just gotten into the field? He certainly would not lend his

name to a business arrangement where there was no possibility of being on an equal footing.” She picked up a planner, her purse and walked around her desk.

“Now if you will excuse me, I really must go. I would appreciate an advance copy of your article before it goes to press.” She gave her a coy smile. “Just to make sure all the names are spelled correctly, of course.”

“Of course,” Morgan echoed, forcing a patent smile to her lips.

“Oh, and about that other business. If those photos get into the wrong hands, I will know who to blame.” She lowered her voice and for the first time, Morgan noticed how ice cold her green gaze was. “And believe me, you do not want to cross me where my husband is concerned.”

The secretary showed Morgan out of the house as Mrs. Kartell disappeared down the hallway somewhere. She thought about what the woman had said. Why was she having an affair if she so adamantly protected her husband? Just as Morgan walked up to her car, which she had parked on the street, Mrs. Kartell drove out of the circular drive. As she pulled into the street, a black SUV swerved around Morgan, almost taking her car door off. She saw Kartell’s red BMW turn the corner and the black car followed, and for a moment, Morgan thought about picking up the chase. It would appear that whoever had hired Percy to follow the doctor’s wife had already replaced the dead investigator.

Her cell phone rang.

“Lo.”

“Mork, where you at? I’ve been waiting for you to get here before I take these pictures downtown.”

She sighed at Travis’ comment, foolishly hoping he had called to say he missed her or something romantic like that. *Yes, but this is Travis*, she reminded herself.

"I'm on my way in. We now have an engraved invitation to the Children's Hospital Benefit next week, courtesy of Mrs. Kartell."

"Is that all?" He sounded interested.

"I'll tell you about it when I get there."

* * * *

Morgan brought Travis up to speed as they drove downtown to police headquarters.

Lieutenant Tanner wasn't too happy to see them, even when Travis gave him the photos.

"I should throw your ass in a cell," he said to Travis as he slammed the door to his office behind them.

"For what?" Travis sounded just as mad.

"Harassment; withholding evidence in a murder investigation." Tanner waved the photos in the air.

Travis scowled. "Harassing who?"

"Law enforcement at Cape Cod, that's who."

This time Travis laughed out loud, but Morgan didn't think it was because he was amused. "You call them police? Hell, for all we know, they're in on it."

Greg Tanner looked like he would blow a gasket. Morgan watched as a vein throbbed on the side of his forehead. "You know, since you seem to be *finding* evidence and since Percy had your card in his pocket, maybe I should hold you for questioning." He leveled his gaze at Travis.

"That's about enough, don't you think, guys?" Morgan stepped between the two. There was enough testosterone in the room for half a dozen men, and she worried that Travis would say something that would make Greg even madder.

Both men stared at her as though just now remembering she was in the room.

"Look, Greg," she spoke in a soothing tone and Travis snorted. She turned and gave him the evil-eye. "We *asked* the

police at Cape Cod for help and they wouldn't say anything. We found the film behind the nightstand in the room Percy occupied and had it developed. That's all."

"Well, we went through Percy's office and have interviewed all his clients," Tanner offered. "They all have alibis for the time he was murdered."

"Even Doctor Kartell?" Travis asked.

Greg's eyes narrowed. "How do you know Kartell was a client?"

"We saw Percy following the doc's wife," Travis offered.

"Love interest?"

"Look at the pictures." Travis slouched in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest. Morgan wondered why it was so hard for these two to have a civil conversation.

The lieutenant browsed through the photos one by one. "Do you know any of these people?" He looked up to ask.

"Nope," Travis answered.

"No one except Mrs. Kartell," Morgan corrected.

"What about these two goons?"

Travis shook his head. "Why don't you run them through the mug shot scanner and see if you can ID them?"

"I thought you—" Morgan started.

"We've got to go." Travis interrupted her and stood. He had her to the door before Tanner spoke again.

"Morgan, could I interest you in some dinner tonight?" His invitation came out of nowhere and took Morgan totally by surprise.

"She's busy," Travis answered for her and his tone brooked no argument.

Morgan rolled her eyes, just about fed up with these two testosterone belching, macho male, ego...she couldn't even think of enough derogatory words to describe their attitudes.

"Thank you, Greg, I would love to," she deliberately paused

before adding, “but I just can’t tonight. Maybe another time.”

She turned and walked out, mad enough at Travis that she didn’t care if he followed her or not.

* * * *

Travis caught up with her in the parking lot.

“What the hell did you mean by telling him you would do it another night?”

She stopped so quickly, he almost ran into her. He stepped back as she turned, and if looks could kill, he’d be laid out on the pavement.

“Don’t you ever,” she sputtered, “ever do that to me again.”

“Do what?” He had no idea why she was mad. He was the one who had the right to be mad. After all, she belonged to him and he hadn’t appreciated Tanner trying to poach on his territory.

“Pull that ‘Me Tarzan, her mine’ attitude.” She glared at him.

“Well, you are mine.”

“I do not belong to you!” She literally screamed at him and then quickly looked around to see if they had been overheard. The parking lot was empty but she still lowered her voice, although to Travis, she sounded even fiercer.

“We are dating. That doesn’t give you the right to own me, nor can you dictate who I can and can’t see.”

Now he was really mad. “What about all that exclusivity crap you fed me when we first got together?”

He watched her pinch the bridge of her nose, give a sigh and turn around and start walking. He fell into step beside her, thoroughly confused.

“Morgan, I’m sorry.”

“For what?” she asked.

“I’m not sure.” Apologizing before had gotten him a smile. Today, it only earned him a snort and a cold shoulder.

"It doesn't do any good to apologize if you're only doing it to get me into bed, Travis." She stopped at the passenger side of his car. She gave him a look that Travis could only describe as puppy-dog sad.

He started to open the door for her but then stopped, turning toward her and stepping close. She was right and he knew it. He didn't know what had gotten into him in Tanner's office, except he couldn't stand the thought of her going out with the man who had a habit of mistreating women. But he realized it was more than that.

"I really am sorry. I was insanely jealous and I lost my head."

Her gaze was direct and probing. "Insanely?"

"Totally, out-of-control, punch-his-lights-out jealous."

She gave him a little smile then and Travis' heart tripped.

"I don't want you telling me what to do," she began and Travis knew by the tone of her voice that a list of commands was forthcoming.

"All right." He agreed to that, at least in theory.

"And I don't need you protecting me from the bad guys. I can take care of myself," she added.

Travis seriously doubted it, given her petite size and her naiveté when they first met, but he nodded. He'd just have to be more careful in how he went about taking care of her.

"Last, if we're not on a strict timetable, take me home and make love to me. Even if I don't like your macho attitude, it does have a very desirable affect on me."

Travis automatically nodded, willing to agree to anything. Then her words soaked in and he instantly got hard. He narrowed his eyes, wondering if she was only teasing. "If I can't tell you what to do, how is it that you can boss me around?"

She tilted her head to the side in thought. "You're right. Sorry." She turned and got into the car, closing the door behind

her.

Way to blow it, Travis castigated himself. The perfect opportunity to have a nooner and now she's mad all over again. His shoulders slumped as he walked around the car and slid behind the wheel. When he reached to put the key in the ignition, she placed her hand over his. He turned to face her.

"Let me rephrase that," she said. "Would you *please* take me home and make love to me?"

Chapter 8

Travis decided the next day to have another visit with Kartell. He had given Tanner the photos, but had double prints because he wanted to trace the young guy with Mrs. Kartell and the two thugs. If he was a betting man, he'd put money on the thugs killing Percy, but he just couldn't figure out why.

He emailed the photos to his brother so Bob, one of his computer experts, could see what he could find. Bob was an ex-Seal and probably had skills Travis didn't want to know about. But Steve said if there was anything from a baby picture to a passport on those two, Bob could find it. Of course, nobody was to know how.

Kartell was just leaving his office when Travis exited the elevator.

"We need to talk." Travis blocked the man's path.

"I told you the last time, I have nothing to say to you about either Sharpe or Greineder. Now, I'm late for surgery."

"This isn't about your partners."

"They're not my partners," the doctor reiterated, but he dropped his voice to a whisper. "It could be my position if there was any rumor that I was involved with—" he stopped short and Travis had the feeling he was lying through his teeth.

He held up one of the photos of his wife and her lover in front of the doctor, figuring it would stop him from hurrying off.

All the color drained from his face. He grabbed the photo from Travis. "Where did you get this?"

“The PI you hired shot a roll of film before someone shot him.”

The man shook his head. “I don’t understand. What are you saying?”

“Percy’s dead, Doc. The police know this is your wife, so they’ll probably come asking you some questions. I hear they already talked to you once.”

“Oh, God.” The man swayed, then leaned against the wall of the corridor.

“Have you got a girlfriend? Is that why you were trying to get adultery evidence on your wife, so you could divorce her without a huge settlement?”

He adamantly shook his head. “No, I love Doreen, but I can’t—” He hesitated. “You wouldn’t understand, but I did not kill Percy.”

“But you know who did, don’t you, Doc?” Travis leaned close, smelling the fear in the man; seeing it in the flicker of his eyes and the nervous twitch of his lip.

“No, no, I don’t know anything. Now please, leave me alone.” He pushed against Travis and hurried down the hall, never once looking back.

Things just got more and more interesting.

* * * *

“You’re pregnant,” the female gynecologist said with a smile. “I would say from your cycles, only about five weeks.”

“Is there any possibility of a mistake?” Morgan asked.

The doctor’s smile disappeared. “No, I’m afraid not. If you don’t think you want this baby, I can refer you to a counseling center.”

“Oh, no, I would never do anything like that!”

“Well, then, there are adoption agencies for when the baby is born.”

“No, you don’t understand. I want this baby.” Morgan

stood up quickly and immediately got dizzy. She put a hand on the examination table as the doctor grabbed her elbow.

“Calm down. You will experience a lot of changes as your pregnancy advances. Dizzy spells and nausea are only a few. I always advise my patients to try and do everything in slow motion. It helps keep the body in balance.”

“I’ve already noticed that,” Morgan replied. “I wouldn’t think at five weeks there would be so much change in my body.”

“The change starts at the moment of conception. It just takes awhile to manifest itself. I’m going to write you a script for prenatal vitamins. The nausea should pass before long, but if it continues, I can give you some medicine that may help.”

Morgan left the clinic, but sat in her car for the next half an hour contemplating her condition. *Pregnant!* She had known there was a possibility after the very first time she and Travis had made love, yet she had assured him she was protected so he had quit using condoms. Had she subconsciously wanted to get pregnant? After the initial shock of having her suspicions confirmed, Morgan found she was delighted, not upset, as the doctor seemed to think she might be.

She knew Travis didn’t want kids right now, and she sure wasn’t going to make him responsible in any way for this. That was no way to catch, much less hold, a man. She knew, because her sister had tried it and ended up with no husband and an unwanted child.

She rubbed her still flat belly. Not that this child would ever be unwanted. She already felt a wealth of love for the unknown being growing inside her. If Travis couldn’t love him or her, then Morgan would just have to give her baby twice as much.

She arrived at the office just as Travis did. He had called and told her he would be paying a visit to Kartell and she wondered if he found out anything.

“Where have you been?” he asked as she threw her coat

over his on an extra chair.

“Doctor.”

He looked at her kind of funny. “What’s wrong?”

“Don’t worry, I’m not contagious.” She quickly changed the subject. “What does Kartell know?”

Chancy came out of his office at that moment and sat on the corner of Travis’ desk as he was brought up to speed. He loved to dig up the dirt and expose the rotten element of his town, but Morgan had learned he was also frugal and if they weren’t turning up leads, he would pull the story and put them on something else.

“I think Kartell knows who killed Percy, but he’s not talking,” Travis said. “I have this gut feeling something’s going on with the three doctors, and they’re protecting each other, as well as trying to protect their families.” He shook his head. “There’s got to be some clue I overlooked in the doctor’s expressions or what he meant but didn’t say.”

“There’s other news that needs written,” Chancy stated. “The doc hasn’t done anything wrong that we know about, so there’s not much we can do. McVicker, I want you covering Greineder’s trial. Gentry, you get the school board meetings, the city commission, and the upcoming spectacular holiday festivities planning meeting for the historic district.” He got up and walked back to his office.

Morgan opened her mouth to protest, but knew it wouldn’t do much good. She turned to Travis to see if he wanted to trade.

“No way,” he said before she could even ask. “I’ll take a murder trial over the school board any day. Besides, something might come up during the trial that will point a finger at Kartell. I also have someone looking into the photos. But until something breaks or someone makes a move, or best case—the doctor calls and decides to spill his guts—we’re nowhere.”

“Maybe I should have dinner with Greg Tanner and see if he

knows anything else.” Morgan didn’t know why she taunted Travis.

“Do I even need to justify that comment with a swear or two?” His gaze captured hers and the heat of it swirled within her. She realized he wouldn’t tell her what to do, because he knew she wouldn’t be unfaithful to him. He wasn’t mad; he was staking his claim.

They had never made their relationship public, at least not in the newsroom, so as much as Morgan wanted to, she couldn’t give him a hug and kiss for being so jealous and possessive. Instead, she sent him a steaming email outlining the naughty things she wanted to do to him tonight. She hit ‘send,’ grabbed her purse and coat and told him to give her a call when he got off work tonight.

“I have to get to the city commission meeting.” She walked out of the office, her insides quivering at the thought that if he read her email and wanted to do all the things she suggested, they would be up all night.

She had just walked into city hall when her cell phone rang.

“Do you know how much I want you, right this minute?” His husky voice vibrated over the phone and sent shivers through her. “Where are you?”

“Just walking into the city commission meeting,” she whispered, taking a seat in the back row.

“Well, keep the phone close to your ear, baby, and don’t say a word, because I’m going to tell you some things you’ll never hear from the mayor.”

For the next twenty minutes, Travis filled her mind with erotic images of the two of them having sex everywhere but in a bed. She could feel her face heat as he explained in very slow and intimate detail where his mouth was going and what his tongue was doing to her.

Morgan crossed and uncrossed her legs, uncomfortable on

the folding chair that sat against the back wall. She was on fire and it was all Travis' fault. She started to tell him so.

"Sh, don't say anything. The microphones in that room are supersensitive so they can pick up the audience when there are questions from the floor. You wouldn't want the fact that you're hot for me to become part of the public record, would you?"

She could hear the laughter in his voice and had a vengeful vision of tying him to the bed and caressing him to the brink of orgasm but not letting him come. It was quite pleasant to think that way, even though she knew she could never do that to him.

"Your place or mine, sweetheart?" Travis' voice brought her back from her daydream.

"Now?" she whispered.

"I'd love to but court is just going back in for the afternoon session. It will have to wait until after work."

"Who's cooking?" She was an all right cook, but Travis was better.

"Home court advantage."

"In that case, I'll meet you at your place. Do you do Mexican?"

Travis chuckled and Morgan knew what he was going to say so she cut him off. "I'll be there by six."

"Make it five and I'll serve you hors d'oeuvres." Once again, his voice was dark and sexy and Morgan could only fantasize about what he had in mind.

The afternoon dragged as Morgan attended meeting after meeting, recording notes about the important business but all the while, thinking about Travis. She intended to tell him about the baby, just not right away. She felt the opportunity would come up somewhere in the next six to eight months, then laughed. She could feel the changes in her body already and knew as the baby grew there would be no way to hide it.

She didn't make it to TJ's place until almost six. As she

walked to the elevator at his loft, she spied a black SUV cruising slowly by the entrance. She thought about the one she had seen at Mrs. Kartell's, and a shiver of fear raced down her spine. The windows were tinted and she couldn't see the driver or any passengers.

Why would someone be following her? she wondered. The vehicle moved on when a small Toyota honked from behind, and that car was followed by another black SUV, although maybe a shorter version of the first. Morgan breathed a sigh of relief. She was letting her imagination get the best of her. After all, wasn't just about every other vehicle on the road anymore an SUV of some kind?

* * * *

"I didn't know this was a formal dinner," Morgan said when Travis opened the door.

"What? Oh," he looked down at his navy slacks and dress shirt, then shrugged. "They frown on reporters showing up in jeans at the courthouse, and I just haven't changed yet." He closed the door behind her and turned. "Want to help?"

Morgan reached for his tie, tugging him closer. She didn't say anything, just brushed his lips with hers.

With a groan, Travis captured Morgan in his arms, hugging her tight as he returned her kiss. He opened beneath her questing tongue, happy to let her take the initiative.

They were both breathing heavily when he broke away, smelling dinner scorching.

"Damn!" He headed for the kitchen. "Make yourself at home, I need to turn the stove off." When he came back into the living room, he didn't find Morgan and thought perhaps she had stepped into the bathroom. After several minutes when she didn't appear again, he went looking for her.

"You have a spectacular view from here." Her soft voice reached him across the length of the bedroom when he walked

through the door.

He sucked in his breath. "I'll say," he replied, but he wasn't talking about the harbor lights or the many small islands dotting the bay.

Morgan stood by the window, moonlight bathing her creamy skin. She wore only her bra and panties, neither of which was more than a mere wisp of material, practically transparent in the moonlight.

"I think I'm overdressed." Travis began unbuttoning his shirt as he walked over to stand by her. She stilled his hands, looking almost shyly up at him.

"May I?"

Travis realized for the most part, he had always been the aggressor, and perhaps Morgan thought he wouldn't like it if she took the initiative. Well, hell, she was certainly turning the tables on him tonight.

He spread his arms wide. "I would never raise an objection to you having your way with me." He grinned at her.

So slow he thought he would die of anticipation, she finished unbuttoning his shirt, sliding it off his shoulders, her fingers caressing the muscles of his arms and back.

He brought his hands to her shoulders, hooking a finger beneath her bra strap, but she shook her head at him, smiling impishly.

"No?" he asked, brow arched.

"No," she replied softly. Travis let his arms drop to his sides.

As she spread kisses across his chest, she slid her palms into the back of his pants to caress his buttocks. He could feel his heart hammer in his chest when her hands continued to move, finding his buckle and then his button and zipper. His breath hitched when she followed his pants down, kissing a heated path down his belly as she dropped to her knees.

When she got to his hips, licking then biting gently, he jerked against her hot lips, his skin super sensitive to her every touch.

“You’re driving me crazy,” he gasped as she cupped him with one hand and stroked his length with the other.

“Is there any cure for that?” she asked and then kissed the tip of him, before sucking him into her mouth, tongue swirling around him as she took him deep.

“Oh, yeah,” Travis groaned, feeling the heat shoot through his entire body. She seemed to have no inhibitions anymore, and Travis thought to take complete advantage of that fact.

It didn’t take long for him to realize that she would take him all the way with her sweet lips and he hadn’t even touched her yet. And that was not the way he wanted to do things.

He reached down, stroking her hair and coaxing her upward. He slid his hands behind her knees and picked her up, carrying her to his bed. When he stretched out beside her, she pouted.

“I wasn’t quite finished,” she said, her voice soft and seductive.

“Baby, you almost finished me, and I haven’t even touched you.”

“But I wanted to give you that gift.”

“You are a gift.” Travis felt awed by her offer. He lowered his lips to hers, thinking he could spend the next thirty years or so making love to this woman and still not get enough of her. As she met his tongue thrust for thrust, arching her hips to meet the stroke of his hand as he caressed her sex and slid a finger deep inside, he didn’t think about losing his freedom, but instead, felt as though she had set him free.

“I need you now,” she whispered fervently and he moved over her, sliding in and meeting her with a burst of sensual energy he had never felt before. There was something different

tonight; something even more intimate about their joining; some change in Morgan that Travis couldn't quite pinpoint.

And then it didn't matter as he took Morgan with him and spiraled upward, his climax jerking through him like a huge bolt of electricity.

* * * *

Something was different, Morgan thought as she lay by Travis in the aftermath of the most incredible climax she had had yet. It wasn't just his tenderness, though that might be part of it. Perhaps it was because she was pregnant and her body was changing. She thought about telling him and actually did turn toward him to broach the subject, but he gave her a quick kiss and bounced out of bed.

"Are you ready for dinner, *Senorita*? I hope you like spicy, because my enchiladas are hot, hot, hot." He reached over and grabbed one of her ankles, pulling her toward him. He kissed the arch of her foot. "Of course, nothing in my kitchen is quite as hot as you in my bed."

"You are such a pig, comparing me to an enchilada. I don't know whether to be insulted or not."

"Ah, baby." He nibbled up her leg. "You should know by now that comparing you to any kind of food is a compliment of the highest form. There is no food that I don't love." One last nibble and he let her go.

Did that mean he loved her, too? Morgan wondered as she dressed in the bathroom. How was she supposed to figure out what Travis felt when he equated her to food?

* * * *

Within a week, Morgan was experiencing morning sickness every day and wondered if anything was worth the incredible upheaval of her stomach when she first got out of bed. When she and Travis went out, she insisted he take her home instead of spending the night, because she didn't want him to see her get

sick. And she especially didn't want him guessing the reason for it.

She looked at her reflection in the mirror as she dressed for the hospital charity benefit. She was pale, and added a little blush to her cheeks. She was supposed to be gaining weight, but as sick as she had been, her clothes seemed to hang on her instead. The black silk sheath she had on was tight across her breasts but loose around her hips. She had no doubt that wouldn't last very long.

She was ready by the time Travis knocked on her door. When she opened it to him, he smiled as he stared, his gaze sliding down her in an intimate caress.

"You are gorgeous," he said as he took her coat and held it up for her. Instead of letting go when he settled it on her shoulders, he wrapped his arms around her, bringing her close.

"Do we have to go tonight?" he whispered in her ear, nibbling on her earlobe.

"We're investigating a story, remember?" she answered even as she leaned back against him, content to be in his arms.

"What story?" he asked as though he didn't know.

She laughed at him, pushing him out the door and locking it behind her.

"You look quite handsome tonight," she commented as they rode the elevator down to the ground floor. Travis wore a tuxedo with a long black overcoat. The stark black and white lent eloquence to his chiseled features. She reached up to kiss his chin, smooth and silky from a recent shave.

When they exited the apartment complex, Morgan looked for Travis' Corvette, or the Monte Carlo, although she didn't think he would drive that to this particular benefit. The only thing parked out front was a long white limousine.

The driver was dressed as elegant as Travis, but sported a white Stetson. He opened the door as they approached.

Morgan turned to look at Travis. "What is this?" She surely

hadn't expected this.

Travis grinned at her. "If we're going to hobnob with the rich set, we have to look the part." He helped her in, following and sitting beside her in the luxurious leather seat. "Besides, there has to be some perks to having a brother who owns a hundred or more of these."

"Where to, Mr. McVicker?" the driver asked through the intercom system from the front seat.

"Invitation, ma'am?" Travis winked at her. She gave him the card and settled back, feeling like a fairy princess on the way to a ball.

The trip to the convention center was entirely too short. When they arrived, several guests turned to look, and Morgan decided she liked playing dress up, even if she knew it was only make-believe.

She recognized several of the people who were there because of her work on the society pages. Definitely all the money people in Boston were there, along with anyone who was anyone, or so Travis whispered as he handed her a glass of champagne. One sip and her stomach reminded her of her condition, but rather than ask for something else, she simply held the glass and pretended to drink it.

"Isn't it odd that this is a benefit for children, but it's catered to adults?" she commented as she and Travis examined the items for the silent auction. There were first edition prints from local artists, all donated to the cause; Sox memorabilia, which Travis drooled over; and various rather expensive items from some of the more exclusive shops in town. From the looks of the bidding on the sheets in front of each, things were well beyond Morgan's income.

"Oh, my, that's beautiful." She couldn't help but exclaim over a floralscape of poppies against a background of greenery. Simply called "Poppies" it was a signed and numbered print, but

Morgan didn't care if it wasn't an original. "That would look so wonderful against my newly painted walls," she commented as she looked down at the bid sheet.

Travis peeked over her shoulder and let out a low whistle. "I never heard of this guy, but he must be noteworthy," he said and Morgan swallowed her disappointment that the bid was almost a thousand dollars already.

She turned away. "Well, maybe I can find an unsigned, unnumbered print for my wall," she joked, knowing there was no way she could afford a piece like that on her salary.

"Uh-oh, look who's coming our way," Travis spoke from behind his drink glass. "I don't think this is going to be quite the venue to gather information on those two."

Morgan watched Doctor and Mrs. Kartell move across the room, stopping to visit with people along the way. The doctor was sophisticated and elegant in a black tux; his silver hair giving him an air of the aristocracy. Mrs. Kartell, who was quite a few years younger, had enough diamonds on to pay for the children's annex herself, Morgan thought, but from her research, she knew the woman came from old money. She wasn't sure who had married whom for the prestige.

"I wanted to thank you for the piece you wrote on our little efforts," Mrs. Kartell smiled, extending her hand to Morgan in a gesture quite different than what it had been in private. "I don't think you've met my husband, have you?"

She gestured and Morgan gave her hand to Anthony Kartell. Funny, though both of them smiled graciously and chatted about the generous gifts to be auctioned off, Morgan got the distinct impression they were both nervous. Their smiles never quite reached their eyes. Doctor Kartell kept giving Travis side-glances as though expecting Travis to pull an eight by ten glossy of his wife and her lover out of a pocket and start flashing it around.

There was no dais for the dinner, although place cards indicated where everyone should sit. They had just finished the main course when Travis leaned close.

“A little action, three o’clock.”

Morgan nonchalantly turned to follow his gaze. A waiter had approached Doctor Kartell but Morgan knew that wasn’t what had caught Travis’ attention. Half hidden behind one of the many columns that edged the grand ballroom were two uniformed policemen and, she had to look twice—Greg Tanner?

“What do you suppose...” she started to question but Travis was already out of his seat, politely excusing himself. Morgan followed suit, and he guided her on a circular route toward the police. She could see Doctor Kartell heading that way, also. When she looked back at his table, Mrs. Kartell was just excusing herself to follow her husband.

Because the police were hidden, it didn’t appear to Morgan as though anyone thought anything suspicious was going on. By the time they had cautiously approached the group, the police and Lieutenant Tanner had escorted Doctor and Mrs. Kartell out of the first set of doors and into the adjoining room where the auction was to be held in just a few minutes.

“What’s going on, Tanner?” Travis questioned.

The lieutenant looked surprised to see them here, and then narrowed his eyes in suspicion as he shook his head.

“Why do you keep popping up whenever anything has to do with these two?” he asked, but Travis never had the chance to answer because Mrs. Kartell gave a tiny shriek and then fainted. One of the policemen standing to the side barely caught her before she hit the floor.

Morgan rushed to her side. “What is going on?” she asked and then she saw the photo lying on the marble tile next to her. While Doctor Kartell tried to revive his wife, Morgan grabbed the photo and stood, forgetting for the moment to use caution

and automatically becoming lightheaded. She swayed. Lieutenant Tanner steadied her with a hand to her back and one on her elbow.

Travis was talking to one of the policemen when he saw Tanner grab Morgan. He started that way, his fists clenched and several swear words on the tip of his tongue. Morgan must have interpreted his murderous expression because she put a hand out as he drew near, a paper fluttering from her fingers.

Travis recognized the man in the photo instantly and his gaze swung to Tanner, still standing protectively close to Morgan. He noticed her pale cheeks and manfully decided that Tanner was just helping her; that he had no designs on her. At least, by God, he'd better not.

"What the hell is going on?" he asked. He didn't try to reach for Morgan but noticed that she eyed him warily. He recalled vividly their conversation about telling her what to do and ownership, so decided that staking his claim at this time was not in his best interest.

"We didn't have an ID on the man in the photo with Mrs. Kartell until tonight," Tanner said, pausing deliberately before adding, "when we fished him out of the bay."

Morgan's cheeks turned even paler if that was possible and this time, Travis stepped up to steady her, narrowing his gaze at Tanner when he would have put out his arm. The lieutenant gave a knowing smile and the barest tilt of his head acknowledging Travis' claim. Travis didn't know if it would matter to Tanner, but at least he knew enough to back off at the moment.

"ID on his person says he's Jeremy Patterson, a fourth year medical student."

"Yeah, so?"

"I recognized him from the pictures you brought in. So we're taking Doctor and Mrs. Kartell in for questioning."

The doctor had turned around and now raised a protest. "This is ridiculous. I have been here all evening with all these people as witnesses. So has my wife. If you take us away under false charges, I'll not only have your badge, but will sue the city for everything." He tried to shrug off the officer's hand, but when the man pulled out his cuffs, the doc grew quiet.

Probably didn't want that kind of publicity. Travis looked over at the man's wife, who had apparently recovered from her faint and stood pale and silent except for the tiny hiccup he heard and the tears running quietly down her cheeks.

"Doc, the kid has been in the river awhile," Tanner said. "Which means your alibi is good for tonight but not necessarily for earlier this week. So let's go."

* * * *

Mrs. Kartell looked panicky and Morgan felt just a little sorry for her. She moved closer to the woman.

"I love him," she said and Morgan thought she was referring to the young man in the photo until she added, "I know he wouldn't kill anyone."

As the two were led away, Morgan turned to Travis. "If she loves her husband, why was she having an affair?"

Travis shook his head. "Beats me. But we have three doctors accused of murder within an incredibly short span of time. I doubt Chancy will hesitate having us work on the story now." He scanned the room and watched as people moved in from the dining area, making any last minute bids before the winners were announced.

"Unless you have a bid on something you can't live without, I think the excitement is over for tonight." He raised a brow in question.

Morgan gave one last lingering look at the poppy picture, not even wanting to go see where the bid stood now. Then her gaze came back to Travis, waiting patiently at her side. The only

thing she couldn't live without would be taking her home in a few minutes. She thought perhaps it was time to tell him how she felt.

The opportunity for an intimate discussion never arose when Travis opened the door to Morgan's apartment. The place had been trashed. Morgan gasped as she turned on the lamp inside the front door, finding everything turned upside-down.

Travis stepped in behind her and immediately grabbed her and pulled her back outside the door, shoving her up against the wall and covering her with his body.

"My—" she started.

He clamped a hand over her mouth, whispering next to her ear. "Don't say a word. We don't know if anyone is still in there."

Morgan nodded in understanding, her heart beating too loudly for her to hear anything, but she stood quietly so Travis could listen. Even when he released her mouth, he didn't move away from her as he pulled his cell phone out of his pocket and called 911.

"Get me Lieutenant Tanner," he whispered urgently, then paused. "I don't give a shit if he's in the middle of an investigation, get him on the phone."

Morgan would have smiled if the situation weren't so dire. She knew Travis and Greg didn't like each other, and yet they respected each other's talents.

Travis wouldn't let Morgan back into her apartment until after the police arrived and declared it all clear. Even when they did enter, there was still a forensic team dusting for prints. Morgan practically sobbed when she saw how thoroughly someone had ransacked her place.

"I would say that someone was deliberately looking for something," Tanner said. "Any idea what?"

Morgan shook her head, a brittle laugh escaping. "I write

the society column. None of those people would have done this just because I misspelled their caterer's name."

"There's got to be something else. What about this thing with the doctors? How deep are you involved?"

"She's not," Travis cut in. "I'm the one who found the film and had the photos developed. I'm the one who's been harassing Kartell." He put an arm around Morgan's shoulders and she could feel the tension radiating from him.

Tanner looked from Travis back to her, and Morgan could feel her cheeks grow warm. It wasn't that she cared if Tanner knew about her relationship with Travis. It just seemed that Travis had a weird way of showing it by trying to incriminate himself.

Tanner shook his head. "I knew I should have locked you up in the very beginning, McVicker. Preferably in some deep, forgotten black hole." He turned to walk away.

"Wait." Morgan grabbed his sleeve to stop him. His mention of black brought to mind the SUV she had seen—twice. "It may not mean a thing, and I know there's probably lots of them around, but maybe a black SUV is involved."

Tanner looked interested. Travis looked mad and Morgan suspected it was because she hadn't told him. Well, she had thought she was just jumping at shadows, and it could be that she still was.

"It swerved around me when I was parked on the street at the Kartell residence a week ago. Later, I saw one again, but dismissed it because only two cars back was another black Blazer, or Tahoe, or something very similar." She shrugged. "It could mean nothing."

"Maybe not," Tanner said. "Any idea of the license?"

Morgan could only shake her head. "The first time, I thought it was just some crazy driver and the second, the cars were driving by close together. I didn't think to look."

Tanner nodded. "We'll put a uniformed guard at your door and another at the entrance to the apartment complex, although I doubt anyone will be back tonight. It appears they had time to very thoroughly go through things." Tanner signaled his men.

Travis interrupted. "She's not staying here. I'll take her to my place." Morgan's cheeks flamed at the very obvious declaration but Tanner just smiled.

"Fine, but then your place gets the guard. We don't know how this all fits together, but chances are, if it has to do with those photos, you're both equally in danger."

* * * *

It was the wee hours of the morning before Travis finally crawled into bed beside Morgan. He had taken her back to his loft and she had showered and pulled on one of his tee shirts. Tanner had come knocking and by the time he and Travis had dissected every one of the photos from Percy's roll of film, Morgan was already asleep.

She looked so vulnerable in his big bed, and he hoped to God he could protect her, if indeed she needed it. A sliver of moonlight cut across the bed, ending just where her hand lay clutching a clump of bedspread. The minute Travis' weight moved the bed, she reached for him in her sleep, sliding her hand up his arm and curling it around his bicep. When he rolled toward her, she snuggled closer, tucking a bent knee between his legs.

Any other time, Travis' hormones would have been raging and he would have made love to Morgan. He wondered what was wrong with him tonight, for his main feature lay dormant as he slid an arm around Morgan to keep her close when she rolled over.

Someone had tried to hurt her today, and Travis felt a deep protectiveness that had nothing to do with lust. Luckily she hadn't been at home when the vandals came, but the more he

thought about it, the more he wondered if they had trashed her apartment to scare her. Still, he was glad she hadn't been there.

He slid his hand down her body, feeling the heavy weight of her breasts and the gentle slope of her belly. He had an idea the vandals were looking for the pictures; he just hadn't figured out why. As he listened to Morgan's faint breathing, he came to the conclusion that she was going to have to stay here with him until they discovered what was going on.

He knew she wouldn't like it because she had told him on more than one occasion that she could take care of herself and he was not to tell her what to do. But this was different, damn it. How could he protect someone he loved if she didn't want him to?

His hand stilled on her belly. *Love?* Was that what this panicky feeling was when he thought she might be in danger? Is that what had him craving her closeness, not just when they made love, but hearing her laughter across the dinner table, her jabs and comments about his writing across the width of their desks in the news' office?

Damn, when had that happened? Travis had always thought when he fell in love, it would be like getting hit by a two-by-four. Bamm—head over heels and all that. He had the good sense to realize this was not the same kind of feeling as he had when he gawked at her in high school. This was an I-want-to-spend-my-life-with-you feeling.

"Morgan, darling," he shook her slightly to wake her, determined to tell her how he felt.

"Go away, it's the middle of the night," she mumbled.

"But this is important."

"Travis, I just can't, not tonight." She kissed his neck and snuggled closer, her breathing even.

With a sigh, Travis pulled the covers up higher, tucking them in around her as he cradled her in his arms. He guessed his

discovery would have to wait; but then it wasn't as if it would go away. Now that he thought about it, he would rather tell her over a candlelight dinner anyway.

Chapter 9

In the morning, Travis found out Doctor Kartell was still being held for questioning. He appeared to be the only suspect in what was definitely a murder, considering Jeremy Patterson had a bullet hole in his chest when they fished him out of the bay. Travis now stood behind one-way glass as Lieutenant Tanner and another detective interrogated the doctor.

"I didn't kill him, you've got to believe me," Kartell said again.

"You don't have an alibi and we found pictures in your office of your wife and this guy, Jeremy. You were jealous and had Percy follow her." The detective playing the 'bad cop' looked to Tanner, who nodded his head, then left the room.

The detective continued. "Maybe you even killed Percy so no one in town would know your wife was making it behind your back."

"No, you don't understand." It sounded to Travis like Kartell was in the process of a total meltdown. His voice quivered and he twisted his hands together on the table. He certainly didn't act like a killer.

"Look, Doc, we'd like to get you out of here, but you have to help us out." Tanner walked back into the room with fresh hot coffee, which he set in front of the doctor and then took the chair across from him.

Tanner was playing the 'good cop'? Travis snorted.

"We've had three murders involving doctors here in

Boston, and we have no clues. One kills an ex-wife; one bludgeons a current wife, and now we have you, who may have killed a wife's lover. How do you suppose that looks to the people of Boston?"

The doctor shook his head. "If this gets out, I'll be ruined."

"Well," Tanner continued in a conciliatory voice, "give us something to work with."

Travis shook his head. The good cop, bad cop routine wasn't working.

Tanner dropped a photo in front of the doctor. From where Travis stood, the doctor showed no reaction.

"Do you know either of them?"

The doctor shook his head. "Who are they?"

"We don't know, but this picture was on the same roll of film, taken at the same place, as the photos of your wife."

The doctor's face paled. "You've got to protect her," he pleaded.

"From what?" Tanner asked.

"From...from—" The doctor shook his head, not saying any more.

"How's it going?" Morgan slipped into the room behind Travis. He had left her sleeping this morning with a note to call him when she was ready to go to work and he'd come get her. He should have figured she wouldn't listen.

"How'd you know where I was?"

"Called the office."

"You don't need to be here."

She gave him a look that told him exactly what he had been afraid of last night. She didn't appreciate being told what to do.

Another half an hour and Kartell still wouldn't talk. Tanner opened the door and a uniformed policeman came to take him back to his cell. The doctor's lawyer promised to arrange for bail.

Travis and Morgan turned when Tanner walked in.

“Something’s going down,” the lieutenant said, looking at him and Morgan carefully. “Have you two told me everything you know?”

“Yes,” Travis said at once.

“No,” Morgan said at the same time. Travis turned to stare.

“What are you talking about?” He narrowed his gaze at her, for the life of him, not knowing what she was thinking. His brain quickly flipped through all the information they knew about the doctor and he couldn’t think of anything they hadn’t told Tanner, albeit a bit late on some things.

“I don’t think Doctor Kartell killed anyone,” Morgan said matter-of-fact.

“Because—” Tanner dragged the word out.

“I stopped and visited with his wife this morning, not knowing where the investigation was heading,” she added with a meaningful glance at Travis.

So, he hadn’t told her where he was going. He was just trying to protect her. This relationship thing was getting a little more complex now that he had discovered he also loved her.

“Anyway,” Morgan continued, “Mrs. Kartell explained to me that she and the doctor have a very...unusual relationship.” Travis could see a blush creep up Morgan’s cheeks and realized that whatever the wife had told her, it had to do with sex. That was the one sure way to make Morgan blush. He crossed his arms and sat back, curious to see just how she would handle this.

“Apparently, the doctor is impotent and Mrs. Kartell desperately wants a baby. So they agreed to use Jeremy Patterson as a surrogate father.”

“He let Patterson fuck his wife just to get her pregnant?” Tanner asked, amazement showing on his face. “What’s wrong with a sperm bank?”

Morgan’s face grew redder.

“Hey, watch your mouth,” Travis retorted, knowing Morgan didn’t appreciate the use of foul language.

“Mrs. Kartell said they had begun with that idea, but she had chosen Jeremy because of his interest in medicine, convincing her husband it would make the child more like him. She was supposed to cultivate a friendship with Jeremy and ask him for a *donation*,” Morgan stumbled over the word, but then went on. “The problem was, Mrs. Kartell decided having an affair would be much more exciting. The *Carriway Resort* was the first time they had met as lovers, rather than for the purpose of a scientific experiment. She’s sure her husband only had Percy following her for protection.”

“So if we don’t have a jealous husband who kills in a fit of rage, who do we have?” Tanner questioned no one in particular.

“Did you ask Kartell about those two guys in the photos?” Morgan asked.

“Yeah, he says he doesn’t know them.”

“Someone’s got to know who they are and why they were sneaking around that room at the resort,” Morgan stated, apparently very upset over the unidentified men. Travis took a step toward her, squatting down in front of the chair where she sat.

“What’s the matter, sweetheart?” He took her hands in his. They were icy cold. He rubbed them between his warm ones.

* * * *

Morgan looked from Tanner to Travis. She could see the concern on both men’s faces, but for some reason, Travis’ gaze compelled her to look deeper. She realized he had feelings for her and he was basically declaring himself in front of Tanner.

“What if those men—the ones in the pictures—are the same ones who ransacked my apartment?” She let her mind free-associate. “What if they think I know something and now they’re after me? What if—”

“Whoa, babe. You’re getting too far ahead of yourself,” Travis cut her off.

“Yes, but you can’t deny that there may be some connection.”

She watched Travis’ gaze flicker to the lieutenant and back. Did they think they were protecting her by not letting her know of the danger?

“Travis McVicker, do you know something you’re not telling me?”

Greg Tanner gave a low whistle. “I’m out of here,” he said and walked out the door, leaving Travis looking just a little peeved.

“Morgan, do you honestly think you can take on those guys?”

Travis had gotten up and was stalking around the small observation room. He ran both hands through his hair, took his glasses off and cleaned the lenses on his shirt, and basically did everything except look at her.

“Travis?” Morgan said his name softly.

“I mean, for God’s sake, how do you expect me to sleep at night knowing someone might be after you, and for no reason because you don’t even know anything!”

“Travis.” She said his name louder.

“What?” He turned and looked at her.

She gave him a smile, beckoning with her finger. He came over and crouched in front of her again.

“Thank you for caring.” She stopped his comment with a finger to his lips. “And thank you for taking care of me last night.”

* * * *

The weeks dragged as Boston was pummeled with the worst storms in the city’s history. The streets were clogged with snow and cars buried too deep to be dug out. Mass

transportation ran, with delays, but Morgan took the subway to work because it was less trouble than trying to keep her car running.

She and Travis had put her apartment to rights, but she found herself spending more and more time over at his place. She loved the view of the harbor. They were only a few minutes from work, and she actually couldn't stand the thought of being away from him for any length of time.

Christmas was in two days, and they had both taken a week's vacation from work. Tonight, they snuggled on the sofa in front of a roaring fire. Hot enough, Travis had said, so that they didn't need any clothes on. His lovemaking, Morgan realized, had become tempered with patience, although there still wasn't a night that went by without him showing her the heights to which they could soar together.

But now his hands were extra gentle when he caressed her; he held her on top of him more often than not, rather than crushing her with his weight. And often, as tonight, he would lay with her tucked between his legs, his hands rubbing slow circles on her belly beneath one of the tee shirts she was constantly stealing from his dresser drawer.

And it never even dawned on Morgan that he might have a clue as to what was causing the changes in her body. She knew her breasts were slightly larger, but didn't think that would be a problem since Travis liked nuzzling them. While her stomach had only the smallest of pooches, she had noticed her pants getting tighter. She knew it wouldn't be long before she had to tell Travis about her condition.

She just didn't want to trap him. He had said he wasn't ready for a serious commitment and she knew with his sense of honor, he would insist on marrying her. She didn't want to marry except for love because she had seen what happened when that emotion wasn't the central focus. Her parents barely

tolerated each other, and two of her sisters were divorced.

On the other hand, she knew Travis' parents had had a loving marriage. From what she had seen in visiting with his family, all his brothers had married for love. She had watched carefully just the other night as Gordon, the oldest, treated his wife with such care and devotion, that she would think they were newlyweds. That was what she wanted.

"Morgan, what would you think about getting married?" Travis asked out of the blue and Morgan's heart about failed.

She turned to face him, his hand sliding across her skin, the sensual arousal such that Morgan almost forgot what he said. Almost.

"Why would you want to get married?" She watched carefully to see his reaction.

"Because," he began slowly, taking her face in his hands, "I enjoy your company, your humor and your intellect. And you must admit, we're dynamite in bed."

But you don't love me, and that's the key.

"What brought on such serious thoughts?" She tried to keep her voice light.

Travis frowned. "Doctor Kartell was arraigned today. Nothing has come up to the contrary and the DA thinks he can get murder one for the Patterson case."

Morgan shook her head. She and Travis both thought there was more to the *Doctor Murders* than anyone knew, but they couldn't identify the men, no more murders had been committed, and if any of the three doctors knew anything, they still weren't talking. So as it stood, the police thought they had the killer and that was that.

"Why would Doctor Kartell's arraignment make you ask me to marry you?"

He captured her gaze with his, dark brown eyes mesmerizing her, enchanting her, just as they had the first day

she saw him.

He slowly lowered his head and kissed her, his lips brushing back and forth against hers, almost as though he were paying homage to her.

“Mrs. Kartell was in the courtroom and I watched her through the proceedings. She’s pregnant, you know.”

Morgan knew her surprise showed and her stomach plummeted as she listened to him.

“She was crying and I thought, how sad. She’s lost her lover—the father of her child—and now she’s going to lose her husband, who would have claimed the child as his own.”

Morgan’s heart constricted. She realized it wasn’t fair for Travis not to know he had fathered a child. Even if he didn’t want to be a parent, he still had a right to know.

“Travis,” she began, “I—”

He put a finger to her lips. “Were you going to tell me if I hadn’t guessed?” The hurt in his voice was unmistakable and Morgan’s heart nearly broke. She scooted upright, dragging the comforter with her.

“But you don’t want children,” she said the first thing that came into her head and realized belatedly it was wrong.

“So you just weren’t going to bother telling me?” Travis shoved off from the couch and began pacing the floor. His jeans hung low on his slim hips, his chest was bare, and Morgan thought he looked like some ancient warrior, ready to ride to the rescue and protect his territory. And his next words confirmed it.

“Christ, Morgan, didn’t you think I would take care of what’s mine?”

“It’s not yours, Travis,” she replied gently.

“The hell it’s not. I know damn good and well you haven’t been sleeping around.” He turned to glare at her.

“That’s not what I meant.”

“Then tell me what you do mean, because I sure as hell can’t figure you out.”

“Now it’s my fault?” Morgan was a little tired of his belligerent attitude. She stood; wrapping the comforter around her, not only to cover her nakedness, but her affronted dignity as well. She tilted her chin up, staring him down.

“The reason I hadn’t told you I was pregnant is just exactly because of the way you are acting now.” She swept around the end of the sofa and headed for the bedroom. “I am not stupid enough to try and leave here in the middle of a snowstorm—you see, I do know how to take care of myself—but you can be assured I will be gone at the first break in the weather.” She walked into the bedroom, turned and kicked the quilt around behind her, and slammed the door.

* * * *

Damn, what the hell just happened? Travis stared at the closed door to his bedroom. *His!* He had never been locked out of his own room before and for a minute, didn’t even know how to react. He ran the conversation over in his mind, but the picture that kept popping up was of the incredibly beautiful Morgan standing before him, wrapped in his quilt, wearing his tee shirt and carrying his child in her womb. And now she had locked herself in his room to sleep in his bed.

A slow smile spread across his face. If she thought she didn’t belong to him, she had definitely underestimated Travis James McVicker.

* * * *

Travis was closer to Chase than to any of his other brothers, and luckily, Chase was in town for the holidays. This wasn’t something Travis wanted to discuss over the phone.

Since Chase and Katie Jo usually stayed with Steve and Keva, Travis now sat slumped in a chair in the living room of Steve’s house, nursing coffee when he would rather have a beer,

his two brothers staring at him from the other side of the coffee table.

It was the middle of the night and Travis was surprised to find Steve in town as Keva wouldn't fly when she was pregnant. He grumpily informed Travis that they had driven all the way from New York in a snowstorm, which was probably why Steve wasn't particularly happy when Travis came ringing his doorbell.

One of the twins had woken up, too, and Steve swore that if he wasn't back asleep by the time Travis left, he would be given to his Uncle Travis for the entire holiday.

"So are you going to tell us what's up, or just sit there looking like a lovesick cow?" Chase asked when Travis didn't immediately spill his guts.

Travis studied his two brothers. Chase poked at the fire and added a log before plopping down in a chair, one ankle crossed over the other bare knee. He wore a tee shirt and boxers with—holy crap—prancing reindeer on them, but he seemed perfectly at ease. His hair was tousled but his face clean-shaven. Travis knew what that meant. A guy only shaved at night when he hoped to get lucky.

He switched his gaze to Steve, who sat holding his son and he wondered how they could act just like...regular guys.

"How do you guys do it?" The question popped out. He saw Chase look at Steve and they both grinned, then Chase winked.

"When you say 'it', are you referring to giving up all women for the sake of one, or," Chase rubbed his clean-shaven jaw, "still aching to make love to your wife after you've been married for years—"

"Or," Steve picked up the dialogue, "helping with the kids, the house, and doing just about anything else your wife wants without feeling emasculated?"

"Yeah, all of that."

Both his brothers burst out laughing, which startled the

twin. His eyes popped open in surprise and then he focused on Travis, giving him a toothy grin.

“Unca Ejay.” When he started squirming, his dad let him down and he waddled over to Travis, dragging a blanket. Travis scooped him up and received a wet kiss on the cheek and two chubby arms choking him in a hug.

“Doesn’t that answer your question?” Steve asked.

Travis loved his nieces and nephews, but there was a difference. “Yeah, but he’s yours. When I get done playing with any of the kids, I can give them back.”

Both his brothers raised identical brows, a trait that Travis knew he shared.

“Ah,” Steve said, his smile gone and his eyes narrowed.

“Mmmm,” Chase added, all seriousness as he stroked his chin, and Travis knew without stating it outright that his brothers had guessed Morgan was going to have his baby.

“Does Morgan have any brothers?” Chase asked and Travis couldn’t understand what that had to do with anything.

“No, just sisters, and she doesn’t get along too well with any of them.”

“So what do you intend to do about this situation?” Chase added.

Before Travis could answer, Steve chimed in. “You’d better make it right, little brother, or I’m just liable to punch your lights out.”

Travis looked from brother to brother. “Aren’t you supposed to be on my side?”

“It’s like Mom used to say. There are no sides, except for being on the right side.”

Travis sighed. “Morgan has this independent, stubborn streak a mile wide, and can’t seem to get past the fact that I want to take care of her.”

Both his brothers nodded in unison, and if the situation

hadn't been so serious, Travis would have been laughing his head off. Apparently, he wasn't the only one who thought women were stubborn.

"And of course, you've told her she belongs to you?" Steve asked.

"Yeah, so?"

"Have you moved her into your apartment yet?" This from Chase.

"Well, no, not moved, but she's been staying there. Mostly because her apartment got trashed. We never found out who did that."

Steve nodded. "That does put a slightly different light on it, but it still basically comes down to the same thing. It seems that McVicker men choose the most stubborn women we can find to fall in love with. But, they are also the most giving, the most intense, and the most loving in return." He looked at his brothers. "Am I not correct?"

Travis had to agree. "I already know that, but it didn't help when she locked herself in my bedroom just because I got mad when she hadn't told me about the baby."

"Well, you two did put the cart before the horse, but the end result should be the same. Do you love her?"

"Hell, yes. She's all I ever think about. I want to punch out walls whenever she talks to Greg Tanner, and my heart stopped when I saw her apartment, thinking she could have been there when the vandals hit."

"Have you told her?" Chase asked, then yawned.

Travis had to think about that. No, he probably hadn't said the words; although she should realize it by the way he acted.

He shook his head.

"Well, Christ," Chase muttered, getting up from his chair. "All you'd had to do was tell her and it would have saved you this trip in the snow and I could have gotten a few more hours

sleep.”

Steve had risen, too. “You would have thought he learned something after all these years, wouldn’t you?” He directed the question to Chase, but his gaze leveled on Travis. He took the baby from Travis, the little one’s drowsy yawn muffled as he snuggled against his dad.

“That’s it? The sage advice I get from my two older, wiser brothers is simply ‘tell her’?” Travis watched as his brothers walked toward the stairs.

“Lock up behind you,” Steve called over his shoulder.

* * * *

Morgan returned to her apartment in the morning. She had gotten up and found Travis gone. He had left her a note stating he had gone over to Steve’s and they would talk later, but she had decided that was a good time to leave. She didn’t want to argue with Travis and knew if she tried to leave with him there, that’s what would happen.

Her apartment seemed cold and lonely when she walked in. There was no evidence of the break-in but Morgan still felt a shiver go down her spine at the thought that unwanted men had invaded her space. She dropped her mail on the credenza by the door and went into the kitchen to put on a teakettle. She kicked up the thermostat on the way.

She would rather have had a fire, but didn’t have the energy to start one, and it reminded her vividly of all the times in the last week she and Travis had made love and fallen asleep in front of his fireplace. She sighed. Was there anything that didn’t remind her of Travis and the time they spent together?

The teakettle whistled. Once she had her cup of tea, she grabbed her mail and went into the living room. Her gaze was immediately drawn to the picture over the fireplace—a space that had been bare when she left the other day.

The mail slid out of her grasp and with shaking hands, she

lowered her tea mug to the coffee table. Tears began to slide down her cheeks as she stared at the poppies, waving bright and colorful from a background of green foliage. She ran a hand along the smooth black frame that set off the striking colors of the print.

Her eyes narrowed as she studied the picture, noting that there was no white border around the print; no title at the bottom, or number to the right side. The painting went clear to the edge of the frame and there was only the artist's signature and date. She gasped as she realized that this was an original, not a print.

She grabbed the card propped up on the mantel. "Merry Christmas. I love you, Travis," she read aloud.

She looked back up at the picture through tears, loving Travis for buying it for her, worried that he probably paid too much and wondering how he could afford it. *Why was it so hard for a guy to express his feelings?* She had stayed awake most of the night, hoping he would come into the bedroom to hold her tight; longing for him to say the words that he had written on this card.

She had been telling herself that she could raise this baby on her own and that she didn't need Travis if he couldn't love her and not want to smother her. More tears fell as she realized she didn't want to do this all by herself. She wanted help; she needed Travis. When the phone rang, she grabbed it immediately, hoping it was Travis so she could tell him how she felt.

"Hello?"

There was no answer, but she could hear some kind of background noise that indicated the phone was connected.

"Hello?" she repeated.

Still no answer. She pushed the disconnect button. Why would someone call and not talk when she answered?

A sudden chill went down her back. It seemed like ages since her apartment was ransacked; weeks since Jeremy

Patterson's murder. Why did she suddenly think that those men were after her again?

She switched off the lights and hurried to the windows, trying to see if a black SUV was parked outside. The bare trees and her distance from the street obscured her view. Besides, there was an entire block of curb parking all around the building. Just because they weren't on this side, didn't mean they weren't watching the entrance, which faced the north, whereas her windows faced south.

She automatically dialed Travis' number. No answer. She tried his cell, but either he didn't have it with him, or didn't have it on because he was on vacation. She thought about calling one of his brothers who lived in town, but what could she say? *I think I have stalkers. Send Travis over here so he can get beat up? Or better yet, I'm pregnant; tell your brother I love him?*

She knew there was just one place to go. It wasn't her first choice by any means, but it would get her out of the city and give her time to think about what she wanted from her life. And if she was careful, she could leave without anyone following her.

* * * *

"I don't care if it is Christmas Eve," Travis hollered into the phone. "She's gone and I want to know where the hell she is!"

Greg Tanner had pulled Christmas duty for the past several years. He didn't have any family and felt the other officers would rather be home. Only a skeleton crew remained on duty, with others on call in case a disaster struck over the holiday. He didn't consider Travis McVicker losing track of his girlfriend a disaster.

"We can't file a missing person's report for twenty-four hours," Greg told Travis when asked. McVicker had everything Greg had ever wanted in life—a great family with lots of brothers, who all looked out for each other and he had Morgan Gentry, whom Greg had fallen hard for the moment she had first walked into his office.

Maybe now if she and McVicker had had a beef, Greg could step in to give her a shoulder to cry on and a bed to curl up in—with him, of course.

“Damn it, Tanner. It’s snowing like hell outside and she’s pregnant!” The words took time to sink in, but where Greg would have thought jealousy would raise its ugly head, he felt anger instead.

“You let her leave town in a snowstorm? What kind of fool are you, anyway?” He knew he was reacting personally rather than professionally, but at the moment, could only think of the petite blonde, car wrecked in a snowdrift somewhere, huddling cold and crying in the dark.

“I didn’t let her do anything. She just did, now are you going to help or not?”

“Have you called her family?”

“Yes. If she was heading up to Wind Gap, they didn’t know it,” Travis replied, and Greg jotted down the name. He passed it on to a sergeant after jotting a note to notify authorities about a possible missing person.

“There’s something else,” Travis was saying. “I checked her caller ID. It was erased.”

“So?” Greg wasn’t following his thinking.

“Who ever erases caller ID? It holds the last ten phone calls and automatically dumps the ones beyond that. You don’t have to erase it.”

“So you think someone else did?”

“Yeah, someone who didn’t want anyone knowing who called or where from.”

“Are you over at her place now?”

“Yeah,” Travis answered. “I came over to, well, never mind. She’s just not here, but she has been. The card I left on the mantel is gone, but her mail is scattered over the floor and a mug of tea is on the coffee table.”

“Don’t touch anything else. I’ll get a crew over there right away.”

* * * *

Travis hadn’t wanted to call the police, but he was scared shitless. There was no sign of a struggle, but then he doubted that Morgan would have put up a fight if someone had threatened her. She wouldn’t have wanted to hurt the baby.

Travis’ legs went out from under him and he sank to the sofa. The thought that someone had Morgan had angered him, but the idea that their unborn baby might be hurt tore him apart. Why had she been so stubborn? Why had he refused to grow up and accept responsibility? The useless unanswered questions flew around in his brain and refused to be filed away. He knew they would continue to torment him until he and Morgan had things settled between them. He only hoped it wasn’t too late.

Morgan’s car was still in the underground garage, which meant she hadn’t driven away. They had called the train station—no ticket to Wind Gap for a Morgan Gentry.

The forensic team only found his prints throughout Morgan’s apartment, along with hers, of course. That didn’t surprise him at all, and it didn’t help. Tanner pummeled him with questions he couldn’t answer because he couldn’t think of anything except Morgan being hurt.

“You’re not going to help her if you can’t give me anything to go on,” Tanner told Travis for more than the first time.

“I don’t know anything, damn it!” Travis ran his fingers through his hair, trying to think. He was usually so organized, his brain automatically filing every little bit and piece of information in the appropriate place where he could easily retrieve it. It was a gift he had and somewhat a curse, because sometimes, his brain felt overloaded and ready to explode. Unlike a computer memory, he didn’t seem to have a delete button to get rid of the useless stuff.

His cell phone rang and he jerked it off his hip, disappointed when the readout indicated it was Steve and not Morgan.

"I gotta keep this line free, in case Morgan calls," he told his brother. He had apprised his family of the situation, and they had all expressed their concern for Morgan's well-being. His mother had said they would not have Christmas until she was found, but Travis reminded her that the little kids wouldn't understand if Santa didn't show up tonight.

"I just heard from Bob," Steve told him.

"Yeah?" Travis wasn't tracking his brother's conversation.

"I had him tracing the goons in the photographs, remember?"

Travis hadn't thought about the Kartell case lately, because it appeared neatly tied up. Now, he wondered if they had all settled for the easiest answer instead of digging deeper. And would Morgan pay for their carelessness?

"These two are bad news, TJ," Steve continued. "They work for a mafia group in South America. They're here illegally, of course, which probably explains why they didn't appreciate their photos being taken."

"Which probably also means you don't have an address for them."

"Sorry, Bob couldn't locate anything. But you know that answering service you gave me with the rest of the info on these dudes? Bob tapped into the phone service records and found a very small number of calls made to and from the service. Too many of the numbers matched for it to be coincidence."

Travis' heart beat faster, hoping for a lead. "What did you find out?"

"We put the service records into the computer and sorted them, then searched for identification. Three of the numbers are residences of your doctors—Kartell, Sharpe and Greineder. Three more are the same doctors' pagers or cell phones."

There was a pause on the other end of the line. "What else?" Travis prompted.

"Your cell number also came up on the records."

"Don't worry about that. We were trying to track down the user. Who else is on there?"

"Two other numbers are definitely noteworthy. One is a South American base and the other is a cell phone which we haven't been able to locate."

"What do you mean, you can't locate?"

"Well, from the length of calls and the tower charges, it's here in the vicinity, but every call has a different pattern, so it appears whoever has the phone doesn't stay in one spot for very long."

"Do the police have access to your technology?" Travis thought that Tanner and he could trace the calls.

"Are you kidding me?" His brother scoffed. "They'd screw up the entire country if they did."

"Give me the cell number." Travis jotted down the number. He had the feeling that whoever had Morgan could be reached on this number.

"Be careful, Travis," Steve said. "We'll keep trying to track it from here. Does Morgan have a cell phone with her?"

"I think, but she must not have it on. I've been trying to reach her all morning."

"Give me her number, just in case," Steve said. "If you do call her, or this unknown number, try to keep them on the line from your phone. That way we have a better chance of getting a location."

Travis gave his brother the number, hung up and immediately dialed Morgan's number again. No answer.

"Give us time to put a tap on this phone," Tanner said, indicating Morgan's land line. "Then we'll use it as a base, if anyone calls."

Travis answered without thinking. “Hell no, Tanner. I don’t want the police to fuck this up.”

Tanner scowled. “This is police business, McVicker. You can’t do this on your own.”

Travis ignored him. He dialed the cell number Steve had given him, his heart thumping harder with every ring. What would he do if the goons actually had Morgan? He had never even told her he loved her. He—

“Hello,” a voice with a heavy foreign accent answered.

“What the hell have you done with Morgan?” Travis blurted out, forgetting tact in an effort to find her.

“Ah, Mr. McVicker, is that you?” The voice was suave and unhurried, probably because he knew he had the upper hand.

“Where is she?” He didn’t bother to confirm his identity, figuring they already knew he would be looking for her.

“We have her—safe—and will return her unharmed if you give us what we want.”

“I don’t have anything you want.” He searched his brain, knowing neither he, nor the police could identify the cause of the mayhem these men had created.

“You have photos,” the voice came back. “We want all the photos and the negatives.”

Travis jotted the word on a pad and pointed to it. Tanner was trying to listen but Travis kept the phone close to his ear.

“How do I know you’ve got her? Let me talk to her.” He looked at his watch, wondering how much time Steve needed for a trace.

“I know you are timing this call, but you cannot trace this phone. However, just to be on the safe side, I will call you back.”

“No, wait!” he shouted into the phone. “Don’t hang up. Let me speak to her, just to know she’s safe.”

There was a pause, some muffled words, and then Morgan

came on the line.

“Thanks a lot, McVicker, for that crazy Christmas present. I can’t get the rooster to quit crowing at midnight.”

“Morgan—” He was cut off as the line went dead.

Chapter 10

Morgan sat huddled in a corner trying to be as inconspicuous as possible. She hoped Travis understood her message because she knew these two men were going to kill her. It wouldn't matter if Travis brought the pictures, negatives and a sworn statement. They hadn't tried to hide their identities when they kidnapped her and they hadn't blindfolded her when they brought her into this building. They knew she could identify them and they didn't care.

She thought of all the things she should have said instead of giving Travis that idiotic code that he would probably never figure out. She should have told him she loved him; that she was sorry she had run off mad the last time they had been together; that she knew he loved her, even before she had read the words on the card he left with her painting.

Her fingers, cold and stiff, curled around the card in her pocket. The men watching her hadn't even bothered to tie her up, figuring a woman was no match against their size and strength. And they were right. Morgan hadn't resisted at all. She wondered now if she should have, but the thought of hurting her baby had stilled her movements.

She thought about her sisters, her parents and nearly cried. *Stop it.* Travis would rescue her and make everything all right. Then she could go and tell her sisters she loved them, regardless of how stupid they acted at times. Thinking about how

quarrelsome they were helped make Morgan angry, which she thought was definitely better than feeling hopeless.

The only sound penetrating the walls of the building was the howling wind, which seeped through the cracks and stirred the already frigid air. She snuggled deeper into her coat. At least she had that on when they grabbed her. She doubted they would have let her go back to her apartment and get it. She heard the bells from the old *North Church*, and with every gong, felt as if it were tolling the end of her life. For the first time in a long while, she prayed.

* * * *

“What did they want?” Tanner badgered him as Travis stood mute, the phone still clutched in his hand. He stared unseeing around Morgan’s apartment trying to understand the reason for his life crumbling down around him. Everything was a blur and he realized his eyes were moist. He squeezed them shut, willing himself to be strong, not because he didn’t want to show weakness in front of the police, but since he knew it would take everything he had to rescue Morgan and his baby.

Oh, God. His knees went out from under him and he fell onto the sofa. He dropped his head, pushing against his eyes with the heels of his hands. He couldn’t think like this or he wouldn’t be able to function.

A strong hand grabbed his shoulder, shaking him.

“McVicker! Come on, man, we need some help here.” Tanner’s voice broke through the misery crowding into his brain. He looked up.

“This is why you let the police handle things. You’re too personally involved and that’s not going to save Morgan.”

“Fuck off, Tanner,” Travis growled, surging to his feet and pacing the room.

The police lieutenant didn’t seem to take offense. In fact, he seemed satisfied that Travis was up and moving. One of these

days, he would no doubt punch Tanner's lights out, but right now, Travis knew Tanner was right and he needed the man's help.

"What was the conversation—word for word?"

"They want the pictures and the negatives."

Tanner narrowed his eyes. "That's all?"

Travis shook his head. "They knew we were probably tracing the call and he said he'd call back. Besides, he didn't give me any drop point."

"What about Morgan? How was she? What did she say?"

Travis wondered about the anxiety he heard in Tanner's voice. If he didn't know better, he would think Tanner had a personal interest in Morgan. But that wasn't possible. He closed his eyes and tried to recall Morgan's exact words.

"I can't get the rooster to quit crowing at midnight."

"What?" Tanner looked at him like he was crazy.

"That's what she said. Something about a rooster crowing at...midnight. Christ, where have I heard that before?" Travis started shuffling files in his brain, searching for the elusive words that he now realized Morgan had given him as a clue to either her whereabouts, or to who the men were who held her.

He thought back to when Morgan had first started at the *Chronicle*, then fast forwarded to right before they started their red-hot relationship. She had ragged on him about trying to write a novel, and—

"That's it! I was using that as a code, for when one or the other detective was in trouble, but shit, we already know she's in trouble." Travis began pacing again, forcing himself to open his mind to the possibilities. What had she meant? Where had that conversation gone?

"Meet me at O'Malley's." The words came unbidden to his lips. He remembered Morgan telling him it would be a better code than the rooster crowing. He raced to the kitchen, opening

and slamming drawers, knowing he had seen a phone book somewhere. As he flipped through the pages, he asked Tanner, "Is there a bar or restaurant named O'Malley's?" Travis had grown up in Boston, but some of the smaller joints changed hands and names so often, he couldn't keep track. Besides he had his favorite hangouts and rarely frequented others.

Tanner quizzed the police officers who were in the apartment with them. No one seemed to recall a place with that name.

Travis scanned the names in the directory. If there wasn't an O'Malley's, there had to be something similar. "Ha! *O'Brien's*. It's the only oh-something in the book and there's no other bars starting with 'm' or rhyming with O'Malley's. This has to be it." He read off the address and headed for the door.

"That place has been closed for the last month or so," one of the officers stated. "It's over on Sixth, off the beaten path."

Travis stopped, hand on the doorknob, Tanner not more than a step behind. He forced himself to think about the sound of Morgan's voice when he spoke to her. Had there been any background noise; something that indicated where she was? All he could recall was that while her words indicated anger, he had sensed an underlying fright.

"Let's go," Tanner said. "What better place to stash a hostage than in an abandoned building? Radio for backup!" he hollered over his shoulder as Travis and he headed for the door.

* * * *

Travis jerked the car door open before Tanner had quite stopped it a block away from where *O'Brien's* stood. Before he could get a foot out the door, Tanner had grabbed his arm, pinning him to the seat.

"You're staying here."

"The hell I am." Travis tried to twist away from the man but Tanner held him in an iron grip.

"I'll handcuff you to the car if I have to," Tanner retorted. "You're not the police; you don't even carry a gun, thank God. If you want to see Morgan alive, you've got to let us do our job."

Travis would have kept arguing if Tanner hadn't said her name. Suddenly, all the energy seeped out of him and he collapsed against the seat. His emotions were raw, and he turned to beg Tanner, the very man who had stolen a girlfriend and later caused such havoc in their lives. Regardless of his personal feelings, he knew Tanner was the best cop in Boston.

Before he could say anything, Tanner spoke. "You're a lucky son of a bitch, I hope you know that." And he was gone.

As Tanner disappeared around the corner, Travis got out of the patrol car. He knew better, he really did, but he couldn't sit still and do nothing. He pulled the collar of his coat up around his ears against the biting wind and sidled up to the end of the building, cautiously peering around the corner to where *O'Brien's* stood half a block away. The rundown neighborhood had no streetlights and he could barely make out several shadowy shapes as the police moved into position.

It was the longest moment of his life. He never took his eyes off the building and they soon watered from staring so intently without blinking. He didn't realize he was holding his breath until his body automatically made him exhale, whereupon he started coughing. He cupped his cold hands against his mouth to muffle the sound and that's when he heard it.

Gunshots. He started running, his heart in his throat, cutting off the screams that echoed in his mind. *Morgan, oh God, if anything happened to her...*

He got to the edge of the perimeter created by the police cars surrounding the building when several people began emerging from the doorway. It had begun to snow and the large wet flakes mixed with the moisture in his eyes to blur his vision. He scanned the area looking for Morgan when suddenly, a small

form broke away from one of the policemen and started running toward him.

“Travis.” Her voice was music to his ears as she flew into his arms.

“Oh, God, baby, are you all right?” She wrapped her arms around him and the cold was immediately forgotten. He cupped her face with his hands, his fingers sliding into her hair as he pulled her close and kissed her.

She tasted so sweet, her lips hot and wet beneath his. He slanted his lips across hers, forcing her mouth open to his invading tongue, branding her for all time.

“Mine,” he murmured, accenting his words with kisses to her lips, her cheeks, her eyes. “You’re mine, do you understand? Mine.” He didn’t care if she didn’t like his possessive attitude, she’d have to put up with it because that’s the way it was going to be.

“Travis,” she breathed his name before he kissed her again, holding her close as she trembled against him.

Travis only came up for air when he heard a throat clear behind him. Reluctantly, he released Morgan’s mouth, but kept a tight hold on the rest of her. He could feel her shiver against his chest and knew he should get her inside out of the cold.

“You know the routine, McVicker. We’ve got to take her down to the station to get her statement.” Greg Tanner stood close by, the snow settling on his bare head.

“It’s Christmas Eve, Tanner. Can’t it wait?”

The lieutenant looked as if he were going to protest but when his gaze slid to Morgan, he shut his mouth. “I’ll get someone to take you home.”

* * * *

Morgan snuggled as close to Travis as she could get in the back seat of the police cruiser. His sturdy, strong arm held her tight, as if he would never let her go. And she hoped that was

true. She had been so foolish to leave his apartment, thinking she needed a declaration to know that he loved her as much as she did him.

"I love you." She turned and kissed the first available patch of skin, which happened to be his scratchy chin. She didn't care.

"Hang on," he said into the phone, tilting it up away from his mouth. He looked down at her and squeezed her tight. "I know, babe," he whispered, "but that's not going to keep you from getting your butt blistered for running away." If he thought his words scared her, they didn't because she could see passion, not anger, glittering in his eyes.

She just smiled, then laid her head against his chest, only half listening to his conversation with his brother.

"Yeah, she's safe." A pause as someone asked a question. "Yeah, tell Mom Merry Christmas." Another pause. "No, we'll be over tomorrow morning. I'm taking her home."

Home with Travis, Morgan sighed. What a wonderful place to be this Christmas.

* * * *

"Travis, I don't want to stay in this bed a minute longer," Morgan croaked out, then immediately had a coughing fit. "I'm pregnant, not an invalid."

"Don't even think about getting up," he answered as he brought her breakfast in on a tray. "The doctor said complete bed rest until you get over your cold."

"What does he know?" She pouted prettily.

"He's the best OB/GYN in Boston; he'd better know what he's talking about," Travis answered, wondering how long he could resist her. She had scared him to death when she fell sick Christmas night, running a temperature and throwing up everything she ate. Even after the doctor had assured him that she and the baby would both be fine, he discovered he couldn't rest easy.

"It's a great story," she changed the subject, referring to the paper she had peeked over to squabble at him. "Thank you for the byline."

The two of them had pieced together the remainder of the mystery. It wouldn't earn them a Pulitzer Prize, but it had freed all three of the doctors. Apparently, Sharpe had gotten involved with the wrong people because of a gambling habit and before long, all three doctors had been coerced into money laundering and performing plastic surgery to change the appearances of several South American mafia members who were trying to infiltrate the US drug market. Whenever one of the doctors threatened to expose them, one of their loved ones was killed. After all, it wouldn't have done any good to kill the doctors.

Travis immediately forgot about the outside world as Morgan slowly slid the paper down and he discovered she was hiding behind the newsprint totally naked. He gripped the tray to keep it from slipping out of his hands, as inch after pale inch of skin was uncovered.

"Morgan," he dragged her name out, trying to warn her off, but she only tilted her head and gave him that smile that melted his insides. And the paper slid lower still until the edge rested on peaked nipples.

"I don't want breakfast, Travis," she purred. "I want you." She raised her arms above her head and the paper slid down the rest of the way, dropping to her midriff and exposing her beautiful breasts.

The tray clattered on the bedside table, the newspaper crackled as he crumpled it up and tossed it to the floor. He bent close and Morgan pulled his shirt off over his head.

"The doctor—"

"The doctor said making love was not going to hurt the baby." She circled his neck, lifting herself to rub her breasts against his chest.

God, it seemed like forever since he had made love to her.

“Are you sure?” He had to ask, even though he didn’t think he could stand it if she now denied him.

“Travis, a good reporter knows the important questions to ask.” She didn’t allow him any further protest as she flipped the covers over them and kissed him, taking them both into the realm of passion.

COMING IN 2007

**ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, ANYWAY
BOOK 4: ALWAYS**

You would think once Morgan and Travis were married, things would settle down for the McVicker families. And for awhile, they did—until the six brothers went to Gage’s cabin in Colorado to celebrate the twins’ birthday. At the same time, the five sisters-in-law got together in Boston and Morgan, the newest member in the McVicker family, asked the question on everyone’s mind—why wasn’t John, one of the older brothers and Michael’s twin, married?

Well, you could have guessed what was going to happen. You get all the McVicker men and their wives together and interesting, not to mention steamy and sexy, things are bound to happen.

Turn the page for a preview of ANYWHERE,
ANYTIME, ANYWAY—ALWAYS.

Prologue

“Whew, the last baby’s finally asleep.” Morgan followed Katie Jo into the living room. “I’m sure glad I only had Becky instead of twins. I don’t know how you do it, Keva.”

“Gage helps a lot,” Keva replied, then grinned. “If he doesn’t, he knows he’ll be sleeping in there with the boys.”

The other ladies nodded in agreement. They all had their own methods of getting their husbands to help, but for the McVicker men, sex was a major negotiating tool.

“Speaking of which, I wonder how they’re all doing,” Penny said. “I don’t remember the last time all six of them went to Colorado to the cabin. It was a brilliant idea, Suzy, to have them take John and Michael out there for their birthday.”

“I don’t understand, though,” Morgan frowned. “Before Travis left, he closed a savings account and gave me the money. He said to buy Becky’s baby furniture and that his brothers were paying for it. Do you know what that’s all about?”

Penny and Suzy laughed. “I’d forgotten about their bet,” Penny said.

“Bet?” Katie Jo asked.

Penny nodded. “When Gordon and Suzy got married, the other five guys each put one hundred dollars into a savings account. Whoever got married last got the whole pot. You know, each of them figuring they’d be the last to fall. And, you

gals,” she nodded at the three youngest women, “knocked them down like dominoes. Keva and Steve—whoops. That’s Gage to you,” she pointed to Keva, who insisted on calling her husband by his middle name, since that was how she had met him. “Then Chase and our darling Katie Jo, and finally Travis and Morgan, who somehow manage working together at the newspaper, which I could never do with Mike.”

“So that’s how Travis got the pot,” Suzy said. “Lucky you. Gordon would have probably bought a new set of golf clubs with it.”

“But John’s not married,” Morgan replied. Even though she and Travis had been married a year and a half, she was still learning about the McVicker family. “Why would Travis get the money?”

Keva and Katie Jo echoed her question, so Morgan knew she wasn’t the only one out of the loop.

Penny pursed her lips and looked at Suzy. Their husbands, Mike and Gordon, were the two oldest, and like the brothers, the two women were often the ones who controlled the clan, so to speak. Well, Mike and John were twins, but in this case, that didn’t count.

“Does anyone want a margarita?” Suzy perkily asked as she hopped up from the sofa and headed toward the kitchen. Morgan was close behind, followed by the others.

“Spill it,” Keva said.

“We were sworn to secrecy,” Suzy practically whined, digging into the freezer for ice.

“We might as well tell them,” Penny said. “It could save someone from putting their foot in their mouth later on.”

“If you don’t tell, Suzy, I’ll tell Gordon how much you really spent on the remodeling,” Morgan stated, not above using

blackmail to get a juicy story. It was the reporter in her. All the girls turned to her, mouths open.

Penny smiled. "Spoken like a true McVicker sister-in-law." She turned to Suzy. "Better make those margaritas extra strong."

Penny looked at each woman in turn. "If we tell, you have got to promise never to breathe a word of it. The guys know, of course, but nobody talks about it. It's just too embarrassing."

Morgan noticed the shift in body language as all the women leaned forward. She gazed around the circle of women, all in comfy pajamas and enjoying a weekend of sisterhood at Suzy's home in Boston while their husbands were off fishing in Colorado. She dearly loved belonging to this family, just one more plus to being married to Travis.

"John was married," Penny began, and then held up her hand before anyone could utter a question, "soon after Michael and I were. But less than six months later, he found out she was cheating on him."

"So he divorced her," Suzy picked up the story, handing each woman a salt-rimmed glass of frosty margarita.

"There's nothing embarrassing about that," Katie Jo said.

Penny bit her lip, then scrunched up her mouth. "He found her cheating with another *woman*. John was terribly hurt over the deception, and I think he feels he can't trust his instincts when it comes to women."

"Huh? I don't understand," Katie Jo broke the silence that met Penny's pronouncement.

"Come on, Katie, surely you can't be that naive," Penny commented. "His wife was a lesbian."

"Oh." Katie Jo's cheeks stained bright red with embarrassment.

The sisters-in-law knew some of Katie's background, and Morgan suspected perhaps, she was that naive. She quickly

jumped into the conversation. "You know, maybe he just hasn't found the right woman."

"Someone he could be his totally macho, totally *McVicker male* self around," Keva added.

Penny and Suzy adamantly shook their heads. "No. Don't even think it. He's just not interested."

"What if we introduced him to friends?"

"Tried that."

"Set him up on a blind date?"

"Been there, done that," Suzy stated.

"What if he were being stalked?" Keva questioned.

"You can't do that!" Penny's exclamation was met with firm nods of the head, but Morgan was interested.

"Explain."

Keva, who edited romance for a large New York publishing company, grinned. "Okay, so maybe stalked is too strong of a word, but it's like a good plot. If John knows we're setting him up, of course he's going to get defensive. Whoever we choose needs to be secretive and very subtle in her approach; sly almost, so he doesn't suspect a thing."

The women now nodded in agreement. "What we have to do is find someone soft-spoken and gentle and totally feminine," Katie Jo suggested. "Someone to trigger his protective instincts." Morgan knew Katie Jo was thinking of her husband, Chase, who had rescued her from an abusive ex-husband and was still very protective of her.

"Does anyone know a woman like that?"

All five women shook their heads.

"Maybe we don't need to actually find someone." Keva grinned and Morgan knew there was nothing she liked better than a good plot. "Let's play *what if*," Keva continued. "What

would happen if we started sending him flowers or something and sign them *from a secret admirer*?”

“That might at least get him to looking at the women around him,” Penny said thoughtfully. “Maybe if he thought one of them liked him, he might actually come out of his shell and ask her out.”

“Here’s a *what if*,” Suzy said. “What if we just ask our husbands to find someone?”

Her question was met with hoots of laughter.

“You actually want to rely on our husbands to find a soul mate for John?” Morgan asked. Although she had been married less time than the other women, she knew the McVicker men well enough to guess what type of woman they would pick for sweet-hearted John. “We want soft and feminine.”

“Yeah, shy and reserved,” Katie Jo added.

“I think John can do this; he just needs a kick-start,” Keva said.

“Okay, we go with Keva’s plan,” Penny stated, getting out paper and pencils so they could take notes as to who would do what and when.

By the third round of margaritas, the five women, all of whom dearly loved their husbands and the entire McVicker family, had, in their slightly inebriated minds, successfully plotted the downfall of the last hold out—John Jefferson McVicker.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

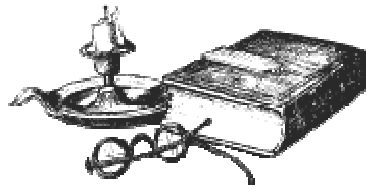
Barb has two married children—Tom and Cassie—of whom she is very proud. She also absolutely loves her daughter-in-law and her new son-in-law. Oh, yeah, there's also a husband riding around somewhere on a Harley.

When she's not writing, she loves to create fused glass dishes, quilts, and just about any other crafty thing she can think of.

Barb collects pottery from places she visits, and since she loves to travel, her collection keeps growing. Her favorite piece is a large planter from a lovely lady in Oklahoma who is seventy-eight years old! Barb swears she's going to be just as active when she reaches that age.

Barb can be reached at writer0926@yahoo.com or through her website at www.authorsden.com/barbarajbaldwin.

*For your reading pleasure, we
welcome you to visit our web
bookstore*



WHISKEY CREEK PRESS

www.whiskeycreekpress.com