



*Never  
Too  
Late*

*Caitlyn  
Willows*

## NEVER TOO LATE

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## ALSO BY CAITLYN WILLOWS

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# NEVER TOO LATE

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BY

CAITLYN WILLOWS

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NEVER TOO LATE  
AN AMBER HEAT BOOK

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*Old as the sands of time, potent as life itself,  
an ancient relic reaches out from the past  
to tempt adventurous hearts with promises of  
carnal delights...and an unexpected gift...*

# CHAPTER 1

Simon Petrocelli couldn't breathe. There she was, looking more beautiful than the first time he'd met her all those years ago. His heartbeat reverberated in a loud *ka-thump*, just as it had that day. If he stood here long enough, quiet enough, Simon could pretend they still had their future before them, a chance at forever.

Fear and uncertainty clawed at his gut. This wasn't their beginning. It wasn't even their end—they'd passed that heart-wrenching moment some time ago. He could save himself the turmoil sure to come and turn around and walk out the door. She hadn't seen him. She'd be none the wiser. Or he could man-up and finish what he came here to do—crawl on hands

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and knees if necessary to plead for yet another chance.

Simon blinked away the uncharacteristic rush of tears. He'd be lucky if she didn't slice his balls into slivers. No...not that lucky. To do that would mean she still cared. That he still inspired some emotion in her, even if it was hate. He could deal with hate. What he most feared was that she'd look up at him with those emerald green eyes, and he'd see nothing reflected in their golden depths. That might just kill him—a fate he deserved.

In the twelve years he'd known Emily Keating, their relationship could be described as a roller-coaster ride of intense joy and pain. The fault was exclusively his. No matter what his job, Simon had always given it more attention than he did Emily. He wanted to say he tried, but knew that was a lie. Oh, he'd resigned from the FBI...and jumped right into the fast-paced world of running his father's corporation. Five years later, when Emily needed him most, Simon was right back into undercover work and juggling two jobs instead of one.

The look she'd given him when he'd told her the news had haunted him since—disbelief, disappointment, pain, betrayal, more grief to compound what they were already dealing with. And not one tear. He supposed she didn't have any more to shed. God knows, he didn't. He'd yelled and screamed, while she'd calmly packed to leave. When he realized she was determined to walk away, he begged her to understand, to give him a second chance. Her response chilled him then and now.

“It'd be more like a fifth chance, Simon. No more. I'm

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done.”

He'd stood there, frozen, and watched the only woman he'd ever loved walk out of his life, dragging his heart in the Las Vegas sand behind her. In the subsequent divorce, she asked for nothing. No alimony. No household possessions. Only to be left alone. He'd honored that...until now. That didn't mean he hadn't kept tabs on her.

Simon watched Emily, absorbed in her work. Her long auburn hair was pulled into a ponytail and still not a strand of silver to be seen. She had so many freckles splattered across her ivory skin that from a distance she looked tan. He'd mapped every single one of those freckles with his tongue. The memory swelled his cock. He did nothing to squelch it, hoping maybe they'd at least have that to fall back on. No matter what had transpired in the past, they'd never been able to keep their hands off each other. That is, until the final horror that pulled them apart.

She looked much like she had the first time he'd met her. Dressed in jeans, green tank top, and sneakers, the years fell away. She was twenty-six again, and he a horny thirty—as opposed to a horny forty-two. Emily sat among crates filled with archaeological artifacts, studiously recording each one on paper and camera. She had to know the request for her services had come via him. If she didn't when the call was initially made, there really wasn't any doubt once she'd heard where the items had come from and what they were. Odd that she didn't attempt to call him. Or had she suspected he'd eventually show up? Or was it more proof she didn't give a

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damn about him anymore?

He wasn't sure he wanted to know. He couldn't bear seeing that non-look in her eyes. Eyes that once had flared with heat and passion, the splashes of gold looking more like molten flames. He wanted to walk up to her, see the craving still etched on her face, have her strip his jeans down, feel her hot mouth surround his dick. He'd thrust his fingers in her thick hair and cradle her head while she had her way with him. She'd bring him to the brink, then shove him to the floor and mount his hips to give him the fucking of his life...again. No one before or after had ever made sex better. Usually, it was release only or, in the case just finished, part of the job. *With Emily...*

Defeat sagged Simon's shoulders. There was no use thinking about what was and would never be again. He was a fool to have come here today. It was too late and he was too big a coward to risk seeing nothing in her eyes.

He stepped back, intent on leaving. The puzzlement on her face when she picked up a small artifact stopped him.

Just one more minute, his heart begged him. His body acquiesced.

## CHAPTER 2

Emotion slammed into Emily Keating. She'd been semi-fine until now. But seeing the carved fertility goddess crumbled the professional wall she'd thrown up. She remembered the day she'd first held the carved soapstone. The gray stone was cool in her hand now as it had been then. She could feel it through her white cotton gloves. The pendulous breasts and burgeoning hips identified it as a fertility goddess. She'd looked at it as a sign at the time, right when she'd asked for guidance. How could she have known things would go so horribly wrong?

Her vision swam with tears. *Poor Simon*. She'd blamed him for so long. If he'd been home, if he hadn't been so

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focused on work. She never appreciated the pressure he was under to learn his father's business and take over its management. Emily remembered when she'd finally realized she had been equally at fault. It had hit her like a jolt of electricity. Simon might have chosen to work that night, but she was the one who'd chosen to spend her anger on cataloguing the artifacts. She was the one who'd chosen to take their son and daughter along, when the nanny was fully capable of caring for them and keeping them safe in their own beds. And for what purpose? To prove to Simon she was the better parent, that she could do her job and take care of the children at the same time.

In the aftermath, she'd deserted Simon when he needed her most. Knowing him as she did, Emily should have realized he'd want justice, that he'd do anything to achieve it. She should have supported him, helped him. Instead, she'd walked out and tucked herself away in the oh-so-safe world of academia. And never been more lonely or heart-broken.

It had taken a year for her to realize what her grief and anger had cost her. By then, it was too late. All the crying in the world wouldn't fix it. She'd made it quite clear during the divorce how she felt.

"If you love me, truly love me, you'll leave me alone."

Those words would be carved on her tombstone. *Poor Simon*. She'd given him little choice. Expecting him to come storming after her and sweep her into a crushing embrace was fantasy. He truly loved her. He left her alone, while her heart and body ached from the loss.

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illusion would dissolve.

“Simon?” her voice squeaked out.

“Hi, baby.” His response cloaked her in warmth.

God, he looked good—grayer than when she’d last seen him, but still deliciously male. Her gray would be showing, too, if not for her monthly dye jobs.

She wanted to toss her arms and legs around him, and never let him go. Wanted his lips sealed on hers, his tongue mating with hers, his body merged into hers. She wanted him back in her bed, her body, her life. He’d never truly left her heart.

“What’s this?” He squatted down beside her and opened her fingers. A sad smile lifted the corners of his mouth. “Ah...the fertility goddess. I’ll never forget that night.”

“You laughed at the time.” She sniffled.

“But you showed me, didn’t you?”

Emily smiled through her tears. She’d tied him to the bed and spent the night ravishing him in every way they could think of. That was the night they conceived their third child. A month later...

Simon laced his fingers over hers, locking the idol between their hands. The stone warmed with the contact. “Is it all here?”

“So it *was* you.”

He nodded as he wiped his thumb over the river of tears on her cheek. “I felt it was only right. No one knows what should be here more than you. It’ll go into evidence and eventually back to the museum in Vegas where it belongs.”

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“And did you get him?” She started sobbing. She couldn’t help it. “Did you get the man responsible for killing our children?”

Tears flooded his deep brown eyes. “Yeah, baby, I got him. It took me a while, but I got him good. If he lives, he’ll be in jail for the rest of his life.”

Emily didn’t know whether she wanted him dead now or to suffer incarceration for eternity. Sobbing, she threw herself against Simon.

“I’m sorry, Simon. I’m so, so sorry. I love you so much. I never should have...”

Those strong arms she’d dreamed about wrapped around her, hauling her close. “Shh, baby, please don’t cry.” Yet he was doing the same thing. “I love you, Em. I never stopped. Not for one second. Let’s go somewhere, someplace private, where we can talk.”

*Talk?* How could she talk when she couldn’t stop crying? How could she talk when all she wanted was his body possessing hers?

Pulling back, she wiped away her tears with her fingertips and nodded. “Let me pack up.”

“First...”

Capturing her face between his hands, Simon slanted a kiss over her mouth. Emily parted her lips with a whimper of unbridled need and met his questing tongue halfway. A groan rippled from him. He dug his fingers deep into her hair, shoving the elastic band that held the ponytail in place down and away. Her hair fell in heavy waves over her shoulders,

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down her back. He combed through it. Hard breaths brushed her cheek as the air pushed through his nose.

Emily wrapped her arms around his waist, molding herself as close as she could to his hard body and throbbing cock. Simon deepened the kiss on another muffled groan. One hot hand cupped her butt cheek. A squeeze had her writhing against his erection like a horny teenager on prom night...or a woman craving the man she'd longed for each and every night.

She tossed her leg around his waist, desperate for friction against her pulsing clit. A second later, she felt the work table behind her—she'd been so absorbed with finding pleasure, she'd failed to notice he'd moved them to it.

Simon pressed her back to the table, lifting her other leg to his waist. Emily nailed her heels into his ass and pressed her jean-clad pussy to the relief his steel-forged cock offered. He reared his head back on a hard groan, then captured her lips once more, his tongue mimicking each thrust of his cock against her crotch.

The seam of her jeans hit her clit right where she needed it, and Simon manipulated it like a pro. She clutched at his back, rocking with every thrust and grind his hips gave, kissing him as hard as he kissed her, as desperately. Hot hands swooped under her tank top. One yank freed her breasts. He wedged his hands between them and scooped up his treasure. A quiver rippled through him. He froze for the space of a heartbeat and then pivoted into her with wild abandon as he kneaded her breasts and tweaked the hard points of her nipples.

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The peak loomed suddenly. A gasp tore her lips from his.

“That’s it, sweetheart.” His voice was rough with passion. “Come for me. Come for me. Only me.”

He cupped her ass, lifting her higher and wider for his dry fucking. Emily couldn’t think beyond the pressure building in her clit. She couldn’t move for the pleasure surrounding her. She held on, body tense for the release hovering on the horizon. It slammed into her with the force of lightning, bowing her body off the table as it shuddered through her.

The aftermath melted her into the table. Awareness cut through her when she felt Simon fumbling with her jeans. The snap was open, the zipper down. One hand tugged at the back to pull them from her. Emily helped him, wiggling her hips free.

He eased her to her feet when the jeans hit her calves, and turned her to face the table. She yanked one foot free, letting it take her sneaker with it.

“God, yes, honey,” she gasped out. “Fuck me. Make me yours again.”

Hard pants overshadowed the rustle of his jeans as he shoved them down. He curled his fingers over her hipbone as he used his other hand to guide him home. Emily pulled her head up on a moan when his glans nudged her cunt.

“How could I forget how damn hot and tight you are?” He slid in to the hilt, his hard balls nudging her still sensitive clit. “I am going to fuck you, sweetheart. I’m going to fuck you hard and make you come again. I want to feel your pussy clutched around my dick.”

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He shoved his hand right to her clit, rubbing hard circles over the slick surface. Emily writhed her hips against him. "Give it to me, love."

She didn't have to ask twice. With a low growl, Simon pulled back and thrust in deep and hard. She knew he was struggling for control. She could feel it in the hot ripple over his cock...a cock that got harder and bigger with each second. Then, as if he couldn't bear it another moment, he cut loose, pounding into her like a madman.

Her cunt clutched him as orgasm built once more, making him feel impossibly larger. He shifted down and thrust against her G-spot, grunting in response to her soft groans.

"God, baby," he gasped out. "I can't hold on. You're so hot. I'm gonna—"

"Yes!" she nearly screamed. "I'm with you, honey. Come!"

Their bodies froze together as climax seized them. Her pussy muscles milked the semen from him as she came. Hot liquid spurted into her with the deep thrusts that finished him. They sagged together on the table, still joined at the hip.

"I need you, Emily. I need you in so many ways there aren't words to tell you," he said against her neck.

"Help me pack up."

He didn't hesitate. Before she packed the idol away, Emily dared one last caress.

*I swear I won't screw it up this time. Help me get this right.*

## CHAPTER 3

Simon kept a proprietary hand against the small of Emily's back as they made their way from the FBI building. There'd been a brief tug of war between the branches of the bureau investigating Brian Sumner. Finally, the decision was made to consolidate all evidence at the New York City field office and bring the federal grand jury indictment here in Sumner's area. The more the combined teams were able to process on Sumner, the better the chances of securing that indictment. That is, if Sumner recovered from quadruple bypass surgery.

He wanted the man dead. During the past three years, it'd taken iron will not to kill him. There'd been more than enough opportunities. The promise of prison if he accomplished that

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seemed a small price to pay to avenge the death of his children. But Simon wanted Sumner to suffer, wanted him hurt in such a way that everything the man believed in, craved, and worked for was forever lost. He wanted Sumner locked away for all eternity, tortured by the mistakes he'd made, assaulted in every way imaginable, as he had done to countless of his own men and more than a few women.

Simon was doubly glad he'd resisted the urge to kill the man. The look in Emily's eyes when she saw him had nearly brought Simon to his knees. She still cared, had missed and wanted him. Though he wasn't foolish enough to say he had her back, he was smart enough to recognize a chance at reconciliation when he saw one. The instant she was in his arms, all Simon could think about was being inside her, making her come over and over again, crawling deep under the covers and staying there for the rest of their lives.

Emily jerked to a stop as they neared the front door. Simon reached for a shoulder weapon that wasn't there. He hadn't carried one in ten years, yet the instinct had remained. His lips tightened when he spied who had halted their escape. The last person he'd ever expected to see—Tim Brown. The fact the man was here, and obviously still sniffing out Emily after all these years, pissed him off. He'd tried to interfere with them once before, feeding doubts about him to Emily while he was undercover. It didn't help that she was pregnant with Adam at the time and worried sick that she hadn't heard from Simon.

Thankfully, he'd come back in time to salvage their relationship. Simon quit the bureau immediately, married

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Emily, and they moved to Las Vegas to help his ailing father. The hell of it was, Tim followed. He was always on the periphery of their lives, as if waiting to swoop in and take Emily. And there wasn't a damn thing Simon could do about it. Tim, with his outdated moptop brown hair, was innocence personified. He never threatened or harassed. He was just always there. True to form, he'd followed Emily when she moved to Phoenix.

"What the hell is he doing here?" she mumbled under her breath.

Simon didn't bother to hide his smile. His heart sang with joy that she was as annoyed with Tim's appearance as he was.

Tim's blue eyes chilled when he saw Simon. Just as quickly as the look appeared, it was gone. All Tim's attention was on Emily.

"I hoped I'd be able to catch you." He stepped into her physical space, forcing Emily to take a step back to put distance between them. "I heard those stolen antiquities were recovered and you were called in to verify them. I flew out right away to lend a hand. I had some experience with them, too, as you recall."

A memory flitted back to Simon as he studied the pinched look on Emily's face. Tim's experience was minimal at best. He'd never taken the interest in the project that she had and was constantly leaving the bulk of the work on her shoulders, which was why she had fallen behind in the cataloging originally. Tim had been removed from the project at her request.

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“Your participation would have to be approved by the FBI,” she told him. “This is their investigation. And even if they agreed, I’d have to insist I be allowed to work alone.” She softened her words with a half-hearted smile and a touch to his arm. “This is something I have to do for myself, Tim. All by myself.”

“*He’s* here.” He shot a glare Simon’s way.

Emily drew back once more. “These were our *children*, Tim. I would appreciate a little respect and understanding. Go back to Phoenix...please.”

She side-stepped him and continued on, with Simon still close.

“Should I call security?” he asked.

“I’d like to say it’s not necessary, but he’s always around. I’ve tried to be polite. I’ve tried to be rude. Nothing works. He’s still there.” She sighed as he held the glass door open for her. “I don’t want to make trouble for the guy. After all, I still have to work with him...constantly it seems. He’s just...annoying. Like a pesky mosquito you can’t squash.”

“I’ll squash him. Just say the word.”

She turned into him, resting her head on his chest. “I’ve missed you so much, Simon. I want to freeze this moment forever.”

He rested his cheek on top of her head, inhaling the clean scent of her hair. “I love you, Em. So much. I’m so sorry for everything I ever did wrong in our marriage. So sorry I wasn’t there when you needed me most. I couldn’t bear the pain of losing Adam, Katie, and our baby. I couldn’t sit back and do

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nothing. I had to fix it, had to make him pay.”

She looked up at him. Tears puddled in her eyes. “I’m the one who’s sorry. If it weren’t for me, they’d still be alive. I was mad at you. I wanted to prove I could—”

“Shh, sweetheart.” Tipping her chin up with his fingers, he brushed a kiss against her trembling lips. “Why don’t we grab an early dinner at that Italian place we used to like so well?”

“I’d like that.”

\* \* \*

Emily watched him hail a cab. What she most wanted was the chance to never let Simon out of her sight, her life, again. After all they’d been through, all the years apart, he still loved her. That knowledge alone made her want to weep with joy, even while she cried for those lost years. Maybe this is what it had taken—the complete loss of everything they held dear in order to discover the true wealth of their relationship. It was a hard and painful lesson to learn. Somehow she suspected there might be more before she and Simon got their happy-ever-after...if they got it at all. Expressing their love, their loneliness for each other, the grief they shared, and the killer sex that bound them was one thing. Rebuilding their lives together would take a lot of hard work and commitment. She was willing. Was he?

They clutched each other’s hands as the driver pulled into traffic. Was he as afraid to let go, as afraid this was all a dream as she was? There were a thousand questions she wanted to ask. She saved them for the privacy of that dark

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booth at Martinelli's, where their only light was a candle stuck in an old Chianti bottle.

"Have you done anything new to the house?" That seemed a safe topic during the drive through heavy traffic.

Simon squeezed her hand. "I don't live there anymore. I moved out after you did. I couldn't bear to be there with the emptiness, the memories." He gave a soft laugh. "I also couldn't bear to sell the place. In some sick corner of my mind, for a while, I tried to pretend you and the kids were still there, and that I hadn't seen you because of work.

"When I realized I couldn't live with that illusion, it was like grieving all over again. And still I couldn't sell the place. I didn't want to shut down their rooms and put their things in storage. Those rooms were my last connection to all of you. A landscaper and housekeeping service come by once a week."

He gave a slight laugh. "I'm sure a psychiatrist would have a field day with me."

"With both of us." She knew exactly how he felt. How many nights had she sat poring over family pictures? Emily remembered, when she'd finally come up for air, that she'd taken all of the photo albums with her. She'd prepared a separate album for Simon and mailed it with no explanation.

"You got the album I sent?"

He lifted her hand and kissed her fingers. "I did. Thank you. I would've called or sent a note, but..."

Emily didn't want a reminder of how stupid she'd been in telling him to never contact her again. She was just grateful he'd finally decided not to listen. That's when she realized—

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he'd stayed away because she'd asked it of him, but also to protect her while he went undercover to catch their children's killer. It made her love him all the more, if that were possible.

She hugged his arm and rested her cheek against his bicep. So much to say and no words to say it. Simon's soft laugh pulled her head up. They'd reached the small restaurant off the main drag in Little Italy. The snap of the green, white, and red canopy greeted them like a long-lost friend. But it was the couple standing outside the door who held Simon's attention. Emily didn't ask if they were friends of his. It was apparent from his look and theirs that some relationship existed. They even walked toward the cab, while Simon paid the driver.

"Small world," Simon said to them.

"Great restaurant," the man replied.

The women extended her hand to Emily. "I'm Allie Quinn. This gorgeous man beside me is Matt Oliver. We know Simon from work. You must be Emily."

He'd mentioned her to others? Talk about making her heart soar. Emily smiled as she shook Allie's hand. "I am."

Matt motioned to Martinelli's. "We were going to grab an early dinner. Care to join us? My treat. But no hard feelings if you say no. I imagine you have a lot of catching up to do."

Emily laced her fingers through Simon's. "We do. I'd prefer to have him all to myself for as long as I can. Thank you for understanding."

"Not a problem," Matt replied with a bright smile. "Perhaps another time. It was a pleasure to meet you."

They walked into the restaurant together and were escorted

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to separate booths at opposite sides of the room. Simon slid in beside her, a pleasure they hadn't known since before Adam was born. With children came pairing off to care for them when they went out as a family. That had transferred over to the private dates they'd had. Emily didn't realize how much she'd missed this simple act until now.

"They make a striking couple." She could remember when people said that about her and Simon. "Are they married?"

He wrapped his hand over her thigh, up high near her crotch. "Not yet, but I'm sure it's only a matter of time. They haven't known each other long, but the sparks fly when they're together."

She studied Allie and Matt. "I can see that. They sure light up around each other."

He glanced their way with a smile. "Yeah, they sure do. No denying that love."

"Did they work with you on getting this man?"

"Yes. We were all undercover together."

"You trust them with your life."

He twisted her way, one hand over her shoulder, the other replacing it on her thigh. The look in his eyes was so filled with love her heart swelled. "More importantly, I'd trust them with yours."

Damned if he wasn't going to have her crying again. She parted her lips for his kiss.

"Would you like a bottle of Chianti for the table?" the waitress asked.

Her abrupt arrival jerked them apart. Emily actually felt

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her cheeks heat.

“Thank you,” Simon said. “And see my friends over there get one, too.” He pointed to Matt and Allie’s booth.

“Right away, sir.”

She slipped two over-sized menus on to the red-and-white checkered tablecloth before dashing off. Neither of them bothered to open their menu. Their selection had never varied in all the times they’d been here before—eggplant parmigiana with angel hair pasta and bread sticks hot from the oven.

Simon toyed with her thigh while they waited for the wine and to give their order. Every so often he’d flick his fingers over her pussy. Emily parted her legs to give him better access. She didn’t care who might see. She was going to suck up every moment she had with Simon.

*And suck him, too, for that matter.*

After they gave the waitress their orders, Emily dared the question she most needed answered. “Who is he? How did you find him?”

“Brian Sumner.”

She frowned. “I’ve heard of him. Isn’t he that millionaire who came up with the charity poker game on his private train from New York to Miami? He and his men were arrested for assault, weren’t they?”

He nodded and took a sip of wine. “That was Matt’s case. We didn’t realize until a week ago we had two separate investigations converging on the man. His case nearly screwed mine up. Fortunately, we were able to join forces and bring him down.”

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

“And where did Allie fit in?”

“She was sent on the train to retrieve information from Matt and got pulled into the investigation.”

Emily doubted Allie had had much a choice in the matter either. One thing she'd learned about Simon when they'd first met was that his dedication to duty and justice was the one thing his superiors used against him and in their favor. Jobs were often presented in such a way that the special agent didn't hesitate to take it on. Undercover agents always had the choice if they wanted to continue or not. Most burned out quickly from the stress of living a double life. Emily didn't know if Simon had ever reached that point. He'd quit for her and his father, not for himself. She could be glad of that fact. A burned-out agent might not have been as effective in bringing down the man who'd destroyed their life. But Simon had never lost that edge he needed. What she'd previously resented, she now blessed.

“How were you able to learn it was him?” She traced her forefinger around the lip of her wineglass. She remembered little about that night. Everything had happened so quickly. She'd jumped up when the men burst into the room and been shot instantly. The bullet punctured her lung and barely missed her heart. Anything from that point on was jumbled in a mixed of horror and blood loss.

“Someone called out on a cell phone from that location. A check of records finally linked the call to Sumner. Using the ties Dad's wealth and company provided, I was able to work my way into his confidence. The agency didn't hesitate to let

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me go under. It's taken all this time to catch him. There were times I wondered if I'd ever do it. I knew I had him when I saw that fertility goddess in the stash of goods he was trying to sell."

"You said he'd go to jail for life if he lived. Did you hurt him?"

"There were times I wanted to, times I had the chance. But no. He had a heart attack and is in ICU recovering from a quadruple bypass."

"I suppose it would save the taxpayers a lot of money if he died."

"The temptation to see that happened has been a lot to bear these last three years."

She cupped his cheek. "I'm glad you didn't. He's the one who needs to be behind bars, not you." She drew his top lip between hers for a slow kiss, then the bottom, then parted them both with a swipe of her tongue.

Simon pulled in a sharp breath and deepened the kiss. Hot fingers traced determined lines along her crotch. She cursed the fact she had on jeans instead of a skirt. The image of him diving beneath it, breaching the small barrier of panties to get to the molten gold beyond, thumped her heart. She pressed her thighs together, capturing his hand between them as she tried to quell the ache in her clit.

Fighting a moan, she broke their kiss and butted her forehead against his. "Can we get our order to go?"

A sweep of his thumb caressed her cheek. "Our food will be cold by the time we get to your room."

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“But we won’t be.” She flashed her tongue over his chin. He spun around and signaled the waitress.

## CHAPTER 4

“Your room or mine?”

Simon swung open the cab door. He clutched the plastic bag with their dinner in his fist. Emily cradled the bottle of Chianti in her arms. She would have found out sooner or later that they were in the same hotel. Working through the agency, he'd wanted to make sure she was as comfortable as possible without rousing any suspicion. He'd been working up the courage to tell her he was footing the bill for her room and also staying in a double suite several floors above hers. There was no better time than now.

“We're in the same hotel.”

“Convenient.”

## NEVER TOO LATE

He relaxed with her grin as they slid onto the seat.

"I'd be willing to bet you have a suite with everything we could possibly need." The comment seemed more to herself than to him. Still Simon felt the need to confirm her assumption.

"There's a big tub, a kitchenette, a huge bed—soft, lonely."

"And private," she added. "The last thing I want is to have Tim Brown knocking on my door."

*If the son-of-a-bitch even dared...* Simon shifted to face her fully. "Stay with me."

Her mouth opened, but it took a few seconds for words to escape. "This job could take a while. What if—"

"No what-ifs." He skidded his hand under her T-shirt straight to her breast and nuzzled his face against her neck. "Stay with me, honey. I need you. God, how I need you." He captured her ear lobe in a soft suckle.

Emily sighed and arched into the caress. "O-okay. I'll get my things later."

"I could get the butler to pack for you."

She froze, then pulled back on a hard laugh. "Butler? You have a butler? You? The man who couldn't stand to have a housekeeper—how did you put it?—up your ass?"

He shrugged a shoulder. "He was in a spot. He'd helped us out immensely. I couldn't leave him unemployed or in a potentially dangerous situation. So...I offered him a job and he accepted. I was going to have him flown directly to Vegas, but if we need his services here..."

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

“Oh-my-God...this ought to be worth sticking around to see.”

“Anything for your amusement, love.” He wedged his hand under her bra and tweaked her nipple.

Emily playfully smacked his hand. “Si-mon! The iver-dray.”

Rolling his eyes, he plopped against the seat. “You know how much pig-latin confuses me.”

“Poor baby.” She stabbed her fingers into his ribs and tickled.

He caught her wrist in a gentle hold and kissed the tip of her nose. Memories of happier times surrounded him—Adam’s and Katie’s laughter, while Mama teased Daddy with pig-latin and Daddy feigned stupidity. He blinked away tears.

“Let’s get your things and check you out first. Once I get you alone, I don’t want any distractions.”

“I agree. I want to tangle in the sheets with you, soak the world away in a tub of bubbles across from you, run around naked, and generally forget the world exists, until I have to go back to work tomorrow. And I do have to go to work. You will, too, soon enough, Simon. As much as we’d like to, we can’t keep the world at bay forever.”

In many respects that’s exactly what he wanted to do. He wanted to chuck in all and start from scratch. Too many things and people relied on him to have that happen, but he was no longer willing to give them every minute of his time. One painful lesson he’d learned was life was too short to place those he loved on the back burner.

## NEVER TOO LATE

"I did a lot of things I've not proud of, Em, especially these last three years."

She rested her head on his shoulder. "You did what you had to do. It's in the past." She raised up a fraction of an inch. "It *is* in the past, isn't it?"

He tucked her head back where it was. "Yeah, baby, it's in the past. I'll still have to testify before the grand jury, but I'm done. I know I told you that once before, but this time I swear to God I mean it. I hated the man I had to be to catch this guy. Hated the dual life I had to lead."

"Wasn't it worth it to catch Sumner?"

"Hell, yeah, but look what it cost me. I lost you, too, and I was too foolish to realize it at the time."

"I'm not lost, Simon. I'm right here."

She was here now, but what about tomorrow and the next day and the day after that, the year after this? Simon snapped his mind away from dwelling on that. If all he got was here and now, he'd take it. It was far more than he deserved for all he'd put her through.

He closed his eyes and welded his lips onto hers, kneading gently while he twined his tongue around hers. Her fingers flexed into his shirt like a contented cat; all that was missing was the purr.

"We're at your hotel," the cab driver snapped. "You might want to think about taking it to your room."

Simon didn't bother to waste a glare on the man. He'd just screwed himself out of a tip with his attitude. He peeled off the fare from his money clip and tossed the bills over the front

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

seat while he shouldered open the door. Emily crawled out beside him. The driver sped away the second the door closed.

“Uhm...we forgot the wine and food,” she said, staring after the departing vehicle.

Simon wrapped his hand around hers. “We’ll order room service later. There’s only one thing I want to eat right now.”

\* \* \*

Emily swore she’d stopped breathing. From the first moment he’d suckled her clit between his lips and deviled it with his tongue, daydreams of that pleasure had often tugged her away from work. She hadn’t been much of a fan of cunnilingus before then. But Simon knew exactly how to eat a woman. She damned the jeans again. If she’d had a skirt on—and privacy in the elevator—she might have peeled off her panties and spread open for him.

She closed her eyes and let the fantasy weave around her...then flashed them opened half-panicked as she tried to recall the last time she’d done any “trim work” down there. Added to the fact they’d just had sex made her a little uneasy. She wanted things perfect for Simon.

“I could really go for a shower first.”

Heat banked in his brown eyes. A smile lifted one corner of his mouth. That hot hand squeezed her butt cheek. Emily was so wet she knew her pussy juices had to have soaked through her jeans. She wanted to shove his hand to her crotch, or hoist herself onto his thigh and dry hump him as he’d done her earlier.

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

“We’ll probably wind up killing each other with kindness before the night’s over,” she said softly.

Simon’s laughter filled the elevator. The other passengers flashed them looks from the corners of their eyes.

“I don’t know about that,” he said. “But I can guarantee we’ll be feeling it in the morning.”

On tiptoe she whispered into his ear, “I’m going to be feeling it sooner than that.”

A breath shuddered through him. He looked like he wanted to fuck her right here and now. God knew, she wanted him to, and she didn’t care who watched. When the elevator doors opened on her floor, Emily grabbed his hand and hauled him out. He matched her hurried strides to the room. To hell with rushing to his suite. She’d waited three years to go after the man she loved. She wasn’t waiting a second longer.

Emily’s hand shook with a combination of lust and nerves as she tried to seat the key card. Simon slipped it from her fingers and thrust it in, then out. She compared it to the pound of his cock deep inside her. Her clit swelled against the crotch seam. She crossed the threshold the second the latch opened, stripping her clothes away as she went.

“I need you, Simon. I need you now,” she breathlessly announced, then laughed when she saw he was with her every step of the way.

Tossing clothing every which way, they fell onto the bed and into each other’s arms. Simon stabbed his cock into her cunt and froze. The rapture on his face, coupled with his contented sigh, said he’d felt heaven. Emily agreed.

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

They lay there lost in the wonder of their reunion. She twined her legs around his. He combed his fingers through her hair. The pulse of his erection beat inside her, spreading her wider with every tick of the travel clock on the bedside table. They traded kisses—soft nibbles, deep tonsil-ticklers, easy and slow, hard and demanding—and still had yet to rock toward a conclusion. It didn't matter. She was close to coming just like this.

"I want to fuck you in every imaginable way possible." His voice rumbled through her like a caress all its own.

"You might find me close to a virgin in some places," she said with a light laugh. "Believe it or not, the only person I've had sex with the last three years has been myself."

His expression closed like someone had drawn a curtain. Emily instantly regretted her words. Obviously, he hadn't been celibate. The news media had been fairly good at linking him to this actress, that heiress, yet another model. Again, there was no one to blame but herself.

"It's okay." She rubbed her hands over his strong shoulders. "A man like you..." She offered a weak smile. "A woman would be crazy..."

He touched his index finger to her lips. "Don't. No one else belongs in this room but you and me. From the first time I met you, there's only been you in my heart. Anything that happened before us or when we were apart doesn't matter. It's me and you now."

He shifted position, pulling his stiff cock from her. With long strokes he used it to spread her moisture along her crack.

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Anticipation hummed across her skin. He thumbed her nipples, flicking the hard beads back and forth, around and around, readying them for his tongue as his penis prepared her anus. She gasped when he grazed his teeth over them, then again when he caught her nipple between his lips. He tugged it gently into his mouth and swept his tongue over.

“Oh, God.” She clutched his head to her breast.

“That’s what I’m going to do to your clit, sweetheart.” Then he lavished attention on her other nipple.

Arrows of sweet torture shot down to her pussy as he kneaded the flesh with hands and mouth and kissed the scar the bullet made, as if he wanted to make it disappear. She locked her ankles around his waist, trying to get his cock rubbing against her clitoris. Simon indulged her with a few thrusts as he drifted back and forth between her breasts. By the time he raked his mouth down her stomach, Emily could have cared less about any overgrowth down there. All she wanted was his tongue against her clit.

Simon nipped at the tender flesh of her inner thighs. A gentle nudge tucked his shoulders under them. Emily draped her legs down his back and clutched the pillow beneath her head. He tunneled two fingers deep inside, while his tongue traced a lazy path in the valleys of her pussy. He pressed into her G-spot and kneaded his lips along her labia. Blood swelled her clit to bursting. He teased it by blowing air over it. Emily twitched, trying to lift her hips to the relief his mouth promised.

Tongue and thumb massaged circles around the perimeter

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

of her pussy, building the pressure even more. She writhed against the press of his fingers into her G-spot. Just when she was sure she'd found home, he eased away.

Emily whimpered a protest, then sucked in a hard breath when he wormed two fingers into her anal passage. He pressed his thumb into her vagina and touched his fingers through the thin wall. With slow strokes, he rubbed back and forth. His tongue fluttered over her clitoris.

She lifted her hips on a hard moan. He captured the swollen flesh in a hard suckle before she could come back down. Orgasm zinged through her. Emily quivered under the onslaught. He stayed locked onto her until she sagged back into the bed.

Simon kissed his way up her body, taking her legs with him. She felt the gently probe of his cock at her anus and clutched his shoulders in preparation.

"Relax, honey." He kissed her.

She gave a quick nod and ordered her muscles to compile. Simon spread more of her juices toward the entrance. There was steady pressure and then the slow, sweet glide of his cock past the tight muscle. Emily released the breath she didn't realize she'd been holding. Her body came alive again, ready for the intense orgasm it remembered from past anal sex.

Simon's slow stroke in and out had her groaning again.

"God, I wish I could have your cock in both places at once. Fucking me. Making me come."

A chuckle rumbled in his chest. "Maybe we need to go toy shopping. Would you like that? Me fucking you good in your

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hot cunt and tight ass?” He pumped her faster, harder.

Emily dropped her hand to her clit.

“That’s it, baby. Play with that hard little clit. Make yourself come, while I’m fucking you.” He rolled her nipples between thumbs and forefingers.

She bit her bottom lip to keep from crying out, then let the raw sound out anyway. Her clit was the slickest she’d ever remembered it being. She flashed her fingers over it, gliding into every thrust of Simon’s body into hers. She felt the orgasm build from deep within her body. It spiraled up like a tornado in reverse and exploded from her.

Simon surged forward. Jets of semen filled her. They strained together and melted into the mattress.

## CHAPTER 5

Simon lay with his head on Emily's stomach, his leg draped over hers, her fingers slowly combing through his hair. Her scent surrounded him like an invisible silk sheet. This is what he'd stolen from himself. Odd he hadn't truly realized that until now.

Sex had always been explosive between them, intensely satisfying. But as the pressures of running his father's company had weighed him down, he was ashamed to say he'd neglected the aftercare part of sex. Where once they'd lay entwined—like now—they'd merely cleaned up and rolled to opposite sides of the bed. No wonder she'd been unhappy. *Well, one of the reasons.* It all boiled down to the fact he was

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

rarely at home, and when he was, he still wasn't there emotionally. He'd become a stranger to his wife, more so to his children. And while he could hope to rebuild his relationship with Emily, the opportunity to know his children better was lost forever.

Tears filled his eyes, then trickled to her belly. Embittered by his loss and determine to avenge it, he'd become a hard man these last three years. Women who'd drifted into his life were fucked and sent on their way, or simply for show at events. Business acquaintances were merely a means to achieve his ultimate objectives—bolster the company and bring Brian Sumner down. If Emily had stayed with him, she wouldn't have stayed for long. He hadn't liked himself much, so how could he expect she would? That was why he'd always stayed away when he was undercover during their dating years. He'd never learned to balance both parts of his life. Leaving the agency hadn't solved that dilemma. He'd just shifted that personality into learning and running his father's business.

Now, by some miracle of fate, here he was with the only woman he'd ever loved. Was it another chance to fix his wrongs and get it right? Or was the universe screwing with him, reminding him of all he'd lost before it was gone forever? He couldn't tell her he hadn't slept with another woman the last three years. God only knew what she'd do if she found out he'd been involved in a brief ménage with Matt and Allie. She wouldn't care that it was necessary for the job. She'd walk out the door and never come back.

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

“Hey...” She gently pulled his head back. “It’s okay.”

Simon had always felt safe with her. She’d never know the times he’d longed to cling to her in the darkness of their room and cry. Now, with Emily’s body next to his, her arms holding him tight, Simon was finally able to give a silent voice to those fears that often overwhelmed him.

He slid upward, drawing her into his arms as he lay on his side next to her. “I do love you, Em. That’s never changed. It never will. The mistakes I’ve made...”

“Shh.” She licked his tears away. “I’ve made mistakes, too. When we were first together, I was as focused on my work as you were on yours. I was fairly content for us to go along as we were. Pregnancy was a huge eye-opener for me.”

He raked her hair away from her face. “You handled it all so well—your job, the kids, the house.”

She gave a light laugh. “I was drowning, Simon. I could barely keep my head above water. Instead of sharing with you, I started to resent you for not being there. I never told you how much trouble I was having. I threw accusations and anger at you, driving you farther away, when all I wanted was you to help me make things right. You couldn’t make it right if you didn’t know everything that was wrong. I expected you to fix me, not once accepting that was only something I could do.”

“I should’ve seen. I should’ve noticed.”

“How could you notice what I’d become so adept at hiding...even from myself?”

“I should’ve been there, should’ve realized I was doing the same thing in the new job as I’d done while undercover—

## NEVER TOO LATE

shutting you out. Adam, Katie, and our new baby would be here if it weren't for me." All the emotions Simon had forced away over the last three years swamped him. His heart could barely stand the pain.

Emily's eyes flooded with tears. "No, love. They'd be here if it weren't for *me*. My anger, my selfishness put them in harm's way. I should've left them safe in their beds with Anita watching over them. But I was determined to show you—to prove to myself—I could do it all. And look what it cost us."

They held onto each other and let their grief out—something they should have done three years before. They eased away at the same time, brushing tears off each other's cheeks, sharing gentle kisses. Her eyes were as red-rimmed as his must be.

He sniffled and pulled in a deep breath. "Let's get you packed up, so we can settle in the suite. I want to spend the rest of the night in our own little world."

"In a minute." Her voice was a hint away from a whisper.

Emily pushed him back to the bed. Straddling his hips, she tickled her long hair over his nipples. They pebbled in the wake of the caress and hardened even more when she rubbed her thumbs over them. A contented sigh eased him into her passion.

She rocked to her knees and dropped a kiss to his nose. "Don't get too comfortable. I know of a hot shower that has our names all over it." She swung from the bed and beckoned him to follow with a crook of her finger.

Simon didn't waste any time, but Emily still beat him to it.

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

By the time he reached the bathroom, she had the shower running and was in the tub. He peeled the curtain aside. Her sweet smile and soapy hands welcomed him in.

She skidded suds over his shoulders, down his arms, then up to his chest. Long strokes of soap followed his pecs, ribs, and navel. She lathered his pubic hair, slowly working around his awakening cock, teasing the base with a nudge every so often. He stood there, eyes half-closed as he absorbed her touch and watched love and passion bloom on her face once more.

Nimble fingers dusted up the trail of hair and circled deep into his belly button. Tension shot to his balls. He drew in a sharp breath when she closed her mouth over his nipple and twirled it between her teeth while she flicked her tongue over it. Her free hand wandered to his testicles, carefully weighing them as she kneaded them and used her forearm to rub his penis.

She slid to his other nipple, dotting kisses all around before suckling it. He pulled in another hard gasp and felt her exploring his ass. He parted his legs to allow her better access. His reward was a finger thrust past the tight muscle and right into his prostate. A groan buckled his knees.

Emily guided him under the shower until his back touched the wall. "Don't move."

She left him standing under the gentle spray while she darted from the bathroom. She returned a few seconds later with a pair of pantyhose. Without a word, she tied one leg around his wrist, pulled his arm up to the shower head, and

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

secured both wrists to it. Simon's full-staff erection poked into her stomach the whole time.

Emily adjusted the shower to strike the far end of the tub. Like a sculptress admiring her creation, her fingers traveled every angle and divot on his body, leaving nothing untouched. She massaged his ass, delving deep into the crack, exploring inside, loving his prostate with such devotion Simon was sure he'd come without any other friction. Then she knelt at his feet.

She cupped his calves and tickled her way to the backs of his thighs. Her lips played with the inside, licking and nipping until she reached his sac. She nestled her face into his crotch, divided his balls with a thrust of her tongue between them. Simon groaned. Sparks shot behind his closed eyes, flashed white hot when she sucked one testicle into her mouth, then exploded into brilliant red when she wedged two fingers inside his ass.

"God, baby, please!" he gasped out.

Emily looped thumb and forefinger around his cock, barely touching the surface. Simon thrust madly into the circle she created.

"Please don't tease me, sweetheart," he begged.

"Mmmm" rumbled in her throat a mere second before she closed her hot mouth over the head of his cock.

Simon sagged into the wall and pushed his hips forward, trying to force his penis further inside. Her tongue fluttered on the underside. Fingers started a slow thrust in and out of his colon. Heat pooled in his pelvis felt like a fire only the spurt of

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

his jism would quench.

She drew him deeper on a slow, hard suck. Simon grasped the pipe on the shower head in a white-knuckled grip. His body quivered from the need to come in her mouth. She tightened the loop around the base of his dick. Experience told him she intended to choke off his ejaculate, letting him orgasm but not come. It hurt like hell, yet felt so good. He pumped wildly into her sucks, craving and dreading the finale, while those fingers up his ass urged him on. He fought to come, fought to hold back. Mindless groans tore from his throat. Emily was clearly in charge. He reveled in the power she had over him.

Without warning, she deep-throated him. Simon cried out. His hips snapped forward, pain and pleasure merging with his climax.

He huffed for breath in the aftermath. She dotted kisses, caresses, and love bites to his groin, then stretched to her feet to untie him. The second he felt the knot slip, Simon tugged his hands free and clamped his lips over her breast.

Emily arched into him on a gasp, head tossed back in ecstasy as he kneaded and sucked her soft flesh. "Oh, Simon, fuck me again...hard and fast."

Clutching her to him, he managed to twist off the water and swung her into his arms. With lips sealed, he carried her from the tub. She snagged the towels as they left the bathroom, haphazardly blotting water from them.

Simon draped her onto the end of the bed, spread her legs wide and stabbed his cock deep into her. Emily bowed her

## *NEVER TOO LATE*

back against the mattress. He pressed his thumb over her clitoris, rubbing hard circles as he beat himself into her tight pussy.

An orgasm rolled over her minutes later. He refused to ease his play. He thrust hard and deep, flicking the swollen nub around and around, while she twisted against the sensation.

“I can’t come again, Simon. I can’t,” she cried out.

“Need your bottom warmed up a little to help you?”

Her eyes flashed open wide. He couldn’t remember the last time they’d played at spanking, but it was before she’d gotten pregnant with Adam. He blessed Matt and Allie for reminding him of how hot spanking could be.

He pulled free and crawled up to the head of the bed, pulling Emily with him. She seemed hesitant and unsure, yet didn’t protest when he hauled her facedown onto his lap. Her bottom was as firm as it had always been, with nicely rounded curves. He dusted his hand over her creamy skin.

“I want to come just thinking about it, Simon.” Her voice came out on a rush of breath. She parted her legs and the scent of her arousal drifted to him.

He kneaded his fingers into her flesh until she was wiggling on his lap. A gentle swat yanked a groan from her. She lifted her ass for more. He alternated playful smacks against each butt cheek until they were rosy. Each one made her wiggle all the more. He smiled when she worked herself toward his knee, then straddled it. Thighs locked around it, she writhed her crotch over it until an orgasm rippled through her.

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Simon hauled her back into place and kept her there, heating her backside more. He shoved his fingers under her, clamping them over her clitoris. Another orgasm shot from her. He built her to the peak once more, bringing her up and over the edge again. When she slid down the other side, he flipped her onto her back, nailing her into the mattress with his cock.

He fucked her like a wild man, like it was his last day on earth. She tickled his lower back, reached down and popped her hand over his ass in a series of smacks that yank his own orgasm to the threshold. He seated himself deep and let the semen pour from him.

Kisses eased them into the afterglow. She'd never looked more beautiful.

"You are the most beautiful woman in the world, sweetheart." He was a fool to have taken that for granted.

"I love you so much, Simon." She locked her hands at the nape of his neck. "I want to be with you. To be your wife again. To have another child. Is it too late?"

"Aw, sweetheart...it's never too late."

## 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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