



# A Real Man

Caitlyn Willows

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...Her cunt muscles clenched around Matt's cock. His balls tightened. A shudder rippled through him. Allie did like the thrill of knowing she was being watched, liked the excitement of knowing she was caught.

"I mean it," Petrocelli said. "There might come a point where I'd have to become more involved, but I'd really prefer not to interfere with your newfound relationship. Been there, had that done to me. I won't do it to another couple unless it's absolutely necessary." He added a smile. "Or unless I'm invited. I want to spend this flight with us getting comfortable with one another. We'll stand a greater chance of convincing Sumner I'm the voyeur and you're my entertainment that way."

"And what do you intend to do about that?" Allie jerked her chin toward the thick ridge of cock straining in his trousers.

"I didn't say I wouldn't get off on it." He shoved his hand in his trouser pocket, fished out a condom, then zipped down. A full and substantial erection fell free.

Allie's breath hitched. Matt couldn't blame her.

"I'm sure you'll agree it's only fair. I'll take care of me." He rolled the condom in place. "And...try to call me Simon, not Petrocelli. It'll help our cover immensely." He looped his fist around his penis. "Now...continue...please."

The last of Matt's jealousy dissolved. It was a job, like all

the others they'd all done. That took precedence over everything else, even he and Allie falling in love. Allie had made her emotions clear. Matt wouldn't forget that again. Petro...Simon made his priorities clear, too. Matt wouldn't forget that either. How could he when it was something he would've done himself?

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A REAL MAN  
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# CHAPTER 1

Matt Oliver stared at the white ceiling as if he could find the answers he sought etched there. The silence in the hospital was a mixed blessing, giving him both peace and quiet while it also put him on alert for anything out of the ordinary. In his line of work, it paid to be prepared. Too bad he'd let himself lose sight of that fact. It wouldn't happen again...he hoped.

He'd never been one to let things slide, to let a feeling of complacency settle over him. But that's what had to have happened tonight. Why else would he be lying in a hospital bed with three stitches closing up a bullet graze?

Matt tried to piece the events together. Not too much made sense. Yes, he'd admit he was emotionally involved with his

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fellow agent. But those emotions hadn't been at the forefront of his thoughts before the shooting. He'd been biding his time in the men's room of Cachet, letting Simon Petrocelli think he was truly debating the man's offer of protection from Brian Sumner. He'd thought for sure he had the man in the palm of his hand. He'd swung open the door, ready to return to the table and give Petrocelli his answer.

It'd been hard not to smile with the victory, Matt recalled. This was a step the FBI had been striving to achieve for years. They finally had an in. Confident in success, he'd seen the gunman on the other side of the door too late and had barely missed a bullet in the chest. The shot had cut across the top of his shoulder, barely slowed by his suit jacket. The shooter had sped away through the service entrance.

Matt wondered if being too cocky is what had screwed him. Cachet was an upscale restaurant, but he knew that didn't preclude murder attempts. Hadn't he even thought to himself that the décor would hide blood well? That should have been his first clue to be extra diligent. His gut had been trying to warn him and he hadn't listened. Thankfully his survivor instincts took over in time to keep him from getting killed.

But it was raw emotion that swamped him as he lay sprawled against the wall in the hallway outside the restroom, bleeding like a stuck pig. His new suit, bought hours before, was wet with blood, though the dark material hid the red stain well. A chunk gouged from the shoulder pad showed how close he'd come to death. Sulfuric scent of gunpowder merged with the rusty stench of blood. He'd broken out in a sweat.



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Thought processes ground to a halt. All he could think about was Allie Quinn. Was she safe or a target as well?

Relief had poured through him when she darted into the hall, Petrocelli on her heels. She'd skidded to the floor next to him. Matt never wanted her to leave, was actually afraid to have her do so. He didn't think about the mission. He didn't think about the years he'd already invested working undercover to get this far. He didn't encourage Allie to take the opening and leave with Petrocelli, despite the fact doing so had been their goal. Only one thought was prevalent—*don't leave me*. She didn't.

At least they'd suffered the explosion from their supervisors together. Thanks to Allie, they were also back on track. Using what he presumed was Simon Petrocelli's attraction to her—which bothered Matt a lot—she'd called and asked for his protection for the two of them. Petrocelli would be sending someone to pick them up mid-morning. Matt was far from elated over the prospect.

He glanced down at the woman curled under his uninjured right arm. Allie's left hand rested on the plane of his chest. Every once in a while he could feel her eyelashes against his skin when she blinked. Her long, golden brown hair spread over them both like a silk sheet. One leg draped over his tied them further together. Matt had monitored her breathing, thinking she'd fall asleep. She hadn't. She just lay in his arms, most probably letting her mind puzzle through things as his did.

Allie hadn't said a word since their bosses left two hours

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before; neither had Matt. Both Bob James and Herb Walker had spent the hour before that railing at Matt and Allie's incompetence—hers mostly. They blamed her for not leaving with Petrocelli when the man offered. Then Bob had had the nerve to out their feelings, sneering the word “love” like they were in grade school. It wasn't something they'd even mentioned to each other. Matt resented Bob doing so, but there wasn't a hell of a lot he could do about it. Bob and Herb were right—he and Allie had screwed up. Right now Matt wouldn't have changed a single thing they'd done...except for the whole getting shot aspect.

*However...*

Matt frowned at the ceiling. He brushed his thumb over the curve of Allie's shoulder. It helped him think, comforted him, too. Hell, for all he knew it was a subconscious act his body threw out to alert her to something he couldn't quite put into words. Something wasn't right.

He'd sensed it earlier in the day when they'd arrived in Las Vegas. Two limos met them—Simon Petrocelli's and Brian Sumner's, his initial target in this investigation. Matt had expected the move from both men. What he hadn't expected was the Sumner driver's in-your-face tactics. It was out of character for a duplicitous man like Sumner. That left Matt wondering if the second limo had come from Petrocelli, making it look like Sumner was trying to threaten Matt and Allie and use that as leverage to bring them under his wing. Worse yet, had the limo come from his own people in an attempt to help ingratiate Matt and Allie into Petrocelli's good

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graces?

Then the shooting... A hired killer would have used a silencer. A hired killer would have shot until the target was dead. There'd been that instant in time when Matt was down and the masked assassin hovered over him—black pin-striped suit, black leather gloves in the August heat, black ski mask. He had a clear shot, despite the fact the first blast alerted everyone he was there. Matt should be dead right now. But the man took off. Never tried to shoot a second time. People like Brian Sumner didn't give warnings. If he sent a man to kill, the man killed.

Suspicion swung again to Matt and Allie's people. It wouldn't be the first time they'd tried to manipulate events to their liking. After all, wasn't that how Matt and Allie had been thrown together in the first place? They'd even had them followed during their brief downtime in Hawaii. The fact he was still in the hospital instead of on his way seemed to support his conclusion. He'd needed a couple of stitches. An overnight stay wasn't necessary. Yet here he was. Bob and Herb had been here waiting for him when he arrived. A private room...also unheard of. Their own people had compromised them. They couldn't have been more apparent if they'd passed out fliers on the Strip.

Matt shifted his gaze around the small room. It was bugged. No doubt there. Which was probably why Allie hadn't said a word since their bosses had left. She knew it, too. It was time to wrest control back into their hands.

He spread his fingers over Allie's shoulder and squeezed it

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toward him. Her chin lifted with her questioning gaze. He mouthed the words, "Let's go." Without an acknowledgement of any kind, she slipped from the bed and retrieved the rest of his clothing from small table where it'd been placed earlier. Matt still wore his trousers and socks. Though ruined and blood-stained, the white shirt was better than nothing. Even in the sweltering Vegas heat, he could wear the dark jacket and hide most of it. Chances of anyone noticing at four in morning were small, especially since they'd be calling a cab from the hospital. The tricky part was going to be leaving the hospital without someone challenging them.

Matt sucked in a sharp breath when he tried to slip his arm into the sleeve. Looked like he wasn't as good to go as he'd hoped.

"Yes, baby, it does feel good, doesn't it?" Allie's sultry words covered them for any electronic eavesdroppers. Her brown eyes told her real concern.

Grabbing the dress shirt, she helped him ease it on, then followed up with a simple kiss and her hot hand splayed across his chest. He wondered if her heart was pounding as hard as his.

"You're sweating." She brushed her hand across his forehead. "Are you sure you're up to this? What if someone catches us?" Anyone listening would still be thinking sex. Damn, she was good. Beat as he was, Matt still felt his cock stirring.

"We'll just have to be extra quiet." He hoped he'd managed to sound as sexy as she did. He squeezed his fingers

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around hers.

A simultaneous nod got them moving again.

Matt braced himself on her shoulder as he shoved his feet into his shoes. She pulled the suit jacket over first one arm and then the other. He patted the pockets, while she ran a comb through his hair, then did the same for hers. Everything for his alter ego of Matteo Lombardi was still there—identification and cell phone.

He passed a gaze down Allie. The blue silk dress was a little crumpled—cuddling two hours in a bed did that to silk—but she still looked drop-dead gorgeous. She hooked her high heels over her fingers and swung open the door. Matt's rubber soles muffled his steps. Across the threshold, they swiveled their heads toward the stairwell exit and then toward the elevator beyond the nurse's station. Either way they risked discovery, but on the stairs they wouldn't be challenged.

They moved in that direction. Their instincts were honed and locked onto each other. This was what he'd liked about Allie from that first moment they met. They played off each other to perfection, instinctively knowing how to act, what to say and do. He never realized a partner would fit him so well, that a woman would meld into his life so sweetly. Matt couldn't get enough of her. She'd said it best—he couldn't breathe without her, couldn't think without her by his side, couldn't imagine one minute of his life without her in it. She made him hard with a look, a glance, a sigh. One touch of her hand, her lips, her body pressed to his sent fire scorching through his blood. And the last thing—the very last thing—he

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wanted was to watch another man's hands on her.

But there was that nasty little business of completing the mission. He'd spent two years undercover investigating Brian Sumner. That had led him to the presumably bigger fish, Simon Petrocelli. They were caught between a rock and a hard place. A very hard place. A place that got harder with every...

Allie eased open the exit door with one hand, while she tugged on her heels with the other. No other sound reached them.

"There's a fast food place next door," she said as they trotted down the stairs.

Each jolt reminded him of his injury. The local they'd given him had worn off some time ago.

"I saw it from the window," she went on. "There's a pay phone. I'll call the cab from there. I don't want to risk using the cells yet. You know they're monitoring us."

"At this point I wouldn't put it past them to have a sniper on a nearby roof waiting to pick us off."

"No, they need us now that Petrocelli's taking us in."

Matt grunted. "What did he say when you offered yourself to him in exchange for our safety?"

Allie kept her gaze focused on the steps. "He said it was an intriguing trade. He made his intentions fairly clear at dinner tonight."

Job or not, the fact Petrocelli had put the moves on his woman—yeah, *his* woman—while Matt was in the men's room pissed him off.

"He'll expect to sleep with me," she said.

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"I know. And I know we have a job to do. That doesn't mean I have to like it. In fact, just the thought of him looking at you, much less touching you makes me want to..." He clenched his teeth along with his fist.

Allie glanced his way.

Somehow Matt managed a smirk. "Yeah, who knew. Guess I'm a real man after all."

She grabbed his sleeve and pulled him to a stop. "I never doubted that for a minute."

Matt cupped her head, stabbing his fingers deep into her thick hair. She rose on tiptoe, lips parted for his kiss.

"God, I want to shove you up against the wall and fuck you hard, just like that first time," he said on a groan.

Allie swooped her hands around his torso and spanned them against his back. "If you can fuck me like that with a hurt shoulder, you'd be beyond a real man."

He kissed her then, hard, deep, twisting his tongue with hers until neither of them could catch their breath. He needed this...her. Needed to feel, to celebrate that he was still alive. The animal male in him broke through the surface of reality, demanding he take, he claim her. He wanted his scent soaked into her pores so no other man would dare touch her.

He yanked his head up on a gasp, clutching hers to his chest. "I swear to God, if we get out of this alive—"

"No." Allie snapped upright and pressed her fingertips to his mouth. "Don't say it. We both know it's there. We have to get this done first. Whatever it takes."

He slipped her hand away. "Whatever it takes." Matt still

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didn't like it one bit. But he also knew they'd never forgive themselves if they let love get in the way of their mission. If they did, at some point down the line it would haunt them and destroy that love.

*Anything to stay alive. Anything to finish the job.* It was the creed they both had lived by, survived by. A real man would remember that. A special agent working undercover wouldn't have forgotten it.

A noise from farther up the stairwell spurred them back into motion.



## CHAPTER 2

Heat and humidity slammed into Allie as they stepped into the Vegas night. Out of breath from hurrying down the stairs, the sudden change made it difficult to breathe. She thought she was in peak physical condition, too—daily workouts and jogging. But this was beyond ridiculous. Sweat trickled along her spine, between her breasts, and pooled in her already damp crotch. She didn't know how Matt stood it in a suit. He had to feel like he was in a sauna.

At least her libido had cooled to a simmer from a full boil. Matt did that to her—could make her crave him with a word. When he went all alpha male on her, she was lost. He could strip her naked and fuck her in the middle of Las Vegas

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Boulevard and she'd let him. She loved how well they meshed—physically and intellectually. Their minds felt joined in a single unit, and their bodies...

There went her libido again. Her cunt clenched at the thought of him inside her, loving her slow and sweet or hard and fast. Her body locked tight with his, as if they'd once been a single mold. She loved how he felt in her, on her, near her. Loved those dark brown eyes of his that could spark with humor, turn introspective as he puzzled through an issue, or hardened to cold stone when he slipped into his Matteo Lombardi persona. Allie thought she'd been living before she met him. She didn't have a clue. This—*he*—was living.

How in the hell was she going to pull off this part of the undercover job? How could she let another man touch her when all she wanted was Matt?

They were in deep—in more ways than one. Allie didn't know what good it did to stop Matt from uttering the "L" word. They both knew love was there and growing stronger each second. But she liked to think she knew herself well enough—and him, too, for that matter—to know talking about commitment and future plans after this was over would screw them. They'd be too focused on the latter when they needed to stay locked on now. And who knew? What they were about to do could wind up sealing their fate—also in more ways than one. Special agents could overlook anything the other did on the job. But a couple? It'd take one hell of a man to overlook what she was going to have to do. While she'd like to think Matt was that man, Allie knew dwelling on it could get them

killed.

“Pay phone’s over there.” She pointed to the booth at the fast food place across the street—some Mexican place called Gaucho’s, whose sign boasted it was “open 24 hours for a 24-hour town.”

A black limo cut across their path before they could step from the curb. Matt’s muttered, “Fuck” said it all. She’d expected the FBI to have a surreptitious guard posted at the hospital, but she hadn’t counted on Petrocelli laying in wait. He wasn’t supposed to pick them up until mid-morning—their previously arranged time.

The limo eased to a stop in front of them. A chauffeur in full regalia popped out and marched to the rear door, swinging it open.

“Do come in, Mr. Lombardi...Miss Shaw.” Simon Petrocelli’s voice held a hint of humor in it. He had the upper hand and they all knew it. Playing along was the best option—the only option. Still, Allie waited until Matt’s hand against her lower back urged her forward.

Ducking, she slid onto the plush leather seat...and nearly fell back out into Matt when she saw who flanked Petrocelli—their bosses. Matt must have felt her start. Strong fingers wrapped around her arm, ready to yank her to safety. His tension eased a second later when he saw Bob James and Herb Walker sitting there. They looked like bookends—two bald bookends, one black, the other white. And neither appeared very happy, although their body language didn’t seem to indicate they were here under duress. They merely looked

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pissed.

Gaze locked to the trio on the seat, Matt settled beside her. The door closed them in.

“Airport now, Mr. Petrocelli?” the chauffeur asked from the intercom at the driver’s seat.

The man pressed a button on a console above his head. “Yes, please.”

“What about our stuff?” Matt’s voice held that edge she associated with Matteo Lombardi. She shifted her own demeanor into that of Samantha Shaw, crossing one leg over the other.

“I took the liberty of packing for you.” Petrocelli’s brown eyes sparkled. Victorious over his coup? “It was, after all, my suite.”

One he’d given to them upon their arrival in Las Vegas. They’d taken it, knowing he’d be watching every move they made.

“And please...don’t cut off the promise of a lovely view.” His hot hand curled over her knee to part her legs.

Matt clamped his hand over his wrist. “Have a little respect...*sir*.” The last word fell hard from his lips.

Petrocelli merely laughed and leaned back. “For a whore?”

“Stop.” The order came from her boss. Herb glared at him. “Could we just get on with this?”

The other man shrugged. “I told you they’d haul ass out of there. You could at least do me the courtesy of admitting I was right.”

“Fine,” Bob snapped. “You were right and we were wrong.

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Happy?"

"Immensely." Petrocelli smiled.

"What the fuck is this all about?" Matt demanded to know.

Something shifted in the older man, as if a façade of his own dropped away. Allie studied him, trying to pinpoint exactly what had changed. He was a striking man—early forties, gray peppering his black hair, fine lines crinkling around his eyes. Eyes that laughed a lot and missed nothing. Eyes a lot like Matt's.

"He's with us," Herb mumbled.

"Formerly...I'm sort of...retired," Petrocelli said, that smile still blindingly bright. "I still do specialized work from time to time. Because of my connections and social standing, I can get into places normally not accessible to others."

Allie resisted stating the obvious—that it would be helpful if all their little subdivisions talked to one another about their respective cases. But that was asking the impossible as bogged down in investigations as they were.

"You're both very good, by the way." He gave a nod to Matt. "I actually never made you. Although I should've been suspicious when you refused to come work for me. No one is that loyal." His gaze shifted back to Allie. "And I wouldn't have taken you for FBI either, if it weren't for Eva Kidwell's allegations."

If Allie ever got her hands on the bitch, she'd probably strangle her. The woman had wanted revenge on her husband and had decided to take no prisoners. She'd outed her husband as an undercover agent and Allie as well. Fortunately, Matt's

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quick thinking and Allie's response to that had saved their lives and the mission. Though the world thought Gordie and Eva Kidwell had been killed, it gave Allie some perverse pleasure to know both were hidden in a safe house somewhere—most probably still making each other's life a living hell.

"However," Petrocelli went on, "I might have gotten suspicious when you didn't take me up on my original offer. Most call girls wouldn't have passed up the chance to enrich themselves. I still couldn't be sure. So I took the wineglasses from the dinner table and had the prints run through our system. Naturally, both of you came up. I was surprised. Kudos to you, Special Agent Oliver."

"Did you have me shot?" Matt asked.

"Relax...it was only a flesh wound."

"Yeah...but it was my flesh."

Petrocelli had the decency to look away. "I was trying to get to your partner. If she was really an undercover agent, I needed to know. You were never in any danger of being seriously hurt. I figured she'd go where you went, whether she was a call girl or an agent. As a call girl, she'd hang on to her meal ticket, or as an agent, she'd stick to you like glue to finish her case. I figured if you thought Sumner tried to have you killed, you'd come to me. Correct?"

Matt's smile was token. "Kudos to *you*. Now...why?"

"As we all know, Special Agent Quinn is a very good distraction. What man wouldn't want to be with her after the performances you two have given?"

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Allie felt her cheeks heat. Years from now she'd become an urban legend within the FBI—the female special agent with a penchant for exhibitionism, public sex, bondage, and discipline. With the exception of Matt, everyone seemed to be losing sight of two things. One, initially it was do all that or be killed. Two, from that point on, it was her and Matt, working and playing together. She'd be so glad to finish this investigation and get back to regular undercover assignments...if those were going to exist after this.

"I wanted her...and subsequently you...to help distract Sumner while I searched his house," Petrocelli said.

Matt stretched his long legs across the distance that separated them. "The agency has already done that."

A long sigh sagged the other man's shoulders. "And from what I understand, didn't find a lot. What I'm looking for would have been moved the second Sumner was arrested."

"Satellite imaging—"

"There are passages tunneled beneath the estate. Perfect for smuggling things in and out."

Allie watched Matt's jaw clench, facial muscles flexing from his effort to hold his temper.

"Don't beat yourself up about it." Petrocelli sounded sincere in his attempt to soothe his professional pride. "You were with Sumner for two years, and you did uncover quite a few of his secrets. However, he never would've made one of his men privy to certain aspects of his business. I, on the other hand, was someone with whom he wanted to do business. I have a reputation for being thorough before I make

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transactions.

“In this particular event, a smart buyer would want to make sure he wasn’t tainted by illegalities. I insisted on seeing everything before I finalized the deal. I’d been working into his confidence a little longer than you had.”

The unspoken statement was that the conflicting investigation had sabotaged Petrocelli’s efforts.

“What are we talking about here?” Matt asked.

“Black marketing in archaeological artifacts and antiquities. He moves them in and out through underground passages beneath his estate—which have been there since before the Revolutionary War. At some point during the fifties they were converted into bomb shelters. Sumner hosts meetings on occasion for interested buyers.”

Allie found herself nodding. Matt had indicated he thought Petrocelli had something on Sumner and others that kept them in line. This would be a big something. She uncrossed her legs and leaned forward, forearms propped on her knees. “So what you’re saying is you have the names of other buyers, dates of meetings and transactions, but what you don’t have—”

“Are the artifacts to back it all up,” Matt finished for her.

“Exactly. Money has changed hands. Buyers expected delivery. Now they’re running scared, praying nothing ties them to Sumner. He’s promised a quiet refund of the money to each individual, but asked for time so it wouldn’t draw suspicion. He needs the money to pay off the people who supplied him with product, but he can’t move anything and risk detection. He’s having to dig deep.



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"I'm going to try to convince him that he can still trust me. If I can do that, he'll complete the transaction and I'll have the final piece of evidence I need."

Matt smiled. "And what better way to do that than to return to New York with one of Sumner's most trusted men. One you thoughtfully saved from an assassin."

Petrocelli's grin matched his. "You played on his insecurities well. He'll think someone was trying to frame him, or kill you as a warning to him. Again, my apologies, but you would've done the same thing to me."

He laughed. "Yeah...I would have."

They were doing a fine job of praising one another, but... "This is all very fine and well, but where do I fit into the equation? Sumner still suspects I'm an undercover agent."

"That won't be an issue when he sees you're with both of us now." At least Petrocelli had the decency not to smirk when he said that.

Matt snorted. "I wouldn't share her with him or any of the others. What makes you think he'll believe we're now having a little ménage?"

"I saved you both. You're very grateful," he calmly replied.

"Hmph." Matt parked his arms over his chest. "I'm being to feel like the agency whore."

"That makes two of us." She mirrored his position and stared out the window.

"I presume Sumner's surveillance system is still intact?" Matt asked his boss.

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“We thought it best to let him think we hadn’t found it,” Bob James replied. “He’ll be more inclined to act naturally and that’ll eventually garner us more evidence.”

He’d be able to watch their every move...again. There didn’t seem to be much choice but to play this to the hilt, just as she and Matt had done on the train, and in the suite for what they’d hoped was bait to catch Petrocelli—a man who didn’t need catching after all.

Matt laughed, but there was no humor in it. “There’s no surveillance system in the library. Is that where the entrance is to these passages?”

“Yes,” Petrocelli replied. “Behind the bar.”

“Time’s short. We’ll be at the airport any minute. Are you in or out?” Herb demanded to know.

“Like we really have a choice? In,” she snapped. “But this is my last undercover assignment.” She’d been manipulated enough.

“Matt?” Bob asked.

His response was slow coming. “In.”

## CHAPTER 3

Matt didn't trust himself to speak. It wasn't that Allie agreed to this arrangement. They'd thought for hours that, at some point, she might have to have sex with Simon Petrocelli. He'd accepted that.

Okay...maybe he hadn't accepted it. The very idea of another man touching her festered under his skin. But he had accepted the fact that they had a job to do and knew he had to suck it up. So in that respect nothing had changed. Yes, Petrocelli was really on their team as opposed to being a suspect. *That* had changed. And before Petrocelli had lobbed his plan in their laps, Matt was actually pleased his original assessment of the man had been correct—that Petrocelli

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shouldn't be lumped in with the Brian Sumners of the world. So in that respect Allie wouldn't be consorting with scum of the earth.

No. What bothered him...what stuck in his craw the most was...

She'd agreed too quickly. It cut his male pride down to the quick. Sure they had a job to do, but couldn't she have hesitated a second or two? Granted Petrocelli was an attractive man. He doubted many women refused him.

Matt knew he sounded like a jealous teenager, but he couldn't help it. Though he didn't like the idea of Allie sleeping with Petrocelli when they thought he was on the opposite side of the law, the man wasn't a personal threat to Matt then. Now he was. He was on their side, one of the good guys. And there was the very real possibility the man would wind up taking Allie from him. She obviously wanted him. Why else would she have said yes so goddamned quickly?

He sucked in a hard breath in a poor attempt to rein in his raw emotions. The limo was pulling into a white hangar at a private airfield adjacent to McCarran International Airport. Petrocelli's jet sat there, doors open, steps down. The pilot and co-pilot were in the cockpit doing their pre-flight check, while a maintenance man in a blue jumpsuit looked over the exterior. The chauffeur gave the jet a wide berth and parked the limo in the far corner of the hangar. Matt waited until the vehicle stopped, then shouldered open the door, stepped out, and extended his hand to Allie.

Cool fingers clutched his. There was a too-long look at her

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thighs when her dress rode up as she scooted over the seat. He gauged Petrocelli's reaction—none. Matt couldn't say the same for himself. But then Allie didn't have to do much to get him hard. She didn't have to do anything at all, just be. That, coupled with his need to prove he was the better man, boiled his blood like nothing had before. He wanted to lift her dress and fuck her hard and fast up against the car, down on all fours, sprawled on the floor of the plane—anyway and anywhere—like some jungle man gone berserk. He felt crazed, panicked, on the verge of being out of control. In some primal corner of his mind, he saw himself with chest out-thrust, bumping against Petrocelli's to assert his domination, his right to fuck Allie. It was followed quickly by the outrageous image of dueling cocks.

Petrocelli unfolded himself from the limo. Herb and Bob were right behind him.

"The aircraft is divided into four interior sections." He motioned them onward with a sweep of his arm. "Cockpit, seating, galley and lavatory, then another more intimate seating area with a sofa, seats, and tables. You'll be able to change into something more comfortable there," he told Matt and Allie. "Every seat is a sleeper seat. We all know what a treat that can be on a long flight. Please help yourselves to anything in the galley. Once we're airborne, I'll put on a pot of coffee."

He cut ahead of them and hurried onto the jet.

Matt took the lead and whirled around on Herb and Bob. "When did you two know?"

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Bob closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. “After we left the hospital. Once your fingerprints and files were accessed, shit rolled downhill fast. We were going to brief you when Simon picked you two up at the originally scheduled time. He said you’d leave the hospital the first chance you got.”

“Looks like he was right.” Allie threaded her arm through Matt’s and tugged him toward the jet. He didn’t argue.

Petrocelli was chatting up the pilots when they stepped onboard. Matt steered Allie right, through the galley and primary seating and on to the section in back. What looked like a white pine veneer covered the bottom half of the curved walls; the upper portion was off-white. Sleeper seats were the color of caramel candy and passengers didn’t lack for room...or comfort as the last section proved. A sofa long enough to stretch out on hugged one wall. Anchored tables of faux black marble flanked it. Lamps were built into those. On the opposite wall were two groupings of four seats—two facing two with a table between.

The elegance was something Matt had come to associate with Petrocelli. The man exuded class. It’d been hard to believe someone of his apparent caliber could be mixed up with Brian Sumner. The picture didn’t fit. At least his instincts had been right about that.

“Our suitcases are already here,” Allie said. “Think we’ll have time to change before we take off?”

Their small carry-ons were stowed under the tables. “I don’t know.” Matt hooked his finger on the latch of the sliding

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door, intending to give them privacy.

Petrocelli's head jerked up. "We'll be leaving soon. Safety regulations require the door to be open and you to be in your seats."

He smacked the door closed anyway and stared a hole through it. Where were those instincts now? Swallowed up by emotions so intense he couldn't think straight.

Allie pressed against his back and hugged her arms tight around his torso. "God, I don't know how I'm going to do this."

He laced his fingers over hers. "Then why did you say yes?"

"What other choice is there? I don't like it, but the job has to be finished. Simon has as much time devoted to his investigation as you do. More, in fact. Don't you want to get Sumner for everything he's done?"

*So now she's calling him Simon?*

"The hell of it is...if this had been ten days ago, it wouldn't have mattered. Ten days ago I didn't know you, I didn't feel—"

Matt turned on a groan. He felt like he'd been in a high-speed blender that had suddenly stopped. Love, need, rose to the surface, leaving him close to tears—something he'd thought he'd hardened his heart to long ago. Shutting his eyes to keep the tears at bay, he cupped Allie's face and slanted his mouth over hers. She arched into him, clutching his back as if he were her lifeline. God knew she was his.

A whimper squeezed from her as she twined her tongue

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with his. He sank one hand deep in her hair and swooped the other to her lower back, deepening the kiss, making it harder, more demanding. And it wasn't enough. It'd never be enough, not in a million years.

Matt lifted her to her toes, wincing at the pull to the stitches in his shoulder. Sensing it, Allie tried to break their kiss. He grunted and tugged her tighter, maneuvering them toward the sofa, while he bunched up her dress in his fist. Sure fingers popped open his fly button, then raked down the zipper. He sucked in a breath, mouth freezing on hers when she plunged her hands into his shorts and yanked down them with his trousers to free his cock. He grabbed the back of her satiny panties and pulled them down her thighs as they fell to the sofa. Allie tugged one leg free and tossed both around his hips. A hard plunge seated him deep.

He yanked up his head, clenching his teeth against the premature rush. "Baby, be still," he managed to say.

Allie flicked her tongue over the stubble of whiskers on his chin. "How can I when I want you so much, when I lo—"

He cut off the declaration with another penetrating kiss and pounded his cock into her hard and fast. The sound of the door sliding open shattered the moment and brought his imminent orgasm to a screeching halt. His throbbing cock stayed embedded in Allie's furnace.

Matt shot a glare over his shoulder. Petrocelli blocked anyone's view from the outer cabin and shut the door behind him.

"Don't let me stop you," he said in a soft voice. "I'd fuck



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my own grandmother to catch Sumner, but my intent with you two is merely to watch.” He glanced at Allie. “You like to be watched, don’t you?”

Her cunt muscles clenched around his cock. His balls tightened. A shudder rippled through him. Allie did like the thrill of knowing she was being watched, liked the excitement of knowing she was caught.

“I mean it,” Petrocelli said. “There might come a point where I’d have to become more involved, but I’d really prefer not to interfere with your newfound relationship. Been there, had that done to me. I won’t do it to another couple unless it’s absolutely necessary.” He added a smile. “Or unless I’m invited. I want to spend this flight with us getting comfortable with one another. We’ll stand a greater chance of convincing Sumner I’m the voyeur and you’re my entertainment that way.”

“And what do you intend to do about that?” Allie jerked her chin toward the thick ridge of cock straining in his trousers.

“I didn’t say I wouldn’t get off on it.” He shoved his hand in his trouser pocket, fished out a condom, then zipped down. A full and substantial erection fell free.

Allie’s breath hitched. Matt couldn’t blame her.

“I’m sure you’ll agree it’s only fair. I’ll take care of me.” He rolled the condom in place. “And...try to call me Simon, not Petrocelli. It’ll help our cover immensely.” He looped his fist around his penis. “Now...continue...please.”

The last of Matt’s jealousy dissolved. It was a job, like all

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the others they'd all done. That took precedence over everything else, even he and Allie falling in love. Allie had made her emotions clear. Matt wouldn't forget that again. Petro...Simon made his priorities clear, too. Matt wouldn't forget that either. How could he when it was something he would've done himself?

Simon was right. This was the only "in" for all of them. They had to get comfortable. Nothing they did should raise a red flag with Sumner. The slightest hint of a lie would have them staring down the barrel of a .38.

Staring at Simon, Matt pivoted into Allie's pussy. Her gasp pulled his attention her way. A gush of wetness surrounded his cock. He'd never met a more uninhibited woman. He supposed she might say something similar of him. Lips parted, she looked at him through lust-shrouded eyes.

Matt peeled her arms from around his torso. Grasping her wrists, he held them over her head...and fucked like he'd wanted—hard, deep, fast. She dug her heels into his ass, riding him all the way. From the corner of his eye, he watched Simon stroke his cock. The engines started, drowning out their soft moans. The jet taxied toward the runway. He thought of it thrusting skyward and beat into her even faster. His dick was harder than ever. So hard Matt swore it might split in two before he could come. Simon's hand was a blur, matching his rhythm. And suddenly Matt realized what they needed, what he wanted for all of them.

He yanked free of Allie. Before she could protest, he sprawled her over his lap, facing Simon. "Show him your

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pussy, baby. Let him see you come.”

Allie groaned and parted her legs. Simon’s eyes dilated. He tightened his hand around his cock. Matt knew that action very well—he was fighting to stop an orgasm.

Matt wrapped one arm around her waist, fisting her dress away to clear the view. “Play with your tits for us, sweetheart.” He sliced down her zipper and shoved the material from her shoulders, taking her bra straps with it.

She cupped her hands around her breasts, alternately kneading the flesh and tweaking her nipples. They elongated into hard points. Simon licked his lips. Eyes glazed with want.

Matt dove his free hand to her clit. It was swollen and slick. She cried out with the contact, splaying her thighs wide. He shoved three fingers into her cunt and rubbed the heel of his hand against her clit. She thrashed against him, riding his hand as hard as he’d ridden her minutes ago, while he humped his cock into her back. Orgasm exploded through her. He lightly pinched her clit, jacking it off like a tiny penis. Then he shifted her upward and impaled her on his cock. He fucked her like a madman, watching the blur of Simon’s hand as he pounded his erection. Another climax rolled through her, squeezing him hard. The mingled groans of her and Simon coming hauled him over the edge. Matt exploded into her.

Hard pants filled the cabin. The pilot’s warning to prepare for takeoff cut through their haze.

Simon hurried to the small lavatory at the rear to wash up, while Matt and Allie quickly readjusted their clothes. There was no time to change now. Matt quickly visited the lav when

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Simon came back. He barely had time to wash his hands before the plane started its run to the sky. He buckled into his seat the second the wheels left ground.

Allie laced her fingers through his, staring out the window as Las Vegas grew more distant below them. "Another city checked off on the Matt and Allie whirlwind tour of the United States. I'm beginning to wonder if I'm destined to not spend more than forty-eight hours in any city outside of New York."

"Let's hope that holds true for our stay with Brian Sumner," Simon replied. "I want this job done quickly. I want it to end."

"You and me both," Matt and Allie replied together.

"So...are we all good to go here?" he asked.

Allie nailed Simon in place with a no-nonsense stare. "Matt and I know our jobs. We might not like what's required, but we'll do what it takes. If this fails, it won't be through any fault of ours."

With that remark, she unsnapped her seatbelt and reached behind her. Her dress sagged. She peeled it down and dropped it to the table between them in a puddle of blue silk. Her bra quickly followed.

## CHAPTER 4

Allie wondered if either of the men knew how much she was shaking inside. It was all she could do to not cross her arms over her naked body to hide it from Simon's appraising gaze. *This* was what she had to get beyond. Funny to think she was turned on by public sex and exhibitionism, yet this intimate setting pushed all her shy buttons. She wondered if that was because Simon was more than just a voyeur—the possibility of sex with both men was very real. In the past, her audience had never participated. They were strangers. She liked teasing them with what they couldn't have. And Matt liked her doing so. But this?

She'd be lying if she said the concept didn't intrigue her as

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much as it unnerved her. Under normal circumstances she would take a giant step away from the prospect. None of them had that option if they were going to complete this assignment and get out alive. That meant she had to push herself beyond the shyness. She had to be comfortable being nude in front of Simon and vice versa. She had to accustom herself to his touch, his kiss, his body. No flinching allowed.

She briefly considered laying out a list of no-nos for him—no kissing, no making her come, no fucking her face-to-face, no spanking her. But she knew putting restrictions in place would tell on them. They had to be ready for anything and everything.

“I’m waiting for you to join me, gentlemen.” She glanced from Matt to Simon. “Time to get...comfortable.”

Neither hesitated, but they also didn’t rip off their clothing in wild abandon. That made her feel better—they were a little nervous, too. Five hours of sitting around naked and filtering in sex should take care of that.

Allie caught Matt’s slight wince when he removed his jacket and shirt. The skin around the stitches on his shoulder was red and a little swollen. She trusted him to say something if it was going to be a problem. Matt was a big boy. A very big boy, she amended when he was finally naked in all his glory. An erection had already started to bloom.

She glanced at their new partner. Simon could be proud of himself, too. His long cock was at full staff. Dark hair sprinkled with a few gray strands arrowed down his muscled torso, straight to the big prize. Here was a man who took good

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care of his body...a prime example of what Matt would look like in the years to come.

"You watched us having sex in your suite?" she asked.

Both cocks lifted a degree more. Allie tried not to smile. *Oh, the power.* It was quite a rush to her libido.

"I did. The two of you make it impossible not to watch," he replied. "Was all the spanking and bondage for show, or is that normal for you?"

Matt grinned. "Normal."

Simon smiled. "I like a woman who can take a good spanking."

Matt frowned. "Make sure you don't like it too much."

He tilted a nod his way. "Understood, accepted, and respected."

"Is the suite yours?" Matt asked. "Or does it belong to the agency?"

"The suite is mine. The surveillance equipment belongs to the agency."

"Obviously your division has a bigger budget than mine."

He shrugged a shoulder. "Not my call. I just do what they ask."

"Even though you're retired," Matt countered. "When was that?"

"Ten years ago. And I didn't actually retire, I resigned."

"Why?"

The expression on Simon's face sobered. He obviously recognized an interrogation. "My father's heart started to fail. He was worried about me. I was worried about him. I wanted

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to spend what little time he had left with him. I took over his business. He died the following year. I don't regret my choice."

"And yet you continue to work for them on the side."

Again, he shrugged. "With my wealth and social standing, I was in a unique position to get where others couldn't. Why not?"

Allie could appreciate that, but she sure didn't want to be doing undercover work ten years down the line. She didn't want to be doing it ten months down the line. Enough was enough. She was burned out and ready to move on with her life—a life she'd like to share with Matt.

"Bullshit," Matt countered.

Simon laughed. "Okay...you caught me. I met a woman, thought it was love. It didn't work out."

"Through no fault of your own, I'm sure," Allie said.

His smile looked sad. "Through every fault of my own. I was more focused on my work than I was on her. She said that if it wasn't one job, it was the other. That she'd always be second...or third. I didn't realize she was right until it was too late. I asked for a second chance and was told it would be more like a fifth chance. She finally left. I got pissed and needed an outlet. So I called the agency for side work. But the part about my dad was true."

"And is that a choice you regret? The woman?" Allie asked.

"More so every day, since it proved her point. It was always the job, whatever job that was," Simon replied. "You



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two aren't the only ones who want this to be the last assignment." He followed up with a more sincere smile, one that reached the depths of his brown eyes. "So now you know I'm human after all."

Matt snickered. "And still a liar. I'd like the whole truth from you."

Simon's erection deflated. "I thought we were doing sex, not story time." He glanced out the window. "Emily and I met twelve years ago. I was working undercover assignments; she'd just received her doctorate in archaeology. We were more or less content until I was given a six-month assignment. When I got back, she was six months pregnant with our son, scared to death I'd been killed, and had a colleague of hers sniffing around her, sowing more seeds of doubt. I quit the bureau and we moved to Vegas. My father's health was failing and I had to devote a lot of time to not only learning the business, but keeping it running. The hours made for strain in our marriage.

"Just when I thought we'd worked things through, I got called into an emergency at work. Emily was furious and I can't say I blame her. Someone else could've handled it. She took the children and went back to the museum to continue cataloging a new shipment of artifacts."

"The same artifacts now in Sumner's possession," Matt surmised.

Simon nodded. "There was a break-in. Emily wasn't supposed to have been there. She and the kids... The thieves were directed to leave no witnesses. How the hell could they

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honestly believe a three-year-old and five-year-old could identify them? Emily came near to death as well. She lost the baby she carried, too.”

“How did you learn it was Sumner?” Allie quietly asked.

“Phone logs were the first clue. We took it from there. Emily was furious I was working for the bureau again. She left me the minute she found out. Brian Sumner ruined my life that night. I won’t rest until I see his ruined, too.”

Shock muted Allie. They sat there for God-only-knew how long, naked, lost in their individual thoughts over the horror Simon had suffered at Sumner’s hands. Finally, Simon offered the semblance of a smile.

“See? Human. Now let’s see if we can keep that from interfering,” he said. “Perhaps we should set some rules.”

“No,” Allie said. “This has to be natural or we’ll be made in an instant. I’d like to do whatever we can now to get beyond any awkwardness. No discussion before or after. No restrictions. Let’s just do this.”

“You lead...I’ll follow.”

Goose bumps leaped to life when Matt brushed his hand up the inside of her thigh. “The ball’s in your court now, honey.”

Allie smirked. “Yes, but whose?”

Soft laughter eased any residual tension. Standing, she took Matt’s hand and reached for Simon’s, then led them to the sofa. A pocket of turbulence staggered them. They fell in a tangle of arms and legs short of her goal, with Allie wedged protectively between the two men. With every throb of the

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cocks against her stomach and back, the forbidden pumped fire through her veins. She faced Simon. His penis dripped pre-cum into her navel. Behind her, Matt's tucked in between her butt cheeks. Her pussy cream soaked her thighs.

"Condoms." Her voice cut through the haze of lust engulfing them.

"I'll get them." Simon eased away and pushed to his feet, returning seconds later with two condoms.

Allie touched his forearm as she came to her knees. "Just so we're clear. Condom always for you. Matt at his discretion, depending on the nature of the act."

"Understood."

He placed one in Matt's outstretched palm. She quivered in anticipation of what that meant, what they were about to do. She'd toyed with the fantasy a thousand times, even used it to get off a time or two...or ten or twenty.

Allie waited impatiently until they ripped the packages open, then pushed Simon toward the sofa. As he sat, she nudged her body between his knees. The condom covered the crown of his dick like a helmet. She looped her thumb and forefinger over the ring of rubber and pulled it down as she covered her mouth around the tip.

"God, your mouth is hot!" he gasped out, hips lifting off the cushion.

She smiled to herself. Yes...sexual power...her own little aphrodisiac. Eyes closed, she sucked him deep.

"Her pussy's even hotter." Matt's reply whispered against her ear, so soft she doubted Simon heard.

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Long fingers dove into her heat. She groaned around the mouthful of cock and pushed against Matt's hand. He rewarded her with a thumb up her ass. Allie's vaginal muscles clenched. She knew what she wanted, needed. And—God, help her—she was going to get it.

She yanked up her head and crawled over Simon. He spanned his hands over her ribs as he stretched out, lips automatically seeking her nipples. Matt's fingers never left her crotch. He followed the shift in positions, rubbing hard circles over her clit, smearing her juices everywhere as they moved together like they'd done this a thousand times.

Allie didn't hesitate. Straddling Simon's hips, she grabbed his cock and guided it into her cunt. He seated it deep with a hard thrust that had her gasping for breath. Before she could regain it, she felt Matt probing at her anal passage. Her body quivered with anticipation. Soft whimpers drifted from her throat. Simon suckled one breast, then the other, shooting more fire down to her clit. Matt's slow glide into her loosed a triple groan. They froze as one, each struggling to hold onto the moment a little while longer.

She'd never felt more full. Then they started to move. One mouth tugged her nipples into aching points. One hand slid against her clit. Two cocks beat into her. Her body tightened with impending orgasm. Matt moved his fingers away, rubbing hard against her labia until the feeling ebbed, only to return to tease her back to the edge once more.

Allie grunted out her frustration when he stole relief from her a second time, then a third. She thrust against the men, her

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body demanding what she couldn't find the words to say. They grew harder, spreading her wider, until she was certain there was no more room for them to expand. Heat from their cocks swelled her clit to bursting. Someone gasped. Her? One of them? She didn't know. She didn't care. Matt pressed hard. Orgasm seized her.

Their moans merged with hers as they came, too. Each thrust deep, grinding into her. She felt the jettisoned release through their condoms. They collapsed one on top of the other, poor Simon left to bear their weight.

Long moments passed where the only sound was their pants for breath over that of the jet engines. Matt moved first, easing from her body while he disposed of the spent condom before he wrapped his arm around her waist and pulled her from Simon.

"I don't know about you two, but I could really use some sleep," Matt told them.

"I won't argue that. I don't know how the hell I'm going to keep up with you two. But then"—Simon slipped his condom free, knotted the end, and tossed it into the trash receptacle beside the table—"those who can't do, watch."

Heat pooled in Allie's belly at the thought. It looked like they'd have no trouble pulling this one off. But as much as she loved an audience for her sexual escapades, one desire topped everything—to get the job done and move on with her life...with Matt.

## CHAPTER 5

Despite having slept the remainder of the flight, Matt had the headache from hell. To compound his misery, his shoulder ached and conflicting emotions still warred in his head. While he appreciated the fact that the three of them could pull off the sex thing, and that it was actually a turn-on while happening, the lingering aftereffect was still jealousy. Oh, he'd do his job to catch Sumner, but he still didn't like how they were going to do so. Even more frustrating was his inability to come up with another solution. He knew Sumner as well as Simon did. This route was the quickest way to the resolution they all wanted.

They wasted little time at JFK. Simon had chosen to land

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there rather than at a private airport nearer Sumner's home in the Hamptons for security reasons, believing higher visibility would protect them more. Once they were at Sumner's, Simon would have the jet moved to a private airport nearby so they could get away more quickly if necessary.

Matt didn't bother to debate the point. It also allowed Herb Baker and Bob James to melt into the crowd, no one the wiser the two had arrived with Simon's party. But it was all a crap shoot. Sumner had the means to make them disappear, no matter how visible they may have originally been.

Matt brushed the hair from Allie's face. She slept with her head on his lap and had been there since the limo pulled from the airport curb. It was the first time he'd seen her look tired. It wouldn't surprise him to learn she'd stayed awake during their flight, making sure all was well. Second nature, he supposed, then felt guilty it was she who'd taken the watch instead of him. He'd make it up to her when this was over—take her someplace special and give her anything she wanted.

She stretched awake and looked up at him with a sleepy smile. "Are we almost there?"

"Almost," he and Simon answered together.

Allie combed her hair back as she sat up. Her red linen blouse drew tight over her breasts. His cock stirred when two of the buttons fell open. He glanced at Simon across from them to see if the other man had noticed, but he was staring out the window, his elbow braced on the armrest. He'd dressed in brown Dockers and a tan pullover—subdued attire for someone Matt had always seen in Armani suits...recent

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nudity notwithstanding.

Matt was back to wearing black trousers and T-shirt that more or less defined him as one of Brian Sumner's men. It'd lull Sumner into thinking Matteo was still on his payroll and also give him a nice view of muscle and ass—Sumner's interests swung to both sexes.

In contrast to them, Allie looked like a burst of summer in her red linen blouse, white Capri pants, and white sandals. At some point during the flight, she'd taken the time to paint her fingernails and toenails red. He imagined himself kneeling at her feet, hands stroking the bones and muscles until she slumped in ecstasy. He'd take his time with each digit, massaging, licking, sucking, then roaming up her calf...

He sucked in a sharp breath and buttoned her blouse. His body was on overload.

Allie glanced down. "Oops." Then she kissed Matt's cheek when he handed her a hairbrush and a packet of breath strips. The Starbuck's coffee she'd grabbed at the airport was cold by now. That didn't stop her from sucking it down. She set the cup back into the holder and popped the breath strip in her mouth.

"I've been thinking." She pulled the hairbrush through her hair. "Are you certain Sumner would have had the artifacts moved?"

"That would have been the logical move," Simon replied. "But a criminal in crisis doesn't necessarily act with logic. That's why I wanted the chance to search the passage."

"There wouldn't have been a lot of time," she said. "Even



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if procedures had been set in place, those executing his orders still would have had to get some sort of conveyance to move the items. Satellite surveillance would have picked up the activity. I'm presuming these things aren't just lying around—they're packed in crates?"

"Yes." He conceded the point with a nod. "The passage threads throughout Sumner's estate with separate chambers set at intervals on either side."

Matt rubbed his chin and stared into nothingness. "If it was used during the Revolutionary War, there'd be an entrance in the house and also an exit at a presumably safe spot."

"Entrance is in Sumner's library behind the bar, as you already know. There's a panel behind that monstrous lead crystal decanter. Push and the wall there unlatches—the façade is actually a door."

"And he just let you see where this was," she said.

"No." He laughed lightly. "We were all blindfolded. I peeked. I also scouted several other entrances throughout the house, but they've been sealed with brick. The passage exits on the edge of his property in a copse of trees."

"So, it's possible the trees could have hidden any trucks from the old eye-in-the-sky," Allie said, more to herself than to them. She tucked her hairbrush into the small tote on the floor beside her.

"It's still worth a search," Simon said. "If the artifacts are still there—"

"I'll do the search," Matt interrupted. "He's already suspicious of Allie and he's going to be wary of you showing

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up with us. He's expecting you to behave like all the other investors—to stay as far away from him as possible. It appears he still trusts me, and once he learns someone shot me, he'll be falling over himself to prove it wasn't him. We'll continue to use that to our advantage along with the distraction of Allie with one or both of us."

Sumner had always been a little afraid of him. With fear came respect. Matt had no problem having his alter-ego go bad-ass on the man. But this next phase of his plan was a little harder to deal with.

"You two keep Sumner occupied. He'll be intrigued with the idea Allie's switched bed partners. He'll want to see, want proof. He likes a show, so give him one."

One by one they turned their attention to passing landscape, letting silence reign over those last miles to the Sumner estate.

\* \* \*

Allie's nerves tingled with that on-the-edge feeling she'd come to associate with undercover work. It'd become ingrained in her, thank God. It was as much a part of them all now as their DNA. That's what was going to get them through this. Well...that and Matt's and Simon's knowledge of Brian Sumner.

"If I'm going to have to smuggle anything out in my vagina, I'd prefer knowing that now."

Matt turned a grin and a wink her way. Lust fired the gleam in his eyes.

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Simon laughed. “So that’s where you hid the flash drive.”

She smiled. Every piece of information Matt had gleaned in his time with Sumner was on the little drive. Retrieval of it had been imperative. “No one was more surprised than me at Matt’s inventiveness. Had I realized that was his goal in the first place—”

“Then you’d still be enjoying your vacation in Hawaii,” Matt said.

She shrugged. “Without you? I doubt it. I didn’t realize what I was missing until...” Allie bit off the declaration. Now wasn’t the time.

He draped his arm over her shoulders and tucked her against him. “Yeah...me, too.”

Emotion choked her when he kissed her forehead. She cleared her throat and forced it to the back burner. “How’s your shoulder?”

“It aches and pulls. I’m looking forward to having Matteo Lombardi channel my sour disposition.”

His undercover persona was intimidating, such a contrast from Matt Oliver, yet still sexy as hell. She hoped he was equally impressed with her skill in portraying call girl Samantha Shaw.

Allie plucked up the collar of his T-shirt for a look at Matt’s wound—still red, but not as puffy. Resting it was a leisure he couldn’t afford right now. She made a mental note to surreptitiously monitor it for infection.

Matt lifted her chin on the crook of his finger as she gingerly replaced the material. The love reflected in his eyes

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squeezed more emotion to the surface. As his lips covered hers in a simple kiss, she fought like hell to keep from crying, from clinging to him.

Simon cleared his throat into his fist. "I'm so, so sorry we have to go this route. We'll work as fast as we can. I swear to God I won't touch her unless it's absolutely necessary. And I'll do my damndest to make sure Sumner doesn't either."

"I appreciate that." Allie eased back into her seat.

"Me, too," Matt said. "I think she scares the hell out of him because she can't be brought to heel. We can use that to our advantage. Still, he might consider it a challenge to break her. That's probably why he wanted her off the train so quickly—she threatened his control."

"As well as his operation," Simon said. "The Kidwell woman planted the seed of suspicion. Having the train stopped for a bomb threat after Allie departed had to shove it deeper."

Matt's shoulders sagged with the weight of the words. She could see the self-condemnation in his eyes for not taking that aspect into consideration. Allie hadn't thought of that either until Simon mentioned it.

She curled her fingers over his thigh. "Don't. You did the right thing. Look at it this way...Sumner will be so busy watching and worrying about me, he won't notice what you're doing behind his back. I guarantee it."

He gave her hand a squeeze. "We're here."

Allie glanced out the window. Set on five acres of lush green lawn, a U-shaped brick house held court. Six dormers punctuated the roof of the three-story structure. Four chimneys

## *A REAL MAN*

marched above those on the main house. Buildings at each point of the U also contained chimneys. Sweeping curves connected these buildings to the house.

"That's his library." Matt and Simon pointed to the right building.

"That area before it is a sunroom," Matt added.

Multi-paned windows swept the first and second floors, drawing attention to the entry portico. Three-sided bay windows dominated the left building. All in all it was an imposing building made even more impressive by the fact it had existed since the Revolutionary War.

"It's a shame such a beautiful house, with its presumably rich history, has to be tainted by the likes of Brian Sumner," she said. No matter what they accomplished by bringing the man and his criminal network down, the house would always have that blot on its record.

They received no challenge as the limo driver turned onto the brick driveway. Stone columns stood sentry, their iron gates swung open wide.

"Isn't that a tad too trusting of him?" She indicated the gates.

"Appearances for the neighbors," Matt replied. "He wants to be perceived as open and welcoming to them during the day. At night, everything is locked down. But don't let this fool you. He was told the minute the limo turned into the drive. He's probably preening his feathers right now in anticipation of who might be visiting."

"Either that or chewing his nails." Simon added a snicker.

## A REAL MAN

“Imagine his surprise when he discovers it’s us,” Allie said.

The key was keeping that element of surprise, darting in and taking the offensive before Sumner recovered. She wondered which man would take the lead on that—Matt or Simon—or if they’d work in tandem. Adrenalin surged into her bloodstream at the thought of seeing them in action, of helping them bring this man to justice. It also birthed a pulse deep in her crotch. Her body was on high alert...for anything. She crossed her legs and squeezed her thighs together to quell the ache.

Allie wondered if the men noticed the action, and, if they did, if they realized the reason for it. Lowering her eyelids, she glanced at Matt’s crotch and tamped down a smile at the erection ridging his fly. A quick look at Simon’s revealed the same. Both empowered her. She used that to yank Samantha Shaw upfront and center. *Now* she was truly ready for anything.

## CHAPTER 6

God, Matt swore he could smell the shift in Allie's demeanor to that of the call girl identity. She was primed and ready for action...whatever that entailed. Judging from Simon's hard-on, he sensed it, too. If there'd been time, Matt would have laid her out on the leather seat and fucked her good and hard...after he'd warmed her ass with one of those spankings she loved so well.

The white double doors opened as the driver pulled to the head of the drive. Sumner's British butler, Harris, stood waiting. Like all those on Sumner's payroll, the man wore black. The suit made the middle-aged man look frail. He was anything but. Matt had run into him one late night in the

## *A REAL MAN*

weight room near the pool house. Harris was ripped. He also kept to himself, never fraternizing with anyone outside his own cliquish butler realm. As far as his knowledge of what Sumner's businesses entailed, Matt suspected Harris didn't know, didn't care, or wasn't concerned enough with the ramifications to leave or say anything. Fear of death could buy a lot of loyalty.

"I understand Sumner likes to keep his men close." Allie's gaze swept the mansion and grounds. "Where do they reside?"

Matt pointed to the left wing. "Most are there. A few trusted ones have rooms on the second floor with the other guest rooms. That's where my room is."

Her eyebrow lifted. "Trusted ones or the ones he doesn't want out of his sight?"

She had a point, but... "If it's gotten to the point where a man has to be watched, he's history." And humiliated in such a way they'd never dare report the incident, much less Brian Sumner's activities. If they did, they knew it wasn't their asses that would be strapped and fucked...they'd be dead.

Simon plucked the cell phone from his pants pocket to call his pilot. "We're here." That simple phrase was all that was needed. He snapped the phone closed and shoved it away.

Harris stepped further onto the portico when the chauffeur cut the engine. He didn't so much as flinch when the back door opened and Simon, then Matt and Allie exited.

He greeted them with a half-assed nod. "Mr. Sumner is in the salon. I'll let him know you're here."

"No need, Harris." Matt trotted up the steps, Allie tagging



behind. "I know the way."

The salon had always been Matt's favorite room of the house, and obviously was not part of the original design. Whoever had decorated the salon took advantage of the sunlight pouring through the bank of windows. Rattan furnishings with pastel stripes of yellow, lavender, pink, and blue lifted the heavy atmosphere of the rest of the house. A lavender rug took center stage on the parquet floor. Being there let a person...breathe, for lack of a better word.

"Wait here," Simon told the driver, and quickly followed.

Carpet runners with designs of English ivy on a cream-colored background protected the dark wood floors and padded Matt's march to the rear of the house. Rather than rush to the nearest intercom to notify Sumner, Harris trailed behind.

"Is he alone?" Matt asked.

"You are the first to return, sir."

Good. They'd have no interference from any of Sumner's trained apes.

"And his latest girlfriend?"

"Not here."

"His mood?"

"Foul, sir."

"I'd be willing to bet it's not nearly as foul as mine."

"I'll ensure the staff stays out of your way as well, sir. I wouldn't want them to suffer the ramifications of your displeasure."

Matt snickered. "No one does sarcasm better than you, Harris."

## A REAL MAN

“Thank you, Mr. Lombardi.” The hell of it was Harris meant it. Quickening his step, he dashed forward to open the salon door.

Sumner jerked around from his view of the pool beyond the French doors. His ready smile froze, then faltered as shock replaced it. Matt gave him no time to recover. Hard strides covered the distance between them. He was conscious of the door closing behind him as Harris slipped back into anonymity.

“You fuckin’ had me shot!” He stabbed the air toward Sumner’s chest.

Though still feet away, Sumner backed up a step. His jaw worked, but no sound came out. It was the first time Matt had ever seen the man flustered.

“I...I did no such thing,” he finally replied.

Matt whipped off his T-shirt. “What the fuck do you call this?” He pointed at the wound.

Sumner’s gaze widened, skidded over Matt’s shoulder to Allie and Simon, then jerked back to him.

“It wasn’t me. I assure you, Teo. You’re the most trusted of my dwindling cadre. I need you more than ever. I can’t begin to say how relieved I am to see you made it safely back. *Her* presence, however, disturbs me.” He jerked his head toward Allie. He’d recovered his equilibrium quickly, and was now trying to take the offensive position. “Did it ever occur to you that *she* had you shot to drive a wedge between us?”

“She was with me at the time.” Simon strolled up behind Matt. “I saw them when they checked into my hotel and

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offered them the use of my suite in what I hoped you'd see as a gesture of goodwill between us. After all, everyone knows how much you respect Matteo, how loyal he is to you. Under the circumstances, I'd hoped you'd view the act in a favorable light. I also took them to dinner. Someone attacked our friend outside the restroom. Tacky, but daring...and, thankfully, inept. Naturally, I couldn't allow them to be unprotected."

He casually walked around the rattan loveseat, caressing the top of the soft cushion like it was a pet. "Frankly, Brian, some of us are concerned. Deals were made. Money changed hands. Now there's this nasty little business with the feds."

"I've told you all the money will be returned," he said quickly.

Simon heaved a sigh. "Hard to do when your accounts have been frozen. Then someone shoots your most loyal man? It doesn't look good, Brian. How do we know you won't make an attempt on our lives? In any event, I don't want the money. I want what I paid for."

His nostrils flared. "What would you have me—" He shot a nervous glare Allie's way. "Miss Shaw, we certainly don't want you to be bored with business discussions. Perhaps you'd enjoy a swim in the pool."

She cocked her head to one side. "Actually, I would. Thank you."

"I believe you'll find a spare swimsuit or two in the pool house."

"Not necessary. Besides...I don't wear used clothing." She brushed off the suggestion with a wave of her hand as she

## *A REAL MAN*

walked out the French doors.

Matt's cock lifted its randy head when she stripped to skin and dove into the water.

"I hope you weren't foolish enough to have married her." Sumner followed every move she made.

Matt snorted. "Let's just say she's been lured by the temptation of a bigger catch, and amuses herself by playing with us both."

When Sumner turned to look at him, Simon chuckled. "As I told you, Teo, I don't have a problem sharing her. She's enticing to watch...you both are. Don't worry. I'll tire of it soon enough. I always do. You'll have her back."

"Hmph...not sure I want the traitorous little bitch back."

Long strokes pulled her through the water. She looked magnificent. On the other side of the pool, she hauled herself out, slinging water off her breasts with her hands.

"But you don't want to let her go either," Simon said with a laugh. "She's fun to play with, fun to watch. Look at her flaunting herself again. Don't tell me you don't want to go out there and haul her over your knee."

A half-smile replied for him. That would rattle Sumner. Hell...it'd rattle them all.

Simon clapped his hands. "Business first. Bottom line, Brian...I know you still have access to your off-shore accounts."

He held out his palms. "I can't very well get to them now without drawing suspicion. Surely everyone can understand that. I'd think they would be worried about the implications of

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receiving money from me...or receiving the item they purchased and risk prosecution themselves.”

“That’s a load of crap and you know it. We both know the feds didn’t seize that property. You moved it in without detection and you can move it out the same way. Everyone is going to want their money or their merchandise. If they don’t get one or the other soon...”

Matt fought a smile. The implication was clear. Sweat dotted Sumner’s forehead. He wiped it away by raking his fingers through his gray-white hair.

“I’m sure you’d love to keep the money,” Simon said. “All I want is what I paid for.”

“Others want their money,” Sumner replied.

“And when they realize they aren’t going to get it anytime soon, they’ll want their items, if only to resell and blur any ties to you.”

Sumner gave them his back and stared at Allie. She now lounged in a deck chair. Eyes closed, one hand toyed with her nipple, while her bent knee swung to and fro, giving them a peek-a-boo shot of her pussy. It was the same show she’d performed on the beach in Hawaii. The problem this time was Matt couldn’t beat off in the ocean while he watched her, or rather, watched others watch her.

Sumner’s frosty blue eyes followed the action like a cat eyeing a string of yarn. “Would one of you please do something about her?” he snapped.

“It would be my pleasure.” Simon darted for the doors before Matt could blink.

## *A REAL MAN*

So much for the son of a bitch's vow to not touch her unless it was absolutely necessary. He balled the T-shirt in his fist.

"Chill out," Simon said with a smile before he left the room. "You'll get your chance."

"I hope you don't expect me to stand here and watch," he pushed out through clenched teeth.

"Odd you don't seem to mind when I watch the two of you," Simon said. If it bothers you that much, go get a drink. And bring the rest of us one back with you."

At least Matt understood the reasoning behind Simon's actions. With Sumner absorbed watching the two of them cavort, Matt had a clear shot to check the secret door behind the bar in the library. He forgave Simon the lapse...sort of. And he could hardly protest when minutes before he'd told Simon to do exactly what he was doing. Jealous hackles soothed, he tugged the T-shirt back on over his head, while Simon ducked outside.

"Okay with you, boss?" he asked Sumner. "I really can't watch this again right now."

Sumner waved him off with an absentminded flick of his fingers. His attention remained riveted on Allie as she feathered her hand down to her crotch.

"Yes. Go. Bring me back a Chivas...neat."

Matt didn't waste time. He resisted the urge to slam the salon door as he left. No sense antagonizing Sumner.

He'd learned the house very well in the two years he'd been with Sumner, even gotten to the point he could navigate

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the place in the dark if necessary. The household staff generally avoided everyone. He'd seen them skitter off more than a time or two. Now that Harris had warned them away, Matt bet he wouldn't see them at all. Still, he kept alert just in case...and tried not to think about Simon buried in Allie's heat. He might have agreed and supported this crazy plan...but he still didn't like it one bit.

Heavy oak doors, aged with time, stood sentry to the library. As with all the rooms, they were closed whether someone was in there or not. Like Sumner's private railcar, there was no surveillance system in the library. Privacy to do as he pleased was guaranteed. Simon's people might have been able to sneak onto the railcar and plant audiovisual equipment, but here it would have been impossible—too many people, too isolated a location, too much security in place. Wiretap on the phones was the best they'd been able to do. It was still one step further than Matt's people had been able to do. He always thought it was odd that they'd been refused permission to tap the phones. Now he knew why—another department had beaten them to it.

He twisted the door knob and pushed. The door opened on silent hinges. Heavy forest green drapes darkened the room and kept it cool against the August heat. Twelve black leather chairs faced either other in a haphazard circle. Tables with reading lamps punctuated the distance between them. Wall sconces cast pale yellow light throughout. Two chandeliers would brighten the room when someone wanted to browse the thousands of books on the shelves that covered all available

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wall space. Recessed lighting glinted off the crystal glasses and decanters on the bar.

The large decanter dead center on the shelf behind the bar called to Matt. He'd always thought it looked out of place, but had considered it merely one of those antique items Sumner was frequently fond of showing off.

He clicked the door shut and let quick steps take him to his target. The dark paneling behind the decanter gave no indication of being any different than that around it. Using the back of his hand, Matt eased the decanter aside and pushed his fist in the middle of the wood. He felt the latch release rather than heard it as the panel depressed and the façade swung out. He scooted to one side and pulled it open enough to slip inside. A solid wall of red brick greeted him.



## CHAPTER 7

Allie tried to keep her come-fuck-me smile in place and not let surprise flicker on her face when Simon walked out the door. She'd known it would come to this. She just hadn't expected it would be so soon, in so open a venue. If anyone had stepped out those French doors, she had thought it would be Matt. The bright sun and dark coating on the windows made it impossible to see if Matt was even there. Somehow she suspected Sumner was, watching every move.

"You can't extend an invitation and not expect someone to accept it," Simon said.

His back was to the house. His expression not one of lust or lechery, more that he was trying to communicate something

## *A REAL MAN*

to her.

“Odd that it was you. I thought you only liked to watch.” She twirled her finger around her belly button.

“I saw an opportunity and took it.”

Allie took that as a hint something had happened to give them an opening to search the passage. Matt would be off doing so; Sumner captured by the promise of a new show starring Samantha Shaw.

Simon was standing over her now, his crotch at her eye level. A thick erection pulsed behind his zipper. Nervousness made her hesitant. This wasn’t nearly as enticing without Matt. In fact, she wanted to leap from the chair and put as much distance between her and Simon as she could.

“Scoot forward,” he told her. “I’m going to sit behind you.”

Allie did as he asked, flinching when his body touched hers as he filled the space, even after the hours together on the plane. The rasp of his zipper brought a lump of panic to her throat. Without Matt it wasn’t right.

Simon’s wrapped muscled arms around her, easing her back against him. His cock felt like a pike on her back. Pre-cum slickened her skin.

“Relax.” Warm breath tickled her ear. Allie jerked when he kissed her neck.

“I know you want him,” he whispered. “I’d have to be blind not to see how much in love you are. He’s in there doing his job. We’re here doing ours—making sure he’s successful.”

Her head knew that. It was her body that couldn’t accept it.

## *A REAL MAN*

“If I have to spank you to get you to relax, I will.” He added a sharp smack to her thigh.

Her body tightened. Moisture pooled to her crotch. Simon had found her major turn-on switch...and they both knew it. But no matter how much she loved being spanked, Matt was the only one she'd willingly allow to do so. Still, Simon's threat gave her system the jump start she needed. Allie relaxed into his arms.

“Good girl.” Rough hands cupped her breasts. His thumbs teased her nipples to hard points. “Show off your stuff.” He nudged his knees under legs and then lifted, tugging them apart. The scent of her pussy wafted around them. “Play with yourself.”

“I...can't.” She pulled her bottom lip between her teeth.

“Let me remind you—I'm wearing a belt and, like your boyfriend, I'm not afraid to use it.” He thrust his cock against her back.

Allie's cunt clenched. God, she was shameless.

“What do you think he'll do when he hears I had you over my knee?” he whispered. “Do you think he'll be angry enough to give you extra punishment?”

She struggled to close her thighs and quell the ache in her clitoris.

“Be still.” He pinched her nipples.

A cross between a squeak and a moan parted her lips.

Grabbing her hand, Simon shoved it to her wet pussy. “Do it. Play with yourself. He could be back and watching. You'd love that, wouldn't you? To have his eyes clouded with want,

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his cock beating in time to your heart.”

“Yes,” she gasped out. “God, yes.” She slid her fingers down her labia, then circled her swollen clit.

“That’s the way.” He cupped her breasts once more, flicking and pinching her nipples as he started a slow pivot along her back.

“Close your eyes and imagine him,” Simon whispered. “He’s angry, kept in place only by the job. His mouth waters for a taste of your sweet juices.”

Allie’s fingers flashed over her clit. She wanted Matt here, yanking her over him. He’d fuck her without mercy, dick pounding away inside while he parted her butt cheeks for Simon to take her there. It had been exciting—the three of them.

“Imagine it,” Simon’s voice pulled her deeper into scene. “He’ll come out here, kneel at the foot of this lounge, and bury his face in your pussy.”

She arched into him at the thought. The band of his arm kept her in place. His cock felt like a hot poker now. Her body, her thoughts were locked into the fantasy with just one goal—to come.

“And after he sucks you to orgasm, he’s going to whip out that big cock of his. We’ll both take you then, just like on the jet, fucking you until you weep from the pleasure.” His gasp mirrored hers.

“Then there’s afterward—your punishment for daring to like it so much.”

“Oh, God,” she squeaked.

## *A REAL MAN*

“He’ll tie you down and warm your ass good. Then he’ll roll you over and let you feel the leather between your thighs...right on your hard little—”

Her body went rigid as climax seized her. Through the haze she felt Simon grind against her back as his semen spurted onto her back.

\* \* \*

Matt’s gaze went straight to poolside the second he crossed the salon threshold. His body came alive at the image of Allie coming in Simon’s arms, splayed open for all to see. God, she was beautiful. His cock led him farther into the room, begging him to go outside and join them. Matt honestly couldn’t say if it was for fun, or to show he was just as good a fuck—or better—than Simon.

He tore his gaze from the scene and over to Sumner. The man stood there, zipper down, hand pumping away at a hard-on. Matt eased out the door, then made his re-entry more apparent. He fumbled with the door knob, rattled the four glasses on the tray he carried, then shoved open the door with one shoulder. Sumner glanced over his shoulder as he stuffed a wadded white handkerchief into his pocket.

“Just in time.” He plucked one of the two glasses of Chivas from the tray as Matt neared. “You missed another great show.”

Matt sliced a glare toward Allie and Simon. They lay entwined like they’d melted from the sun. He wasn’t exactly sure what his reaction was supposed to be. So he fell back on

## *A REAL MAN*

what had never failed him before—his instincts.

“Goddamn it!” He slapped the tray onto the nearest table, spilling the liquor all over it. “I’ve had it. When I get my hands on him...”

Sumner curled a hand over Matt’s shoulder. “Jealousy doesn’t become you, Teo. It was her doing, not his. You saw her. She was begging for someone to fuck her. I doubt she cared who. If you want to take it out on anyone, take it out on her. If she’s going to be your woman, she needs to know her place.”

Matt jerked free. His jealousy wasn’t feigned, but his over-the-top rage was. “And I intend to do so the second I get her to our hotel room. I’m going to wear her ass out.”

Sumner smiled. “Why wait so long when you still have your room here?”

The son of a bitch wanted to watch him “deal” with Allie. Matt loved it when the fish took the bait. The distraction would give Simon the time he needed to search the passage exit. If that was walled up, too, he didn’t have a clue what their next move would be.

“And Petrocelli? He’ll want to leave.” He jerked his head toward the man.

“He’ll appreciate the opportunity to stay close while I retrieve his merchandise.”

“I’ll tell them we’re staying.”

“Excellent.”

The gleam in Sumner’s eyes sickened Matt, and not for the first time. He couldn’t wait to bring this man down.

## A REAL MAN

"I'll have Harris bring your luggage in and dismiss your driver."

"Your hospitality is appreciated as always. I wouldn't want to abuse it."

"Not a problem. Trust me, Teo. Having you here will be my pleasure."

Matt brushed by the man before he could give into the urge to punch his too-perfect nose.

Simon and Allie pulled apart when he charged outside.

"Mr. Sumner has invited us to stay here," he told them. He snagged Allie's clothes and tossed them to her. "At least have the decency to wash his cum off you before you get dressed."

She gave him a sultry smile as slow steps took her past him to the pool. "Care to join me?"

He landed a solid *thwack* on her butt cheek. "Hurry up. You and I have a few issues to resolve. The sooner, the better."

"Whatever you say, Teo."

She affected a pout and crawled down the ladder for a quick dunk. God, she could fuck him with a look, bring him to his knees with a smile. She was clearly in control. Matt wondered if she knew how much so.

Simon snickered and shoved his flaccid penis into his pants. "I warmed her up good for you, Teo. You should thank me."

Matt balled the man's shirt in one hand and reared back his fist. "You son-of-a—"

"Teo! No!" Dripping water, Allie curled both hands

## A REAL MAN

around his forearm to pull it down.

"The passage in the bar is bricked up." He kept his voice low, teeth clenched.

"Fuck," Simon muttered. "I need to check the exit. Can you two keep him distracted?"

"The seed's already been sown." He released him with a shove. "Mr. Sumner thought you'd appreciate being close while he retrieved the item you purchased," he said in a voice anyone could hear.

Simon smoothed his shirt into place. "He presumed correctly. I'll leave you two to whatever issues you have, while I ensure our host also has a room for my driver. I don't want any delays when I'm ready to leave. Don't pull a stunt like this again, Mr. Lombardi. Remember, if it weren't for me, you could very well be dead."

"And if *you* pull a stunt like *this* again, so could you. We agreed you wouldn't be with her alone."

"I believe that decision rests on Miss Shaw's soft shoulders," he said with a half smile.

"Which would be one of the issues she and I need to discuss," Matt tossed back.

"I look forward to hearing the resolution...or seeing it."

Matt stared a hole through the other man.

Without another word, Simon chuckled, pushed by, and walked onto the house. Matt had hooked Sumner earlier, he hoped this little scene was enough to reel him in and give Simon the window of time needed to search the other end of the passage.



## *A REAL MAN*

“Get dressed,” he told Allie. “We’re going upstairs now.”

She snorted. “Where I suppose you’ll want my clothes off again?”

“Yeah.” God, he wanted to fuck her right here. Push her to her knees and shove his cock in her mouth. Drag her to the pool house—no, the patch of lawn—and fuck her doggy style.

“Then why bother dressing?” She shrugged a shoulder and pranced her ass into the house.

Matt was hot on her heels, led by the invisible leash she had around his penis. He was mesmerized by the sight of her parading naked through Sumner’s grand home. How many staff members would dart away now? Only as far as they could peek, he’d bet. It took a hell of a lot of self-confidence to carry this off. Allie had it. She walked along like she was wearing a formal gown.

“Which room?” she asked.

He blinked. They were at the staircase and he hadn’t realized it. “Second floor. Left wing. Third room to the left.”

One hand on the polished wood banister, she started up. Matt could smell her sex. Images of tackling her to the carpeted stairs and licking her dry assaulted him. He couldn’t wait to get her alone. Sumner would have the show of his life then.

They were nearly to the bedroom door when Harris arrived from the kitchen stairs with their luggage. Allie’s bravery diminished. She ducked into the room before the butler got a solid look at her.

Smiling, Matt wrapped his hands around the handles. “I’ll

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take these, Harris, thank you.”

He stepped away with a slight bow. “As usual, sir, dinner will be served at six with drinks in the library with Mr. Sumner at five.”

He thanked him and shouldered the door open. Allie huddled against the headboard, bedcovers clutched under her chin. She looked like a little white speck on a sea of navy blue. He tried not to laugh.

“Relax. He’s gone.” Matt stuffed the luggage next to an antique highboy of red cedar. It was mismatched among the other black lacquered furnishings, and clearly worth more than everything else put together.

“I can’t believe you were with Simon alone after all we discussed.” He thumbed open his belt buckle and pulled the leather through the loops.

Allie tossed back the covers and crawled to the end of the bed. “No one was more shocked than me. You deserted me. You left me alone with him. If anyone is to blame, it’s you.” She swung her legs to the floor and held out her palm. “This time the punishment is mine to give to you.”

She could have set a blowtorch to his balls and Matt wouldn’t have been hotter...or harder. The thought of her taking a belt to his bare ass as he’d done to her was...intriguing. He’d be lucky if he didn’t come after the first strokes.

“He made you come,” he said.

“Technically speaking, I made myself come. Besides, I was thinking of you when I did.” She wiggled her fingers,

beckoning for the belt.

“Point made.” Matt stepped forward and placed the leather over her palm. “Naked?”

“Completely. Hands braced on the end of the bed. I don’t want your cock rubbing on the mattress. You come when I say so.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Gazes locked as much as possible, Matt stripped his clothes off and tossed them into a pile. His dick was hard, ready to explode at the slightest touch. His balls felt like rocks between his legs. Her nipples were just as rigid. Her excitement was betrayed by her short, rapid breaths.

“I don’t suppose I could plead my injury.”

Allie raked her fingers down his chest right to his cock. “It’s not your shoulder I’m going to warm.”

He sucked in a sharp breath when she stroked him, groaning when her thumb smeared a glistening drop of pre-cum over the head. He clamped a loose grip around her wrist.

“Let get this done so I can fuck you senseless.” Matt spread his legs and braced his hands on the end of the bed. “Just know that when you’re done with me, I *will* have you over my—”

The whack of the belt silenced him. Fire raced across his buttocks, over his balls, down the length of his cock. A hard groan ripped from his throat. Another stroke had him reaching for his penis. He needed friction, needed to come, needed fucking.

“Hands back,” she said, smacking him twice.

## *A REAL MAN*

“God, baby, you don’t know—”

“Yes, I do,” she purred. “Everything feels alive. Blood pools in your crotch, swelling you, making it throb, making you think you’ll die if you don’t come soon.”

She measured each word with one lash after the other. All he wanted was more, to come, to fuck something, anything, while she continued to warm his ass. He edged his hands further up the mattress, trying to get his cock within touching distance.

“No! Stand up!”

“You’re killing me,” he complained. Then he knew what sweet torture truly was.

She knelt before him, raining blows on his ass with one hand, while the other swooped under his aching sac. His knees quivered when her fingers tickled at his asshole, then buckled when she shoved two past the tight ring.

Matt cried out. Tangling his fingers in her hair, he shoved her face toward his cock. Allie’s lips closed around it, sucking him deep and hard, while she pumped his ass and warmed his backside.

“God, baby...I’m gonna—”

She jerked back. Matt snarled out his frustration. Grabbing her upper arms, he tossed her onto the bed. The belt clattered from her fingers. He snatched it up and rolled her facedown. She lifted her ass in anticipation.

He laid one stroke after the other on that luscious bottom, groaning with her as she wiggled and begged from more. Locking her wrists at her lower back when she tried to appease

## *A REAL MAN*

the ache in her clit.

“Fuck me!” she screamed. “Please, fuck me!”

Matt tossed the belt aside and paddled his hand over her hot bottom, reveling in the sting of flesh on flesh. He rolled her onto her back and flicked his thumb and forefinger hard at her nipples.

“I should spank you while you’re fucking him,” he growled out. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“I—”

He pinched her clitoris, nearly coming himself when her hips reared off the bed.

“Oh, God...Please...” she whimpered.

He tapped her clit, soft and then hard. Sucking her breast deep, he pushed the pads of his fingers around and around.

She clutched his head to her and screamed as she came. Matt raked his mouth down to her pussy to capture his prize. Sensitive from coming, she fought the attention. He pulled her to one side and sucked her clit anyway while he rained fresh blows on her hot ass. Orgasm tore from her, drenching his face in her juices...and still he kept at her, spanking and sucking until she came again.

“No more,” she begged. “Please.”

Matt pushed her to the mattress and draped her legs over his shoulders. A deep thrust sealed them and flashed her eyes open. She dug her nails into his back as he fucked her fast and hard. She rode him all the while, pulling that fire from deep within his belly to his aching balls and rigid cock. Squeezing her cunt muscles like a vise around him. Deep moans and

## *A REAL MAN*

sounds urging him to...

"God!" Climax turned him inside out, blinding him to everything but that moment.

At some point they fell asleep wrapped in each other's arms. They started awake at the feel of someone crawling into bed with them—Simon on Allie's other side. He tucked up against her tight, lips a breath from her ear.

"It's bricked up, too," he whispered.

And they couldn't very well bust down the walls unless they had proof the artifacts were still there. Defeat weighed Matt down. He was beginning to wonder if this investigation would ever be over.

"Well, he sure as hell didn't do it himself," Matt whispered back. Sumner never soiled his hands with dirty work of any kind. That's what he had people for. And since most of his people had scattered, that left only one remaining.

"Harris will never roll on Sumner," Simon said.

Allie glanced over her shoulder at him. "He might if the right seeds were sown."

Matt cupped her butt, essentially putting himself between her and Simon. "My thoughts exactly."

His eyebrow lifted. "And if that fails?"

"You just make sure your plane's ready to go," Matt replied. "I have a plan. It's time for this to end."

## CHAPTER 8

Matt found Harris right where he expected the man to be—setting up the dining room for dinner. Whether Sumner dined alone or with guests, Harris always made it a silver and crystal event. Place settings gleamed with perfection. Harris guarded his domain with the intensity of an eagle. God forbid one of the staff placed a fingerprint on any of it. If they did, they earned Harris's heavy sigh of disapproval, a scathing glare, the snap of his cloth as he popped it out to right the wrong...and never a harsh word. It was enough to send more than one young girl darting from the room in tears.

“It's lovely as always.”

Harris glanced up. “Thank you, sir. May I help you?”

## *A REAL MAN*

The unspoken question was: “What the hell are you doing in my dining room before the meal is served?”

“Is there somewhere we can talk?”

His head cocked ever-so slightly. “Talk, sir?”

“Privately.”

“Privately, sir? There is no one here but you and I. Our staff has been fully warned away. The ladies especially fear the present randy air about the estate.”

Matt tried not to laugh. It was impossible. “Are those your words or theirs?”

“Our cook’s, sir.”

“I think she’s more of a threat to us than we are to her.”

His lips actually twitched in an attempt to hide a smile. “Indeed, sir. And the issue which concerns you? Perhaps the sheets need to be freshened.”

Was he giving Matt an excuse to grab on to, or being sarcastic? “I’m embarrassed to say, but yes. I’d rather not bother the housekeeper. If you’d just show me where they are, or give them to me.”

“My pleasure, sir. This way.”

Matt followed him up the stairs to a second floor linen closet he was reasonably certain didn’t have one of Sumner’s cameras pointed at it. Shelves of crisp, white sheets lay in regimented order by size. They smelled of sunshine and fresh air, a reminder of when Matt’s mom would hang sheets out to dry on the line.

“I was shot, Harris,” he said without preliminaries. “I think it was Mr. Sumner’s doing.”



## A REAL MAN

The butler paused, one hand under a fitted sheet like he'd been caught in freeze-frame.

"He's denied it, of course. Do you think he's capable of it?" he pressed on. "I've been with him a long time. I know a lot about his business. He's in a mess right now. What's to stop him from shutting me up...just in case? What's to stop him from eliminating all possible threats, even if they aren't threats? There's talk he had that couple killed—the Kidwells. You know...the guy we knew as Little."

"I did see the news. I think you give him too much credit, and not enough to others." He pulled a sheet combo off the shelves like they were nothing more than cards. "Here you are, sir." He snapped around and handed them to Matt. "I'll see to it a fresh set is in your room each morning and early evening. Or will you be needing them more frequently?"

Now *that* was sarcasm. "No, that'll be great."

"Excellent. Now I must finish seeing to dinner." After a polite nod, he walked away.

So much for that maneuver, but Matt wasn't down yet. In fact, he didn't plan to be down at all. If push came to shove, he wasn't above kidnapping Sumner and taking full advantage of his fear of flying to torture a confession of some kind out of him. They still had a couple of tricks up their respective sleeves before that happened.

He dropped the sheets off in his room and hurried on to the library where the others would have gathered for pre-dinner drinks with Sumner. The sheets gave Matt a good excuse for being late...if Sumner even noticed. He allowed himself a

## *A REAL MAN*

smirk. He wouldn't be surprised if the man had jerked his dick raw while he watched Matt and Allie in their earlier sexcapades.

Knowing Sumner's proclivities, Matt guessed he was alternately imagining Matt's ass at his disposal and his own at Allie's. Both scenarios were about control—finally having the courage to dominate Matt, wresting control from a woman he longed to break. It was a flaw they were hoping would ultimately help to bring him down.

He swung open the library door. Sumner scowled at his tardiness. Allie and Simon monitored the impending exchange from behind their respective drinks—vodka on ice for Simon, rum and diet cola for Allie's Samantha. Matt shuddered at the thought that she would ruin good rum with diet cola.

"Sorry, I'm late." Matt hurried to the circle of chairs where they sat, stopping behind the one to Sumner's left.

With the exception of Allie, everyone wore what they'd had on earlier. Sumner liked to keep it casual, make his guests comfortable. It made it easier catch them off-guard and take advantage of them that way. But tonight Allie's tropical sundress, though casual, won that right. The halter top squeezed her breasts into deep cleavage. A man would have to be dead or crazy not to notice.

"I hope it's because you were retrieving my merchandise for Brian," Simon said as he took a sip.

"Not only is the answer to that no, I also have no idea what merchandise you are referring to," Matt shot back. "I wanted to catch Harris to get fresh sheets for the bed. That's all." The

## *A REAL MAN*

last was his way of letting Allie and Simon know he hadn't been successful with anything else.

Simon set his glass on the table by his chair. "I'm growing impatient, Brian, not to mention concerned. Potential witnesses against you are dead. An attempt was made on Mr. Lombardi's—"

"I told you that wasn't my doing," he snapped.

Simon ignored him. "I want my artifact and I want it now. Tempting though Miss Shaw is, as gracious as your presumed hospitality, I have no desire to remain in this house overnight. Now...get it or I'll get it myself."

Sumner's nostrils flared with barely suppressed rage. "You might not find that so easy to do."

"Why? Because you had the entrance and exit bricked up?"

His eyes showed his surprise.

Simon laughed. "I'm not stupid, Brian. I'm not going to pay that much money for something without knowing where it's held. I also know you'd want access to it. Now... again... get it or I'll have Mr. Lombardi take a sledge hammer to that wall and retrieve it myself."

Allie draped one leg over the other and rocked it slowly as she stirred her ice with her finger. "Want me to whip it out of him? That's what he'd do."

Sumner's face flared red. "Watch yourself, young woman."

She jerked forward. "You're the one who needs to watch it. Nothing would give me more satisfaction than to have you

## A REAL MAN

bound, strapped, and fucked up the ass like you had done to me.”

“It seemed to me you enjoyed it.”

“And I’ll enjoy it so much more when I’m doing it to you,” she ground out through clenched teeth. “Don’t think I can do it? Watch me. I’ve got two very strong, very determined, very angry men who will gladly do the heavy work for me while I mete out justice and revenge.”

“Teo would never—”

“You-had-me-shot,” Matt replied. “Teo *would*.”

Sumner slammed his glass down. Chivas splattered to the table and dripped onto the carpet below. “Fine. You’ll have your merchandise, Petrocelli. And then I want you all to vacate my premises immediately.” He jerked to his feet.

Matt blocked his passage. “You’ll understand that we won’t trust you to go alone.”

“You’ve made a powerful enemy, Mr. Lombardi.”

Matt merely smiled. “And even more powerful friends.”

Sumner ground his teeth. “Let me pass so we can get this over with.”

Allie stalked their way. “Should I frisk him first, Teo?”

“Thoroughly, my sweet.” It was Simon who replied. “Inside and out.”

Sumner jerked his head her way, eyes blazing. “Don’t you *dare* touch me.”

He smacked his shoulder against Matt’s as he shoved by. Matt let the behavior pass. No sense pushing their luck. Their goal was to get the artifacts so Simon would move toward

## A REAL MAN

closure on his case, which would finish Sumner completely—the goal in Matt’s case.

They followed Sumner’s march to the bar. He shoved aside the crystal decanter and depressed the panel. When it unlatched, he yanked the door open the rest of the way and wedged his shoulder into the brick. It gave way under the pressure of his weight. It had been a façade as well, put in place at a moment’s notice with folding hinges. Automatic lighting filled the passage beyond.

Sumner darted into the opening and down the wide stone stairs. Simon, Allie, and Matt followed. He was counting on their numbers to keep the man in check. None of them carried a weapon. If Sumner did...

*One bluff at a time.*

The staircase opened to a bright corridor that belonged more to a high-rise than a Revolutionary War era home. Rooms with heavy oak doors and cipher-locks spidered off from it. Sumner hustled to the nearest one and punched in a code. At the beep he pushed the door opened. Emptiness stared back.

“What the fuck!”

Pivoting on his heel, Sumner dashed to the next one and the next one, rage mounting as he found each one empty.

“What the hell did you do? What the hell did you do?” he screamed.

The question wasn’t directed at any of them. Wild eyes shot back to the entrance. Fists clenched in his hair, Sumner ran to the stairs. They hurried after him. He stormed through

## A REAL MAN

the house, muttering obscenities. His face mottled to a dark red, like a volcano ready to explode. Target sighted in the dining room, he hurled himself at a startled Harris.

Harris ducked his reach.

“What the hell did you do? What the hell did you do?” Sumner’s voice shook the crystal water goblets on the table. “Where is it? Where is it?”

The butler met his rage with a cold stare. “Gone, sir. Fixed so nothing was found on the estate to implicate you. Those *were* your last instructions.”

“Do you know what you’ve done?” Gray-white hair spiked up from where Sumner clutched it. “Do you know?” he shouted louder.

The hint of a smile lifted one corner of Harris’s mouth. “Precisely, sir.”

Clutching his chest with one hand, his head with the other, Sumner screamed in agony, fell to his knees, then toppled to one side.

Matt caught his head before he could hit the floor and let him down gently to his back.

“Perhaps I should call 9-1-1?” Harris casually asked.

“Yes,” Matt replied just as calmly, before he and Simon started CPR.

\* \* \*

Matt combed his fingers through his hair, but it was Allie who rubbed the tension from his neck as the paramedics drove off with Brian Sumner. Simon sat at the dining room table

## *A REAL MAN*

across from him, eyes closed as he massaged his temples. They'd played their hand and come up empty, with nowhere else to go. The disappointment was beyond crushing. He wondered how long it would take their bosses to slink in.

"Shall I serve dinner now?" Harris asked.

Matt didn't know whether to laugh or scream. "What just happened here, Harris?"

"I thought I was quite clear earlier, sir. As I recall, I told you that you give him too much credit, and not enough to others."

Simon opened his eyes. "And you would be the 'others.'"

"It seemed like the perfect opportunity," Harris said. "His instructions were to place all of his business records in the crates with the stolen antiquities. I did so. He wanted nothing found on the estate tied to him. Nothing on the estate is. I arranged for the crates to be shipped away. It isn't my fault the records will be found once the crates are opened."

Matt didn't have the energy to laugh at the irony. "You wouldn't happen to know where the crates were taken, would you?"

"The Smithsonian, sir. I felt they were the most likely to be able to process everything and know who should rightfully receive those items. I indicated it was from a private collector. They should have had it in their possession for several days. Shall I serve dinner now? I know you'll want to be on your way. No sense wasting good food."

"Please." Allie added a smile and a thank you to that, sending Harris on his way.

## *A REAL MAN*

Simon pulled his cell phone from the depths of his pants pocket. "I'll call for verification."

"Aren't you worried about surveillance?" she asked.

"Since Harris was so free with his information, I wouldn't doubt that he disabled it once Sumner was taken away," Matt said. If he'd done so sooner, they never would have had to slink off to the linen closet.

"He's checking." Simon tossed the cell onto the table.

It skidded to a stop next to his water goblet as Harris returned with their salads. It didn't budge again until he cleared away the dessert plates. Matt didn't have a clue what they'd just eaten. He'd been too focused on waiting. Considering the silence at the table, Simon and Allie were as well.

Simon snatched up the phone on the first ring. His smile telegraphed success. He gave them a thumbs-up.

"One thing, Bob," he said, "I want you to insist that Dr. Emily Keating be brought in to do the cataloguing. She's a professor at the University of Arizona."

Matt and Allie flashed each other a look. It was hard not to wonder if this Emily was the former wife he'd mentioned earlier.

"They've got it all." Simon shoved the phone away and stretched back in his chair with a satisfied smile. "Now all we have to do is wait for the federal grand jury indictment."

"We'll be keeping a low profile until then." Sumner's recovery was an issue, but there were others sure to be charged—others just as determined as Sumner to keep



themselves from prison.

“So...” Allie crossed her arms on the table. “Dr. Emily Keating...was that an olive branch extended?”

Simon snorted. “I could extend the whole olive tree and it wouldn’t matter. It’s too late.”

“It’s never too late,” she quietly replied.

In the time he’d known Simon, Matt had never seen the man look more vulnerable. The pain of the loss he’d suffered was clearly etched in his face. It was like he’d aged ten years in those ten seconds.

“Would anyone care for coffee?” Harris hovered over them, the silver coffee pot perched in one hand.

“That would be nice.” Simon slid his cup forward. “What about you, Harris? What will you do now?”

“Yes, I do suspect my employ with Mr. Sumner has come to an end.”

“Why not come with me?”

“Oh?” The butler straightened and walked to the other side of the table to pour coffee for Matt and Allie. “Does Miss Shaw require another stud for her stable?”

Simon laughed, while Allie turned a bright shade of red. Matt, on the other hand...

“I believe he means as his butler, not to service my woman.”

“Thank you for the clarification, sir. I fear I would be a crushing disappointment to a lady so used to vigorous activity with such fine specimens of male exuberance as yourselves.”

Matt wasn’t sure, but he thought Harris had just insulted

## *A REAL MAN*

them.

He gave a slight bow after the cups were filled. "I shall be delighted to entertain Mr. Petrocelli's offer. I'll be free to discuss terms shortly, sir. If mutually agreeable, I can be ready to depart within the week. Will Mr. Lombardi and Miss Shaw be remaining in your household?"

"We've not decided," Simon replied. "We'll keep you apprised."

Harris gave another slight bow and left.

"Well, what do you say?" Simon leaned forward. "Ready to leap into the next assignment?"

Allie shook her head. "I'm done with undercover work."

"That makes two of us," Matt said.

"I want to finish our vacation, too. And it might be wise to make nice with our families."

Matt smiled. They definitely had some explaining to do there. His family thought she was a hooker. Hers thought he was a mob hit man.

"Pity." Simon passed a slow, appreciative gaze over Allie. "We make such a great team. I was looking forward to more adventures."

"Let's get something clear." He nailed Simon in place with a glare. "You don't touch her. You don't think about her. You don't look at her. You don't do anything. Got it?"

He laughed. "Got it. She's your play toy, not mine."

Matt curled his fingers into a fist. "She's not a play toy. She's my woman. Say it."

Simon smiled. "She's your woman, not mine. Not a play

## *A REAL MAN*

toy. Your woman. The love of your life. Your soul mate. Future mother of your children. Close enough?"

Matt matched his smile. "Perfect."

Allie wrapped her arms around his neck. "I love when you go all alpha male on me."

He pulled her to his lap. "I know you want a real man."

She snuggled under his chin. "I wouldn't have it any other way. I love you."

He wrapped his arms tight and closed his eyes as he inhaled her scent. "I love you, too, baby."

## CAITLYN WILLOWS

Caitlyn Willows is the pseudonym for award-winning author Catherine Snodgrass, who wanted to flex her writing muscles in the erotica genre. Readers will find the same quality from “Caitlyn” that they have come to expect from “Catherine,” but the stories will be more over-the-top and more steamy. Always they will be action-filled...in more ways than one.

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\* \* \*

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