

A woman with long, wavy blonde hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a light blue strapless top. She is holding a white measuring tape around her waist. A man's muscular arm and hand are visible, holding the other end of the measuring tape. The background is blurred, showing more of the man's body.

# A LESSON IN PASSION

**Peggy Hunter**

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## Chaptez 1

"Damn," Shane said under his breath as the bedside phone began to ring. Bright sunlight assaulted his eyes as he brushed his shoulder length brown hair away from his face and looked at the offending instrument. "Leave a fucking message," he murmured before he rolled over. When he heard the click of the answering machine in the living room pick up the call, he rolled over.

The scent of the woman beside him filled his senses. She smelled of expensive perfume and stale wine as she turned her face toward him and opened her eyes.

"Good morning, lover," she purred as she touched his cheek with her hand. Her long blond hair, no doubt from a bottle, splayed across her pillow as she smiled at him with love swollen lips.

Shane winced at her touch. Her hand felt cool against his unshaved face. Bringing her home from the party last night seemed like a good idea at the time. She had been flirting with him all night, making sure he knew what she wanted. He didn't let her down.

Shane broke his number one rule, he'd let her come home with him rather than going to the woman's place. He had no intention of bringing her to his apartment, but she'd made him so damn horny and said they couldn't go to her place. Now he was faced with finding a way to get rid of her. The last thing he wanted to do was share breakfast with the woman and plan the day with her. God, he wasn't even sure what her name was. *Susan? Shirley?* Something with an s, he was certain of that much.

Shane pulled away from her touch and sat up on the bed with his back to her. "I need a shower," he grumbled as he got up and walked to the bathroom.

*Shelly.* That was it!

When she gasped and chuckled, he turned to look at her.

"You've got the imprint of my fingers on your ass. I didn't realize how hard I was holding on when I sucked you off last night."

Shane sighed. "Look, Shelley, we had a great time last night but—"

Her laugh cut him off. "We had a fabulous time. I've never met a man who could fuck better. But if you're trying to come up with a nice way to tell me to get lost, I'll spare you the effort."

Shane blinked as she got out of bed and reached for her clothes. "I've got a husband who is probably wondering why I didn't come home last night."

*Shit!*

She grinned as she walked up to him. "You see, I used you

just as much as you used me." She planted a kiss on his lips as she buttoned her blouse. "Thanks for scratching that itch for me. You were great."

As she walked to the bedroom door, she turned and looked at him. "By the way, my name is Sandy."

Her laughter split the air as he heard the apartment door close firmly, leaving him standing in the middle of his bedroom stark naked.

Shane walked to the bed and sat down. No fucking wonder she didn't want to go to her place. That's what he got for thinking with his dick. Damn!

Shane flopped back onto the bed and stared up at the ceiling. Since his marriage broke up three years ago, Shane often enjoyed women's company. The short-lived marriage had left him bitter enough to know he'd never commit to anyone again, but that didn't mean he didn't want great sex as often as he could get it.

He'd always been the user. Until now, that is.

Shane sighed when the phone rang. He considered letting the answering machine get it again and then decided to answer it.

"Shane!" Cordelia Von Helt's familiar voice sounded on the other end. "I heard you got to town and moved into your new apartment a couple days ago."

Shane smiled fondly. "Yeah," he said, "Still a bit of unpacking to do, but I'm here."

"And you didn't call me immediately? I'm disappointed in you, Shane," she chided softly.

"I'm sorry, Cor. This past week has been crazy." He decided not to tell her about the party he'd gone to the night before. "I'll come by to see you today."

"Well, that's why I'm calling. I'd like to you come to my summer house on Carleton Island for the weekend."

"Oh, Cor, I can't do that. I'm starting my new job on Monday and I've still got so much to do around here." He hated the idea of disappointing the old woman, but he didn't have a choice. "Maybe we can do it some other weekend, after I'm settled in."

Cordelia's voice grew cool as she replied. "Shane, I've known you for many years and I've never asked you to do anything for me. I need you to come to my summer house this weekend and I won't take no for an answer."

"Cordelia," Shane said, "It's not that I don't want to—"

"Good," she said quickly. "I'll send my driver to pick you up in an hour."

"God, I wish I had a rich aunt who would whisk me away to her summer house for an extended weekend," Mary said as she stood over Lucy's desk.

"Cordelia isn't really my aunt," Lucy replied. "She's a good friend of the family, that's all."

"Still, she invited you to spend the weekend at her posh estate on Carleton Island. It'll be the perfect weekend for you. A chance to regroup and sort things out."

Lucy smiled at her coworker. "I suppose. I could use a little down time."

"After everything you've been through in the last few weeks, I'd say so," Mary said.

"I just wish I wasn't leaving Doctor Benton in a lurch. Friday is the busiest day at the dental clinic and it's his last full day before he retires."

"Don't worry about me," Doctor Benton said as he rounded the corner and pulled a file folder from the holder on her desk. "If I didn't think you needed a long weekend, I would have said so."

Lucy nodded. "I know, but—"

"No buts," he said, "You're just missing one day of work and you'll be here on Monday for my official retirement and to meet the new dentist taking over the practice." He looked at Mary and winked. "I wonder if my dental hygienist feels like helping me today?"

"I'll be right there," Mary said as she turned to Lucy. "Poor old man, he can't manage anything without me."

Lucy grinned and leaned forward. "Aren't you curious about the new dentist taking over?" she whispered.

Mary rolled her eyes. "God, yes. I don't know why Dr. Benton has kept it such a secret."

Lucy was about to express her own concerns when a glint of light caught her eye. She peered out the front window and saw a black stretch limousine pull up in front of the clinic. Mary beamed. "Look's like your ride's here. Have a blast, girlfriend."

Lucy sighed. Cordelia would have to send the largest limo in her fleet. While the older woman might have been a friend of her family for many years, the fact she loved to show off her money always made Lucy feel uneasy.

Cordelia's past was anything but opulent. Born to poor farmers, she used her good looks to land rich husbands. She swore her fourth marriage to billionaire financier Hendrik Von Helt was for love. She was forty-nine when she married the eighty-three year old man. Three years later, Hendrik died during a lovemaking session with his young wife. He had no immediate family and Cordelia inherited everything he owned.

While most people didn't believe her love was sincere, Lucy never doubted it for a moment. Every time she'd seen them together, she could tell the light shining in their eyes was true love. A love of the ages. Something Lucy had long since given up hope of ever finding.

At twenty-nine, Lucy knew one thing for sure. What Hendrik and Cordelia shared was not only rare, it was almost unheard of. Hendrik didn't care that his wife's body wasn't perfect. He had come to love the woman she was, warts and all ... figuratively speaking.

Lucy met her ex-husband, Jon, in high school. They married right after graduation against her parents' wishes. Wedded bliss was short-lived. He soon found fault in her, no matter how hard she tried to please him. He often told her she was so flat, he felt like he was sleeping with a man. No matter what Lucy did, she always felt ugly when her husband looked at her naked body. She'd never been able to satisfy his needs in bed.

Still, when she came home and found him in bed with one of his coworkers, she felt her heart break into a million pieces.

Lucy would never forget the moment she walked into her bedroom and found Jon with the woman. The woman was on her knees and elbows as Jon shoved his length into her from behind. He groaned and cursed as he bucked his hips.

"Fuck me harder, Jonnie," she cried. "Yes, it's so good."

Jon leaned forward and grabbed her huge breasts as he continued to grind his hips against her ass. She could hear the sound of their bodies smacking together as he moaned.

"God, you are so fucking hot. Your pussy is so tight."

She screamed, "Oh God, I'm coming now, Jonnie. Harder!"

Lucy felt tears of frustration prick her eyes. Jon was making her climax. In the years they'd been married, she had never once experienced a climax and here was this woman, on the verge of something Lucy knew nothing about.

It was true. Lucy knew it without a doubt. She was undesirable.

She backed out of the room and pulled the door closed just as the woman howled her release. She pressed her hands over her ears to block Jon's moans as he came. She ran out of the house and never went back.

"Ms. Bedford?" Lucy blinked back to reality as she gazed up at the stoic man standing over her desk.

"Uhm, yes," she said. "That's me."

"My name is Stanton," he said as he tipped his chauffeur's cap. "I'm here to take you to Mrs. Von Helt's summer house."

"Yes, yes, of course," Lucy said as she got up from the desk and leaned down to grab the bag she'd packed and brought into work this morning.

"Allow me," Stanton said as he lifted the bag and stood to one side. "After you, ma'am."

Stanton followed her out of the clinic door and walked to the back of the limo. He opened the trunk and placed her bag inside. As Lucy reached to open the door, Stanton quickly opened it for her.

Lucy offered him a nervous smile as she got in. She blinked when she saw the limo already had an occupant. The door slammed shut and Stanton got into the driver's seat. Lucy quickly peered over at the man occupying the seat an arm's length away from her and offered another nervous smile.

"I expect Stanton is dropping you somewhere on our way," she said.

The man looked annoyed. "As a matter of fact, I was thinking the same thing about you. I'm going to Carleton Island for the weekend."

Lucy's gaze washed over him. She could tell he was tall, at least six feet, and dressed casually in jeans and white t-shirt. His chiseled features were enhanced by the long dark brown hair pulled back into a ponytail. Rich brown eyes regarded her with wariness as he leisurely crossed one leg over another.

"When Cordelia Von Helt asked me to spend the weekend at her summer house on the island, she didn't say I'd be sharing the place with anyone."

He looked down his long perfect nose as he regarded her with hooded eyes. "I guess you were wrong. Seems I'm spending the weekend there, too."

Lucy felt her body shrink into the plush seat. The man was perfectly handsome, from his tall stature to the dimple on his chin. She couldn't share the house with him this weekend. She would never relax knowing he was anywhere near.

"There must be some mistake. Cordelia told me I'd have the place to myself."

"It's a big house, I expect we won't be in each other's way," he replied.

Lucy leaned forward and knocked on the window between them and Stanton. As the window slid open, Lucy said, "I don't think this is a good idea after all. I'd like you to take me home."

Stanton looked in his rear view mirror. "My instructions are to take you and Mr. Shane to the summer house on the island."

He leaned forward and retrieved a video cassette. "I'm sure if you put this into the VCR, you'll have all your answers."

When Lucy took the cassette, the window closed before she could argue further.

"This is crazy!" Lucy cried as she flopped back against the

seat.

"Shall we watch the video before we pronounce judgment?"

"I don't care what Cordelia's got in mind, I'm not for it."

He took the cassette from her hand and popped it into the VCR. He turned the small television on and leaned back.

"Shut up and listen."

Lucy was about to tell the guy to go screw himself when Cordelia's voice came over the speakers. "Hello, Shane and Lucy. I'm sure you're both wondering what's going on."

"I'll say," Lucy grumbled.

"Shh," Shane said, "Just listen to what she has to say."

"If I know you both, I know Shane expected something to happen and is taking it all in stride, while Lucy is waiting for the first opportunity to escape the limo. Don't bother trying to escape, my darling, the doors are locked. Only Stanton can let you out."

"This is outrageous!" Lucy cried.

"So, I'm sure you're both wondering what I'm up to," Cordelia said.

"At least one of us is," Shane said with a snicker.

"Shane, I'd like you to meet Lucy. She's a very dear friend of mine who needs your help. You see, she hates herself. She thinks she's ugly and that no man could possibly love her. This weekend, I want you to show her just how beautiful she is."

Lucy shrank into the seat. How could Cordelia do this to her? Lucy had told Cordelia about her life in confidence. Now the woman was using it against her!

"That's not true at all," she said as she looked at Shane.

The frown on his face caused her to stop dead, any further words completely flew from her mind. He was no more pleased about the prospect of trying to convince her she was anything other than what she was.

Cordelia continued, drawing her gaze away from the man beside her. "Lucy, this is Shane. You'll find him to be a valuable teacher in the ways of love but he's not without faults as well."

"Fuck off, Cordelia," Shane whispered. "Don't go there."

Cordelia went on. "You see, Shane had a bad marriage too, and now he screws just about anything that moves but he doesn't know what real love is all about. I've chosen him to teach you about good sex because I know you can show him what love and trust is all about."

"I don't expect either of you to have anything more than this weekend together. I don't expect you'll want to see each other after you part ways. But I want you both to see that there is more to life than what you've allowed yourselves to have. You have much to teach each other, so have fun this



weekend, explore each other and, if you're lucky, you'll touch each other's soul."

With that, the video ended. Lucy blinked at the blue screen on the TV in disbelief. She'd been duped by the one woman she trusted. Cordelia had no intention of Lucy spending a weekend alone at her summer house. She had set her up with ... with ... Lucy slid a gaze at the man ... a gigolo. The term didn't seem to fit him and yet, what else could he be?

Shane's fingers were tempted over his mouth as he gazed at the screen of the television as well. His dark brows were knit in a frown over his eyes. He didn't seem any more pleased about the situation than she did.

A sensual shiver coursed over her body and settled deep in her core. Shane was definitely sexy as hell. She imagined her hands sliding over his firm jaw upward to the band that held his hair back. She'd release it and his hair would cascade over her as he bent to take her nipple in his mouth.

## Chapter 2

*All right, Cor, the joke is over,* Shane thought as Stanton pulled their bags from the trunk of the limo and placed them on the steps of the house. She made her point. He had gone too far with the women in his life. How she knew was anyone's guess. Shane suspected there was little he did his benefactor didn't know.

Hendrick Von Helt had picked him up from the deepest gutters in Toronto. A snot-nosed street kid with nothing going for him. His single drunken mother had hit him one too many times. Why Hendrik and Cordelia took pity on Shane and took him under their wing was something he'd never understood. They cleaned him up and sent him to college. When Hendrik passed away not long after Shane graduated from college, he remained close to Cordelia, always looking out for her. It was what Hendrik would have wanted him to do for his beloved wife.

Yeah, she protested when he met and married Lena.

Looking back, she had every right. Lena was only after one thing ... and his connection to the rich widow had more to do with it than her love for him.

Still, he was hurt when their marriage fell apart, so much so that he knew he'd never take the chance of loving anyone again in his life. Love equaled pain, as far as he was concerned.

Traveling to the island with the luscious woman beside him was meant to be some kind of lesson. Cordelia loved to prove him wrong. When Lucy peered at him with innocent eyes, he fought the urge to tell her nothing bad would ever happen to her.

Unfortunately, she was everything Shane didn't want in his life. He didn't like those fearful blue eyes peering at him, making him feel like he needed to protect her from heartache. Cordelia's video offered no real answers for Shane. If she thought all Lucy needed was a good roll in the hay, the woman certainly didn't give the impression she wanted to be touched. And exactly how was the innocent waif supposed to help him with his problem?

Stanton produced a key and waited for them to climb the steps to the front door. He put the bags on the floor as he pushed the key into the lock and opened the door.

Lucy gasped as she looked inside. The seventeen room summer house was a showcase of beauty. The entryway boasted a fountain with the statue of a woman, in all her naked glory, holding a vase as water cascaded into the tiny pool below her.

Shane shook his head as he gazed down at the tile flooring that led to a massive teak staircase.

"Shall I take your luggage to your appointed room?"

Stanton asked.

Shane chuckled as Lucy quickly corrected the man. "You mean rooms, don't you?"

"Mrs. Von Helt only had one room prepared for your visit," he supplied. "I'm sure you won't be disappointed. It's the suite she keeps for only her most treasured guests."

"Well, if it's a suite, I expect there's more than one bed," Lucy replied with a relieved sigh.

Stanton was about to reply when he caught sight of Shane waving behind her. "I'll leave you to take the luggage up then, sir," he said as he turned and walked out the door.

Shane was left alone in the massive house with the woman. More and more, it seemed to him that Cordelia was indeed serious about his having to spend the weekend with her.

Lucy picked up her small bag and walked to the steps. She peered over her shoulder nervously. "I guess that's it then. I'll see you in the morning."

Shane laughed out loud and Lucy peered back at him in askance. "What's so amusing?"

"You don't get it, do you?"

As Lucy shook her head, long blond hair cascaded around her shoulders. "I guess I don't. I'm here to have a pleasant weekend by myself. This house is certainly big enough so we won't have to see each other all weekend."

"Was I the only one watching that videotape? Don't you know what we're supposed to be doing this weekend?" *God, could the woman be that dense?*

"I saw the tape," Lucy snapped. "And I also saw the expression on your face."

"What's that supposed to mean?" *What expression was on my face?*

"I'm well aware you'd rather throw yourself into a volcano than touch me," Lucy said. "I could see it on your face when Cordelia explained why she was forcing us to spend the weekend together."

Shane frowned. "What the hell makes you think that?"

Lucy squared her shoulders. "Don't play games with me. I know I'm not attractive. What man would want to touch these?" She gestured toward her breasts.

Before he could reply, she ran up the steps and opened the first door she came to. The door slammed shut as Shane stared after her, dumbfounded.

*All right, Cordelia, I know what you want me to do. But exactly what does the little waif have to offer me?*

Lucy hid away in the massive bedroom for several hours. The suite Stanton said was prepared for guests did not have a second bed. In fact, it had one massive bed. She quickly left that room and found a smaller one down the hall.

The smell of food made her stomach rumble. Since she had yet to hear Shane go to his room, she attempted to ignore the rumblings and wait it out. He had to go to bed sooner or later, and then she'd sneak down to the kitchen and find something to eat.

Still, the smell found her feeling the urge to peek out of her bedroom.

She opened the door slightly and stuck her nose out. The scent was heavenly.

"I found some steak marinating in the fridge and threw together a stir fry if you're interested." Lucy opened the door a little more and spotted Shane sitting on the top step, a large plate in his hand. "Lots of peppers, carrots, onions. Even some snow peas." He looked at her, a fork poised in his hand. "Care for a bite?"

Lucy squinted in annoyance. "Doesn't it bother you that Cordelia set us up?"

Shane shrugged. "Yeah, it does a bit. But that doesn't keep me from wanting to eat. And I suspect you're hungry, too. Why not join me?"

When Lucy opened the door a little wider, Shane produced another fork and smiled at her. "You need to keep your strength up."

Lucy walked out of the room. She took the first step down and sat beside him. "You've got a point," she said as she took the fork he held out and pierced a slice of steak. She moaned when she placed it in her mouth and chewed. "This is so good," she said as she speared a piece of red pepper and popped it into her mouth.

When she would have stabbed more off the plate, Shane held it away from her. She looked at him. "What?"

"Why do you think I wouldn't be interested in you?" His eyes bore into her.

"I'd really rather eat in peace," she told him as she attempted to spear more food.

Shane moved the plate again, keeping her fork at bay.

"Wrong answer," he told her. "You made a comment about the size of your breasts before. Why?"

Lucy grimaced. "If I tell you, will you let me have some more food?"

Shane nodded as he swung the plate over her head and placed it behind her.

"I'm as flat as a pancake," Lucy supplied honestly. "What

man finds a woman with such small breasts attractive? Men want big boobs. They don't want to have to search for them in the dark."

There, he had his answer. When Lucy turned to reach for the plate, he pushed it further away. "Oh come on!" she cried. "You said I could have more if I told you the truth." "What makes you think we'd make love in the dark?"

His words washed over Lucy. She felt her core tighten in awareness. "Because ... well, if you saw me naked, you'd want total darkness, trust me."

Shane grinned as he retrieved the plate and allowed her to take another bite. Her body hummed with awareness as she felt his eyes on her as she chewed.

He took a long breath in through his nose and let it slowly escape through his mouth. Lucy had just speared another piece of steak when he spoke again. "So, let's see your body then."

Lucy's fork dropped onto her lap, the slice of delectable steak long forgotten. "Excuse me?"

Shane's dark eyes brushed over her. "We both know why we're here. Cordelia expects us to make out like rabbits this weekend."

"I'm not very hungry after all," Lucy said as she rose from the step. When Shane grabbed her arm and pulled her back down, he gazed at her with conviction.

"You've already decided I won't be attracted to you. What's wrong with showing me your body?"

Lucy shrank away from him. His touch made her scenes sizzle in a way she'd never known before. "Because it wouldn't be right, that's all."

Shane chuckled. "That's not all. If you don't think I'd be attracted to you sexually, you wouldn't be afraid to show me what you've got to offer."

"You're wrong," Lucy burst out. "I have every reason to be afraid. Maybe I don't want to see another man looking at me with disappointment." The words were out before she could stop them.

Shane remained silent as he studied her. Damn it. She'd never felt as attracted to Jon as she did to him. Knowing she'd disappoint him too cut her deeply. She strained against his grip and wrenched her arm free.

"Good night, Shane," she said as she made her way to the bedroom. As she attempted to close the door, it was met with an iron fist. She whirled around to find him standing with his arm extended, keeping the door from closing.

His eyes blazed as he stared down at her. "You're not going to simply walk away from this, Lucy. I want to see you naked so I can draw my own judgment."

"Well, forget it, mister," she spat out. "It's not going to

happen."

Shane took a step inside the room. "Would it help if I stripped first?"

Before she could reply, he lifted his t-shirt over his head.

The action loosened the band holding his pony tail. When he tossed his t-shirt aside, he ran his fingers over the back of his head and pulled the band away. His brown hair fell around his shoulders as his sinewy chest expanded with each breath he took. Lucy stood dumbfounded as she watched his fingers settle over the fly of his jeans.

"Stop!" Lucy cried. He peeled his jeans and underwear away from his body and kicked them aside.

Lucy's mouth went dry as her eyes raked over his nude body. He stood proud, seemingly enjoying her discomfort. Her eyes strayed to his hips and below, a smattering of dark hair surrounded his long, erect penis.

"I can't do this," she was barely able to find her voice as she turned from him. "Please put your clothes back on."

"I intend to spend the entire weekend nude," he told her, his voice hoarse with desire. "And I fully intend for you to be naked along with me."

Lucy shook her head as her feet shuffled nervously on the carpeted floor. "You have no idea what you're asking. You don't want to see me without my clothes on."

Shane chuckled softly. "Are you so sure? Why not prove you're right by stripping right now?"

Lucy whisked around to look at him. At first, her eyes fell on his throbbing manhood. She struggled to raise her gaze to his face. The fact Shane's eyes sparkled with amusement only served to heat her fury. "I won't strip off my clothes for you. Not now, not ever."

Shane closed the distance between them. "You said you'd rather have the lights off. Would that help?"

*Yes, it would. But that wasn't the point!* The fact she felt herself moisten with need had nothing to do with it. She'd only met this man a few hours ago. How could she possibly want to let him touch her?

*How indeed?* As Shane took another step closer to her, Lucy felt her senses fill with his scent. She felt his erection gently touch her thighs as he looked down into her eyes. Her body sizzled when he spoke. "Tell me what you need, Lucy." His breath fanned her face. "Tell me what you want and I'll give it to you."

How could she voice what she needed when she had no idea? Frustration built within her. She wanted to back away from him but his magnetism kept her close. She wanted him to touch her in ways she'd never known. But she knew one look at her body would send him packing.

In spite of herself, tears welled in her eyes. "Please, don't

make me do this," she pleaded with him. "I can't do this."  
Shane's eyes darkened as he peered down at her. "Don't cry, Lucy," he said as he drew her into his arms. "God help me, I don't want to hurt you."

"Then let me be," she sobbed. "Don't pressure me into something I can't do."

Lucy buried her face into his neck and sobbed gently. She felt his arms glide over her back and hold her against him. His touch was gentle, so reassuring. She wanted to tell him everything, tell him how unworthy she was.

Shane pulled out of her arms. He turned to retrieve his clothes. She watched his backside with appreciation as he slid his feet into his jeans.

As he zipped them and retrieved his t-shirt, he looked at her. "I'm sorry I pushed you, Lucy," he said sincerely. "I don't know what Cor was thinking when she set us up for the weekend, but I won't push you into something you don't want."

With that, the door closed behind him. Lucy pulled a tissue from a box on the dresser and wiped her eyes.

She smiled at the closed door. *Nothing like a few tears to make a man back off.*

## Chapter 3

"Cordelia, if I weren't stuck here at your damn summer house, I'd kick your little butt!"

"Shane," Cordelia purred into the phone. "I can't believe you thought you'd get laid the first night. Lucy's nothing like the women who beg you to take them home and screw their brains out. She's an injured soul; she needs more time than that."

"I stripped my clothes off for her and she didn't seem to care," Shane complained. "No woman I know has ever backed away from me when I'm naked. She's got to be frigid."

Cordelia laughed out loud. "How full of yourself are you, Shane? You're too used to getting your own way with women. Lucy is different. Your dick can hang down to the floor and she wouldn't care. She needs to be loved, not used."

"Well, you'll have to excuse me. You didn't bother to fill me in on Lucy's background before you forced us to spend the weekend together."

"But I did say you had a lot to teach each other. Show Lucy that her body is beautiful, and I expect you'll be very happy with what she can teach you."

"What can she possibly have to teach me? And how the fuck can I teach her anything if I can't get her to take her clothes off?"

Cordelia chuckled. "You're an enterprising young man. I won't bother answering your first question. And all I can say about your second is to use a gentle touch. Prove to her that what's under her clothes doesn't matter."

"I'll try, but there better be combat pay."

Cordelia laughed. "Trust me. You won't be disappointed."

\* \* \* \*

After a restless night, Lucy woke early and walked down to the kitchen. All was quiet as she opened the refrigerator door and peered inside. The leftover stir fry from the night before was wrapped in cellophane and tucked on the bottom shelf. She retrieved the butter and a block of cheese. As she opened a loaf of five grain bread and popped two slices into the toaster, she leaned against the counter and looked around the room.

What had she gotten herself into? She should have known Cordelia had something in mind when she invited her to stay at her summer house for the weekend. But Cordelia knew about her past, how she felt about herself. The older woman was always understanding, sorry she struggled the way she did. Why would Cordelia toss her into such a precarious situation? A man like Shane had no interest in someone like



herself ... under normal circumstances anyway.

After what had happened the night before, Lucy was more convinced than ever that Cordelia had offered him a huge amount of money to seduce her. God, seeing him nude, the length of him fully erect, was almost her undoing. She had to remember that Shane was purchased—he had no real interest in her.

When the toast popped up, Lucy turned to retrieve it. A large hand beat her to it. She peered over her shoulder to see Shane, dressed in a bathrobe, smile down at her.

His eyes sparkled as he took a bite of dry toast. "Did you sleep well?"

Her body tightened in awareness. "No," she said, "I did not."

"I'm sorry to hear that," he replied. "I slept like a baby."

"I'm sure you did," Lucy replied as she buttered the single piece of toast she'd been left. "You had a nice night off."

"I beg your pardon?" There was no mistaking that the question upset him. The room chilled several degrees as Lucy plunked her buttered toast on her plate, deciding not to bother with the cheese, and walked to the table.

"You heard me," she said as she sat down and wrapped a hand around the china mug filled with coffee. "I'm sure you get paid whether you have sex or not."

As Lucy reached for her toast, she was whisked away from the table. She gasped as unforgiving hard hands lifted her body and plunked her on the table. Her heart thundered as she gazed up at Shane.

"You think I was hired to fuck you?" he asked through clenched teeth.

Lucy cringed at his crass words. She struggled to meet his blazing dark eyes and chose to look at his chest instead. "Of course you were," she replied. "Why else would Cordelia set us up here for the weekend?"

"Maybe she thought we'd be a good match for each other," Shane said.

Lucy bit back a bitter laugh. Her eyes met his. "As if someone like *you* would find *me* attractive," she said. When Shane frowned, she pushed against his chest. He stepped aside and she jumped down from the table. "I'm no fool," she told him. "I'm well aware I'm far from perfect. Even my own husband had to go elsewhere to relieve his sexual needs."

"Relieve his sexual needs?" Shane echoed her words. "Are you kidding me?"

Lucy kept her back to him as she continued, "Even if my body was attractive, I fall desperately short in the bedroom. I couldn't satisfy his needs."

"And you think Cordelia hired me to have sex with you?"

Lucy winced at his lowered voice. He understood.

"If you don't mind," she said softly. "I'd like to have my breakfast in peace." She turned to look at him. His dark eyes blazed back at her, his brows low over his eyes.

With his long hair pulled away from his face, the white bathrobe tied firmly around his sinewy body, he looked terribly sexy as he stood rooted in place. She could only imagine the expression on his face when he made love to a woman.

He broke the spell when he picked his piece of toast up off the counter. "Well, I don't give a shit if you think I've been paid to fuck you," he said. "I'll give you an hour to prepare. You can do whatever you want in that hour. Take a shower, read a book, I don't give a damn."

Lucy's heart leapt into her throat. She tried to ignore the warm feeling that pooled between her legs. "I already said—" "I know what you said," Shane cut in. "I'm just telling you what's going to happen." He took a bite of his toast, no doubt cold by now. As he chewed, his gaze slid over her. "If it doesn't suit you, you better get out of here before the hour is up. Otherwise," his eyes darkened with promise, "I'm going to fuck you until you beg for mercy."

Lucy didn't look back as she dashed to her bedroom. The stairs leading to the second level seemed longer than usual as she ran up them and pushed the bedroom door closed behind her. Her heart thundered in her chest as she pressed her back against the closed door.

This was insane! She had to pack her bags. She had to get the hell out of here before her hour was up.

Lucy pushed off the door and ran to retrieve her bag. She ignored the excitement she felt sizzling through her body as she opened the bag and tossed it on the bed.

*Damn it! He's been paid to have sex with me! Don't forget that!*

But her body wasn't listening. Her body cried out to be touched, her breasts ached to feel the rapture of his lips, her vagina begged to feel his fingers and more.

*I don't want that! I don't need a man to make me feel whole!*

And yet, as she opened the dresser drawers, her hands halted .

Her body ached to be touched. She ached with the need she felt. Shane was an attractive man. So what if he'd been paid to pretend she was a sexy woman?

If she could just push that sorry bit from her mind, pretend she was indeed sexy, that Shane wanted to have sex with her because she was attractive...

Lucy flopped down on the bed. Her body was telling her to do one thing; her head was telling her something else. What the hell was she supposed to do?

And then, it came to her.

## *Chapter 4*

Shane waited the hour out in the kitchen. He fully expected to see Lucy fly by with her bags in hand, never to look back. But as time ticked on, she continued to hide in her bedroom.

He had ample time to reflect on the exchange between them in the kitchen that morning. He still couldn't get his mind around the fact Lucy thought he'd been hired to have sex with her.

She was such a pretty little thing, so delicate, so damn fuckable. How sad was it some asshole had treated her so badly, she thought no one would find her attractive? He'd been fighting his hard-on from the moment they had met. Shane checked the clock on the wall. She'd been hiding for fifty minutes. His heart thundered, hoping it meant she wasn't going to run out on him seconds before the hour was up. He still felt as if he owed her the full hour.

At fifty-seven minutes, Shane planted himself at the bottom of the stairs. At least this way, if she decided to make a break for it, he'd have the opportunity to talk her out of it. The clock ticked. Fifty-nine minutes. The seconds began to count down ... and still no sign of her escape.

He felt his cock tighten with need as he took the first steps upward. If she was going to make an escape now, he'd catch her halfway down the stairs.

The massive grandfather clock in the hall struck the hour about thirty seconds before his watch did and dang it, he rushed up the stairs anyway. His need for her throbbed with every step.

Shane slowed as he approached her bedroom door. He took a moment to catch his breath and then slowly turned the knob and pushed it open.

The room was basked in darkness. He squinted to adjust to the dim light as his hand reached to find the light switch near the door.

"No," Lucy said, her voice a low purr. "If you came here to take me, I want the lights left off."

Shane's hand dropped as he stepped inside and pushed the door closed. With the blinds and curtains drawn, he could barely make out her figure on the bed. "You can't expect me to feel my way around," he said.

"As a matter of fact, I do," she said. "Follow my voice to the bed."

Shane stumbled forward and found the bed. He leaned over and touched her bare foot. He shook his head. "This is not how I do things."

"You said you wanted to have sex with me," Lucy said, her voice wavering slightly. "I need to have some control. I'll give

you what you want, but it will be on my terms."

Shane stood by the bed. "And your terms are..."

"Your hands will not touch me. You will come only as close as it takes for you to put your penis inside me."

"Uhm," Shane wanted to laugh out loud, the entire situation was ridiculous. "I'm sorry, Lucy. Just how often have you had sex?"

When she didn't reply, he continued, "I can try to put my cock into your pussy without touching you, but the entire experience involves a lot more than that. I need to touch your clit, your tits and rub against you as I fuck you."

Lucy's voice quivered as she replied. "I won't allow that. You are here to mate with me and that's all. If you touch me in any other way, we will stop."

*All right.* If that's what she wanted, he would try to accommodate her. Shane crawled onto the foot of the bed. His cock sensed her warmth nearby and hardened with need.

"Fine," he said. "Tell me what you want me to do."

His eyes had adjusted to the dim light well enough to see her move her legs in the dark. She drew her knees upward and spread her legs. "You wanted to have sex with me," she said flatly. "So do it so we can get it over with."

Shane shook his head. His cock should have turned south when she made such a blatant remark. He wasn't allowed to touch her. He was offered only her pussy and nothing else. And still, the need to possess her urged him forward.

"I know you don't want my touch," he told her. "But at the very least, I need to touch your legs."

She didn't reply as he positioned himself between her thighs.

"I need to know you're ready for me," he said. "I need to feel you to see how wet you are."

Again, she didn't reply. He slowly slid his fingers into her pussy. He was delighted to find her warm and soaking wet. His fingers glided over her clit and then to the moist opening. She moaned as he grazed his fingers against it.

"Don't worry, baby," he said gently. "I just need to know you can take my cock. I'm just going to slide my fingers in to see how much room there is."

Shane grinned as her hips lifted off the bed to receive his fingers. He shoved them into her, the slick moisture lapping against his palm. His thumb edged toward her clit, gently, carefully touching.

Lucy cried out as her hips bucked against his hand. Encouraged, Shane leaned forward, needing to feel her thighs against his throbbing cock. His free hand reached up and touched her breast. His fingers circled her nipple and squeezed. He leaned over her and opened his mouth as he bent to take her nipple.

"No!" Lucy cried. "I don't want you to touch me. Take your fingers out of me!"

"Lucy, my sweet," Shane said, attempting to soothe her, "Let me make love to you. Let me touch you."

"No," she said. "You agreed to play by my rules. I don't want your touch. You can put your penis inside me, but that's all."

Shane pulled away from her. "Okay," he said.

He positioned himself between her thighs and braced his hands on either side of her. He pushed his cock into her slick pussy.

She gasped as she arched her back to receive him.

Shane pressed forward, attempting to fill her completely.

She gasped. His girth was too much for her. She spread her legs wider, lifted her hips higher.

Shane pressed again. Without leverage, he couldn't fill her completely.

"You're too big," she gasped. He wasn't sure if he heard disappointment in her voice, or if he was just hoping it was there.

"I can fuck you," he said, his voice a low growl. "But if you insist I don't touch you, that I don't lean over you, I'll never be able to fill you completely."

"I'm too small to take you," she said.

"You're not too small," Shane said, his passion barely contained. "Please, just lay back and let me take over. I know your pussy is tight, but I can fit."

Lucy hesitated. He knew she was unsure. She wanted to be in control and he was asking her to give it up.

"Trust me, Lucy," he said urgently. "I know I can please you. Just let me show you."

Lucy's legs relaxed and fell to the bed. He leaned over her, his chest resting against her delectable breasts. He placed his hands on either side of her face and gazed down at her.

His heart hammered in his chest when she closed her eyes and turned her face away from him.

*Damn her!* He wanted to see her eyes when he thrust into her. He wanted to see the expression on her face when he filled her completely.

His need for her was too great. He didn't demand anything from her as he positioned his cock and pressed forward.

He gripped her hips and pulled them upwards as he thrust hard. She whipped her face to look at him, her eyes widened when his thrust was met with resistance.

"You're tight," he said through gritted teeth. "I know this is going to hurt but..."

He thrust again. This time, his cock sliced inside her, filling her completely.

His body shook, his hands splayed on either side of her

face. "Sweet Jesus," he said as he held himself still, "You're so hot and tight."

Lucy reached up and placed her hands on either side of his face. She pulled him down to her open mouth. Their tongues entwined, sipping life from each other in desperate need. When he pulled his mouth away from hers, she ran her tongue over his shoulder and then settled on his neck. Shane's hands strayed to her hips. He hoped he'd given her enough time, he so needed to move inside her. He splayed his hands on either side of her and slowly pressed his hips forward.

Lucy cried out, her hands digging into his hips as he filled her even more.

Shane propelled himself against her hands and slowly pulled out of her. The tip of his cock glided against her wet folds, slipping up and down against her clit as it made its way back to the portal he so needed to fill.

Lucy gasped as she attempted to pull Shane into her body again. He chuckled lightly as her hand found his throbbing penis and guided it back to her slick folds.

Shane pressed inside her again, this time, with a thrust that made her gasp. He put his hands under her ass and pulled her forward as he thrust into her.

"Sweet bitch," he said as his fingers dug into her ass. "I'm going to fuck you until you scream for mercy."

Lucy didn't respond. She gave herself to him willingly. He pulled her legs up and wrapped them around his waist as his momentum built.

His body cried out as he leaned over her. He couldn't hold on much longer. Soon, he wouldn't be able to stop himself from spilling into her. He wanted to fill her with his cum, he wanted her to explode with his seed.

The need overwhelmed him, his body shuddered with release. He pulled out at the last moment.

"No," she cried.

He groaned as his cock rested against her soft abdomen. He felt the warmth of his cum spurting over her stomach. He leaned over her, splaying his hands in her hair as he pressed a kiss on her open mouth. "I'm sorry, my love," he whispered. "It was our first time and I'm a man. I couldn't hold on any longer."

He felt her lips cool against his. "Get out," she whispered. Shane blinked. "What?"

"I said get out," she said, her voice a little clearer.

"Lucy," he said, "I don't understand. What's wrong?"

She was crying. He couldn't see her tears but could tell she was by the sound of her voice. "I don't want to talk about it. I'm asking you to leave."

Shane pulled away from her and sat on the side of the bed

with his back to her. *What the hell was this?* They just had mind-blowing sex. He knew she enjoyed it as much as he did. "This is ridiculous," he said, more to himself than to her. He got up and walked to the window. As he reached out to pull the curtains back, she cried. "No! Leave them closed and get out of here."

Shane shook his head. "Suit yourself," he said as he walked to the door. "Let me know when you're ready to talk about it."

She didn't reply as walked out. He stood at the closed bedroom door with his back pressed against it and heard her sobs as she gave in to the pain she was feeling. He wanted to walk back in, take her into his arms and tell her everything would be all right.

He quelled the urge and walked to his suite. She wouldn't welcome him back. Besides, how could he promise everything would be all right if he had no idea what demons she was fighting? Maybe it wouldn't be all right. Maybe nothing would ever be right in her life.

As he walked into the bathroom and turned the shower taps on, he ignored the ache in his gut.

## Chapter 5

Lucy hid in her bedroom all morning. After what felt like an hour of sobbing, she found the energy to take a shower to wash away the scent of their lovemaking.

Feeling somewhat refreshed but no less weary, Lucy sat at the vanity and ran a comb through her damp hair.

How could she have given herself to him so damn easily?

Why did she let him touch her the way he had? Lucy felt a shiver course throughout her body as she remembered his hands gripping her hips as he thrust into her. Every fiber of her being was on fire with a need she had never known before in her life.

How stupid was she to think that by insisting the room stay in darkness he wouldn't affect her? Certainly, not seeing the look of disappointment on his face helped a great deal.

She could close her eyes and pretend she was attractive. For a moment, she was able to shut out the fact he was being paid to have sex with her.

The moment he pulled out of her, she remembered. She closed her eyes and heard the voice. *You aren't worthy. You'll never have my kid.*

Lucy's eyes widened when she heard the gentle knock on the door. The comb fell from her hand as she twisted to look at the door. Damn, she'd forgotten to lock it!

"Lucy?" Shane's voice was muted through the heavy oak door.

She held her breath. *Would he open it?* She didn't reply.

Shane sighed. "Just wanted you to know I'm going out to the pool. You can join me if you like."

Lucy looked at her reflection. *Get into a bathing suit and parade in front of him? Don't think so.*

He waited a few seconds before he replied. "Fine, I won't bother you. But you can't hide in there all weekend."

Lucy knew instinctively he'd walked away. She let her breath out slowly. *Dodged that bullet.* He was right, she couldn't hide all weekend. She'd have to leave this room sooner or later.

\* \* \* \*

Dressed in worn jeans and a bulky white t-shirt, Lucy made her way down the steps. She looked around her carefully, peering into the lounge as she made her way to the kitchen. She'd have stayed in her room all day to avoid facing Shane if her stomach hadn't been rumbling so much. The slice of toast she'd eaten for breakfast hadn't gone very far considering all the energy she used up an hour later.

She opened the fridge and found a plate of ham sandwiches wrapped in plastic. Since she hadn't seen any



staff around since they arrived, she assumed Shane made them.

She took half a sandwich and padded through to the massive living room. She felt a gentle breeze coming through the patio doors.

She was about to take a bite of the sandwich when her eyes fell on Shane climbing out of the massive kidney-shaped pool. The muscles in his arms and chest rippled as he pulled himself up. His long damp hair gleamed in the sun as he leaned down to retrieve a towel.

Lucy's gaze slid from his face down over the curly hair on his chest, his rippled abdomen and rested on the black Speedo he wore. With his legs planted in a wide stance, the wet fabric clung to him, outlining his girth.

Lucy licked her lips, her mouth felt dry and her heart pounded in her chest. And, unforgivably, she felt herself dampen, her body crying out for his touch.

*Water. I need a glass of water!* As Lucy turned to head back to the kitchen, the deep, rich baritone of his voice stopped her in her tracks.

"Lucy," he said, "I'm glad you decided to come out."

She turned to him. She nodded, not sure she should attempt to speak.

Shane finished toweling off and walked toward her. He nodded at her hand. "I see you found the sandwiches I made."

Sandwich! Yes, that's what she had in her hand. She glanced at it, no longer hungry ... at least not for food.

"Yes," she croaked. "I found them."

Her heart tripped over itself when he smiled. "I hope you like it."

"Yes," she said again as she attempted to swallow the lump in her throat. "It's good." She managed a nervous smile. "Good, good, good."

Shane chuckled lightly as he tossed the towel aside. "Glad to hear it," he said, clearly amused by how nervous he made her. "I'm glad to see you, too. I was getting lonely."

Lucy took a step back. Her mind was hopelessly muddled.

"Good, the sandwich is good." Her eyes strayed back to his Speedo. "I need water." She turned and hurried back to the kitchen.

She darted to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of water.

*Stupid woman! You can't even look at him without going berserk. Get a grip!*

Lucy hadn't realized her palms were perspiring until she struggled to open the cap on the bottle. She groaned again as she turned to find a glass. Tap water would do just as well.

"Want some help with that?"

Before she could reply, Shane took the bottle out of her shaking hand and opened it. His eyes studied her face as he

handed it back to her.

"Thank you," she croaked, then took a long swallow of cold water.

Shane leaned against the counter as he regarded her. He shook his head lightly as Lucy struggled to replace the cap on the bottle. "What?" she asked.

Shane chuckled. "You look like a deer caught in headlights. Like you know you shouldn't be here, but can't make yourself leave."

Lucy turned away from him and focused on the window over the sink. "Maybe I am," she said. "I don't know what I'm doing anymore."

"All this because we made love this morning?" Shane's voice was gentle.

Lucy whisked around, piercing him with her gaze. "We didn't make love," she spat out. "We had sex. There's a big difference."

"Is there?" Shane countered. "I wouldn't know."

Her heart sank as he continued. "I guess I called it making love because most women don't want to hear what it really is. Personally, I prefer to call it fucking."

Lucy shivered at his crass words. Her body sang with awareness. Her legs went weak, her nipples tightened.

He inched closer to her. "What I do know is that it was damn good between us and," his voice lowered, "I know I want to fuck you again and again."

Lucy ached terribly for Shane's touch. As he neared her, her senses filled with his musky scent. It would be so easy to close her eyes, let him touch her, let him take her to the brink of erotic bliss again.

When he touched her face, she backed away. "No," she said breathlessly. "We can't let it happen again. You have no idea what you want from me."

Shane chuckled and closed the distance between them. He pulled her into his arms, his hands gripping her buttocks as he pulled her against his erection. "Oh, I think I know what I'm asking," he murmured before he lowered his lips to her mouth.

Lucy felt herself spiral in his arms, his fingers dug into her hips as he pushed his hard penis against her belly. *Oh God, help me!*

Lucy felt weak as she wedged her arms between them and pushed on his chest. New tears pricked her eyes as he slowly let go of her.

"You don't know," she said, trying to find the words. "You don't know what I am."

Shane allowed the space between them in spite of his labored breathing. "Then tell me."

Lucy wrapped her arms around her waist and turned away from him. As much as she wanted to give in to the delight of

his arms, his touch, he had to know why she wasn't worthy. "I know why Cordelia set us up together. I know she hired you to teach me how to love myself. She thinks if you show me a good time this weekend, I'll think I've got something to offer a man."

"I'm not about to argue with you about why Cordelia wanted us together," Shane said. "But you're gonna have to explain why you think I have to be paid to have sex with you."

"Because I'm ugly," she said simply.

"No, you're not," Shane replied, quickly dismissing her answer. "Try again."

"I know my face is okay," she told him. "It's the rest of me that's lacking. I'm boney in some places, fat in others. My own husband couldn't stand to look at me."

"So, you married an asshole. Be glad he's gone," Shane said.

"He was the first man who ever took an interest in me," Lucy explained. "After he left, no man has even asked me out, let alone wanted to sleep with me."

"And you think it's because you're ugly." It wasn't a question. "I think I understand. That explains why you didn't want me to see you this morning."

Relief washed over Lucy as she turned to him. "Yes, that's exactly it. I'm so glad you understand. Now we can just relax the rest of this weekend, maybe even chat a bit—"

Shane cut her off. "Chat a bit?" He laughed out loud.

"What I understand is why Cordelia wanted me to spend the weekend with you. I've been wandering around my life fucking any woman who struck me as interesting. You've been wandering through your life thinking no man would want to fuck you. Cordelia knew we'd look at each other and find middle ground."

"That's crazy," Lucy said.

"Is it?" Shane asked. "If I promise not to hurt you in any way, will you let me show you just how damn sexy you are?"

"No!" Lucy cried. He really was crazy. Hadn't he heard anything she'd just said?

"Listen to what I have to say before you refuse," Shane said. "You think there's nothing about you a man could possibly want. You insisted the room be pitch black when I fucked you. What you don't realize is, even if I couldn't see you, I could feel you. I didn't need light to be turned on by your body."

Lucy felt her face flush. She hadn't intended to allow him to touch her body. She had given him the opportunity to know her body without seeing it. That didn't alleviate her angst. After all, he'd been hired. The fact he could put on a good act for the sake of the all mighty dollar did nothing to

soothe her. "I should never have let you touch me," she said. Shane ignored the comment. "Lucy, no matter what you think of me, you know Cordelia would never put you in jeopardy, right?"

Lucy trusted Cordelia implicitly. "Yes, I know she'd never knowingly hurt me."

Shane sighed. "Good, then we agree on at least one thing," he said. "So, knowing you trust Cordelia, you should also know you have nothing to fear from me. You know she wouldn't set you up with someone who would hurt you. Right?"

Lucy thought about his words for a moment. He had a very good point. Cordelia would have investigated him thoroughly, perhaps even known him for a number of years, before she threw him on her. "I guess so."

"So," Shane continued, "You know you have no reason not to trust me."

Lucy swallowed. "I guess I don't," she said reluctantly.

"Good." Shane smiled, clearly satisfied with her response.

"Then, let me show you how beautiful you really are."

Lucy shook her head. "I already know what I look like. There's nothing you can do that's going to change my mind about my body."

Shane's eyes twinkled. "That sounds like a challenge. And I gotta tell you, sweetheart, I'm up for it. But first, I need a cold shower."

Before Lucy could respond, Shane disappeared.

Shane was right. Lucy really had no reason not to trust him. Cordelia never would have shut her into her summer house with a man she didn't trust.

Cordelia was a lot of things, many of them undesirable.

But when it came to her friends, she would move Heaven and Earth to keep them safe.

In her heart, Lucy knew Shane wouldn't do anything to hurt her ... not knowingly anyway. The fact he affected her heart was something beyond even Cordelia's control.

While she waited for Shane's return, she explored the enormous house. She wandered through the dining room, library and den before she came to a closed door. Curiosity got the better of her and Lucy pushed it open. A huge gym, complete with weight machines and other various equipment filled the room. Three walls were covered in full length mirrors.

Lucy absently walked around the room and finally settled on a leather covered weight bench. With her legs splayed on either side of the bench, she peered at herself in the mirror. Her eyes slid down the image in the mirror. Shane said he wanted to show her just how beautiful she was. She closed her eyes and imagined just how he would do it. He would sit

behind her, his naked body pressed against her as he ran his long fingers over her body. They'd circle her nipples, pinching lightly before they ran down the length of her body and settled at her groin.

Lucy's body tightened with need as her hands glided over her body. Her fingers pushed against her crotch, kneading lightly. Shane would push his hands inside her jeans and slip his fingers inside her. She would rest her head against him as his fingers slid in and out of her, making her need for him grow stronger with every stroke. And then...

Lucy was startled back to reality when she heard Shane's voice. "I see you found the gym."

She jumped up, knowing her face was crimson. She peered at him, her eyes drinking in his black cotton shirt and tight jeans. His hands were at his sides and his shoulder rested against the open door. His eyes spoke volumes. He knew what she'd been doing ... what she'd been thinking about.

"Yes, I was exploring the house," she told him.

Shane laughed. "You were exploring something," he said.

He pushed off the door frame and walked toward her. "I'd like to help."

"Uhm," Lucy's scattered mind searched for something to say. "I guess I found what I wanted."

"Did you?" As he approached her, he leaned over to keep her from rising. "Don't move, you're in the perfect place."

Shane straddled the bench behind her, his groin rubbing against the small of her back as his legs sprawled behind hers. He placed his chin on top of her head as his hands wrapped around her waist. His dark gaze connected with hers in the mirror.

"We've already established that you trust me," he said as his hands grazed over her midriff. "So what I'm about to do won't bother you."

Before she could find her voice, Shane's hands slid under her t-shirt and pulled it upwards. His hands cupped her breasts for a millisecond before he pulled the shirt over her head. She felt helpless, her arms lifeless as they rose to allow the shirt to glide over her head.

Shane's eyes never left the reflection of her face in the mirror as he tossed the shirt aside. His hands gently glided over the lacey bra covering her breasts. "We don't need this either," he said as his fingers grazed a path to her back and quickly undid the hooks.

Lucy gasped as he pushed the lacy straps off her shoulders and dropped her bra to the floor. Before she could react, she saw his heated gaze on her breasts. Lucy raised her arms to cover herself but Shane quickly pushed them away and cupped her breasts. His fingers rubbed her nipples and

squeezed gently. "God, you have lovely tits," he whispered in her ear.

"They're too small," Lucy replied, fighting the waves of passion coursing through her body as he gently kneaded.

"Nonsense." He moved his hands to cup them. "Look how perfectly they fit into the palm of my hands. I want to suck them, pull your sweet nipples into my mouth and bite them." He shook her lightly. "Look at yourself in the mirror," he said. "See how they look in my hands."

Lucy slowly opened her eyes and looked at her reflection. Her breasts swelled as he cupped them, begging to feel his mouth suck them, his teeth graze them. Her nipples ached as she arched her back.

Shane's hands slid down to her waist. His nimble fingers quickly undid her jeans. Lucy felt herself being lifted slightly as her jeans and underwear were pushed down to her knees.

"Kick them away and spread your legs so I can see you," Shane said urgently.

Lucy did as she was told and felt her backside pushed toward the edge of the bench as Shane pulled her legs further apart. His hands slid over her thighs, gently molding her against him. His hands then moved over her knees and back to the soft skin of her thighs.

"Look at you," he whispered in her ear. "Look at how Goddamn sexy you are."

Lucy's hooded eyes watched as his fingers grazed her thighs and slowly, methodically swept over her vagina.

"I know you're not a bottled blond," he said softly "The hair on your pussy is the same color as on your head."

Lucy attempted a light laugh but his fingers slid over her clit. Her breath caught in her throat as he parted the lips of her vagina.

"Look at you, Lucy. Look at your sweet pussy. How could you think for even a moment no man would want to fuck you?"

Lucy felt his rock hard penis dig into her back. "I want to fuck you. Just try to tell me why you think your body isn't perfect."

Lucy's senses were focused on one thing and one thing only. Her mind filled with the need to touch him, to give him the pleasure he so expertly gave her.

She pulled out of his grasp and fell to her knees in front of him. Without considering the implications of what she was about to do, Lucy pulled the fly of his jeans down and grasped his erection in both hands. She dove forward, taking him into her mouth.

"Jesus!" Shane exclaimed as he wrapped his hands around her head, urging her on.

Lucy wrapped her fingers around the base of his shaft as

she allowed it to pop in and out of her mouth. Her lips felt every vein as she desperately sucked as hard as she could. She moaned when she felt his hands slide down her back and back up again. His fingers moved over her cheeks to her mouth. He moaned and bucked his hips against her face. "God, Lucy. You do that so well. Fuck me with your mouth. Yeah, honey, that's it!"

Lucy felt his hands wrapping in her hair and pulling her away from his penis. She looked up at him questioningly. Shane chuckled softly as he lay down on the bench.

"You're too damn good," he explained. "I'd like to last a bit longer than I did this morning."

Lucy wasn't sure what to do next. She got up and stood looking down at him.

"Come here," he said. "Stand over my face. I want to eat you."

Eat her? No one had ever touched her that way. "I don't know, Shane. Why don't you just have sex with me?"

Shane grinned. "I will, but I want to taste you first. Come here."

Lucy walked forward. Shane gripped one of her legs and pulled it over his face. His hands reached up and wrapped around her waist. He forced her to squat over him as she felt his nose rub her clit. And then one hand left her side to spread her open as his tongue licked her full length.

"Ah," she gasped as his lips pressed against her. His tongue lapped, drinking from her, as his fingers held her wide apart. He changed his focus, his mouth began to suck her clit as his fingers found their way to her portal and gently pressed inside. First one finger, then two. Lucy felt her body contract with aching need as he slowly pushed three fingers inside her and gently pushed upward and slowly pulled out.

Her knees weakened. Shane seemed to sense she was no longer able to support herself. His fingers pulled out of her and his hands gripped her hips as his tongue slid from her clit. He curled his tongue and slid it inside her.

Lucy cried as she neared climax. She gave herself up to the sweet, torturous sensations. Shane sensed her coming burst; he rubbed his nose against her clit as he continued to lash her with his tongue.

Lucy's hands glided up her abdomen and around her breasts. Her fingers wrapped around her nipples and squeezed as she felt her body contract. Her body sang with sheer joy as she cried out. She went completely rigid for a millisecond before she felt the sparks begin and then ignite into a full-blown fire.

"Shane!" she cried as the world around her went up in flames. She felt her body cascade into a million tiny pieces as she lost all ability to control herself and fell backward.

She felt strong arms catch her and keep her balanced as her body went completely limp.

Shane pulled himself out from under her and held her in his arms as she sobbed.

Lucy pressed her face into his chest. "I'm sorry," she gulped. "I don't know why I'm crying."

Shane chuckled lightly. "I do. It was too good for words. It moved me too."

Lucy slowly pulled herself away from his chest and gazed up at him. "It did?"

"Lord, woman, don't you know by now?"

Lucy frowned when she looked at him. His face glistened from just below his eyes to his chin. She ran her fingers over his cheek, the liquid felt warm and sticky. It dripped off his chin. "What is that?"

Shane laughed out loud. He reached for her discarded tshirt and wiped his face. "You ejaculated. You covered my face with cum."

Lucy had only read about female ejaculation. She thought it was a myth. "Really?" *Was it really possible?*

"Yes, really," Shane said. "Didn't you feel it happening?"

"No," she told him honestly. "Until today, I've never even had an orgasm."

He smiled down at her. "I'm glad you saved it for me. But I have to tell you, I've got this little problem."

Lucy's heart tightened. Here it comes. He was about to tell her how ugly she was. "What's that?" she asked reluctantly.

"My cock still wants to fuck you," he said.

Relief washed over her. As his hands touched her breasts and wrapped around her shoulders, desire filled her senses.

\* \* \* \*

"Really?" Shane smiled as she looked down at him. "I wonder if there's anything I can do to help."

God, she was so amazing. Her eyes burned with desire as she bent over him. Her legs straddled him as she positioned her pussy over his cock.

Lucy wasn't the first woman who'd ejaculated for him. He always knew he had a special touch with women. But she was the first to touch his heart, to make him want her again and again.

"Tell me what you want," Lucy said as she straddled him and rested her hands on his chest.

"Guide my cock inside you," he said.

Lucy raised her body slightly and wrapped her hands over him. "Like this?" She slowly glided her body down on top of him.

"Yes," he hissed as he felt the tip of his cock open her.



When he bucked his hips upward, she pulled away.

"I'm not sure I've got this right," she told him as her fingernails grazed over his throbbing erection. "You might have to give me a little more direction."

Shane saw the teasing sparkle in her eyes. He growled and lunged up. His arms wrapped around her waist as he pushed her off the bench to the floor. He rolled her onto her stomach and pulled her backside up until she was on her knees. "You know what I want," he growled as he nudged her legs apart and pushed his cock inside her.

Lucy cried out as he filled her. He leaned over her back, his hands sliding over her stomach and reaching her core. He felt the connection between them, how her pussy splayed wide open with his cock firmly inside it. "Tease me, will you?" he grunted as he began to pump against her ass.

"Show me what you do when you've been teased," Lucy said in gasps as she pushed against him. His balls slapped against her thighs as he showed her just that.

## Chapter 6

Lucy turned the steaks on the barbeque as Shane did laps in the pool. Neither of them bothered with clothes after they left the gym. Lucy was no longer afraid of what he'd see after she had promised to trust him and gave herself to him so completely.

When the phone rang, she quickly walked to the kitchen to answer it. Since no one she knew had this phone number, she suspected it was Cordelia checking up on them.

"Shane's brothel," Lucy said lightheartedly. "How may I help you?"

The voice on the other end wasn't Cordelia's and it sounded annoyed. "Who the hell is this?"

"Lucy," she replied, "Who's this?"

"I need to talk to Shane," the voice said. "I need to talk to him right now!"

"He's in the pool," Lucy said, knowing in her heart the caller wouldn't like it. "Can I take a message?"

"Tell him it's Lena," she said. "Tell him I need to talk to him now."

"Okay, okay," Lucy said, trying to calm the woman on the other end. "I'll get him. Just hold on, Lena, he'll be right here."

Lucy placed the receiver on the table and hurried outside.

"There's someone on the phone for you, Shane," she called as he continued to swim.

"Who?" Shane asked as he swam to the edge of the pool and began to crawl out.

"She says her name is Lena," Lucy told him.

"Oh, fuck," Shane slowly released the handle of the ladder and let his body flow backwards. "What does she want?"

"I don't know," Lucy said. "But I think it's urgent."

Shane sank beneath the water and came back up. He blew water from his mouth as he replied. "It's always urgent. Tell her I can't come to the phone."

Lucy was taken aback by his cold stance. "I think you can tell her that yourself," she said. She wasn't his damn secretary!

Shane pulled out of the pool and grabbed a towel. He wrapped the towel around his waist and padded past her. "All right," he growled.

Lucy returned to the barbeque. She watched through the window as Shane picked up the phone and pressed it to his ear. She quickly flipped the steaks and edged closer to the open window.

"What the fuck is your problem now, Lena?"

He shuffled his bare feet on the tile floor before he responded. "I'm sorry you're in such a predicament. But what

do you expect me to do?"

Another long silence.

"You get yourself into these situations. If you didn't like the guy, why did you ask him into your house?"

Another brief pause.

"God knows you've opened your legs for a lot of men since I've known you. So what if one took it when you weren't ready?"

When Shane pressed the button to end the call and tossed it back onto the cradle, Lucy quickly stepped back to the sizzling steaks.

Shane burst through the patio doors. "The steaks are almost ready," she said.

He ignored her words as he went past her. He literally walked into the pool. One foot after the other until he stepped far enough to plunge, feet first, into the water. The towel he wore floated to the surface. He stayed beneath the water for a long time. Lucy quickly counted the seconds, fearing he was about to drown.

Shane surfaced, taking a long, gasping breath before he turned and began to swim.

Lucy knew he wasn't prepared to tell her about the phone call. She turned the heat off and placed the steaks on a plate. She pulled an oven mitt over her hand and picked the foilwrapped potatoes and vegetables off the top rack and placed them beside the steaks.

She turned her attention to the pool. Shane continued to swim. His face was drawn as he reached his arms forward and strained with each stroke.

Lucy dropped the oven mitt onto the table and walked inside. She'd learned long ago that pressing a man to talk wasn't worth the effort

Still, the woman on the phone seemingly told him she'd been raped and he didn't give a sweet shit.

Her heart strained against the idea that Shane could take such a cold stand, even though she'd heard it with her own ears. Best to walk away.

\* \* \* \*

Shane had worn himself out in the pool. He regretted the way he'd reacted to Lena's call, especially that he ignored Lucy when she was so clearly concerned about him.

Lena had taken everything from him when she walked away from their marriage. Shane struggled to put his life back together after she left. Lena had been everything to him.

Yeah, she was fucked up. Her overly religious parents played with her head nonstop when she was a kid. She didn't know what she wanted when she agreed to marry Shane. He was

so certain his love would turn her world around. Instead, her inability to love turned his world ass over teakettle. Even though they had been divorced for quite some time, Lena continued to see him as her shrink. The moment something wasn't right in her life, she called him. She needed him to tell her she was okay, that nothing which happened in her life was her fault.

Even though he resented the loss of their marriage, he continued to feed her need to be okay. He always told her what she needed to hear.

Today's call was nothing unusual. She had many liaisons since they broke up. The problem was Lena regretted them the moment they were over. It wasn't the first time she told Shane she'd been raped.

In fact, the first time she did it was only a couple weeks after their divorce was finalized. She'd called, sobbing about how she'd been violated. Shane set out to find the bastard and see that he was charged. When he finally located the guy, he found a man happily married with three young children. He burst into the house, tossing accusations every which way. He had a faint recollection of children crying moments before the man's wife hit him with a cast iron frying pan.

When he came to and pushed Lena to press charges, she admitted she'd met the man at the local grocery store. He'd winked at her when she gave him a cantaloupe and asked him if her melons were ripe enough to eat.

How she knew he was at Cordelia's summer house this weekend is what threw him for a loop. He was used to getting her desperate calls at home. But how on earth did she know where to find him? Just when things were going right with Lucy, he had to get her call. Nothing softened his cock like Lena did.

*Cordelia!* For fuck's sake. Who else would toss a wrench into the weekend with Lucy?

## Chapter 7

"Do you have any idea how you fucked things up with Lucy when you told Lena how to find me?"

"Don't go off on me," Cordelia warned him, her voice tight with warning. "I told you the two of you had a lot to learn this weekend."

"I've already figured out I need to show Lucy how to love her own body," Shane said. "But tossing Lena into the mix isn't going to help, and you know it."

"Of course, I know it," Cordelia countered. "Do you honestly think I'd throw something at you that you couldn't handle?"

Shane ignored the question. "Things were going well with Lucy until that damn call," he grumbled.

"Let me guess," Cordelia said with a chuckle. "Your hardon deflated quickly."

*And how!* Shane wasn't willing to admit it to her. "The fact of the matter is that I'm no longer clear on what you expect me to prove to Lucy. I've fucked her, she liked it. I'm sure I've showed her that her body isn't ugly. What more do you want from me?"

"I'm happy to hear that you've become close to Lucy, but it's not over yet. What have you learned?"

"Patience," Shane said. "She didn't give herself up easily." Cordelia clicked her tongue. "What have you learned other than that?"

"Don't play fucking mind games with me," Shane said, his patience running thin. "Why can't you just tell me what I'm supposed to do?"

Cordelia laughed softly. "That would certainly be the easiest way, wouldn't it? But," she said. "It's only Saturday evening. You still have at least twenty-four hours before Stanton returns to pick you up. If you haven't figured it out by the time he brings you back, I'll tell you. Until then, you're on your own."

"What the hell does that mean?" But the line went dead. Shane stared at the phone, tempted to heave it across the suite. He tamed his rage and slowly replaced it onto the cradle.

*What now?* He'd seen the expression on Lucy's face when he'd gotten off the phone with Lena. She didn't know what he was up against when it came to his ex-wife.

No doubt, she had heard his side of the conversation and again closed herself in her bedroom.

Shane fought with himself. *What to do now?* He walked out of his suite and banged on her door.

"Lucy," he said. "We need to talk."

Again, his words were met with silence. He ran his hands

over the door, his fingers grazed the handle. It would be so easy to burst inside and insist she listen. However, he needed her to invite him in. He needed to hear her say she understood.

His hands fell to his side. "Lucy," he said flatly, "I want to explain things to you. Meet me by the pool in ten minutes."

His words were met with silence again. No doubt she wanted to hide in her room for the rest of the weekend. He couldn't blame her. He didn't deserve her understanding.

Shane heaved a long sigh and walked down the stairs.

With any luck, she'd consider his words and meet him at the pool. In the meantime, he'd use up his energy swimming laps.

Shane walked through the patio doors and stopped dead.

He saw the long legs on the chaise lounge.

"What took you so long?" Lucy's voice purred. "I've been waiting for ages."

Shane felt his cock twitch and come to life as his eyes rested on her. "I thought you were in your room," he said as his eyes washed over her naked body.

"Nope," she grinned, her hands gliding over her breasts and then to her flat stomach. "I've been here waiting for you."

"I need to explain that phone call," he said, his body protesting against any kind of talk.

"You can explain later," Lucy said as her fingers glided over her pussy. "Right now, I need you."

All thoughts left his mind as blood rushed to his cock. He stripped off his t-shirt and jeans and met her on the chaise.

Lucy wrapped her arms around his shoulders as he leaned forward and opened his mouth over hers. He drank from her lips as his hands glided over her. His cock sought her out, throbbing against her.

Shane tore his mouth from hers and turned his attention to her breasts. He gently squeezed one in his hands as his mouth closed over the other. Lucy gasped and arched toward him as he sucked, his tongue wrapping around her nipple. She wrapped her legs around his hips as she arched her back to accept his cock.

"Sweet Lucy," he said as he buried himself inside her. "My sweet, sweet Lucy."

\* \* \* \*

Lucy lost herself in his touch. Only Shane could fill the need she felt within. She raised her knees, begging him to delve deeper.

When Shane pulled away, she cried out.

He spread a towel on the grass beside the chaise. "Don't worry, my darling," he whispered. "I only want to fuck you deeper. The chair is too soft. Come here onto the grass and let me take you."

Lucy tumbled from the chair onto the towel. As he positioned himself, he lifted her legs. He edged closer to her, her knees bent over his shoulders as he thrust forward.

"God, yeah," he breathed. "That's so good."

Shane thrust into her several times, his arms wrapped around her legs. Then he leaned back, taking her feet into his hands. He spread her legs even wider, his hands slowly gliding to her calves.

Lucy was lost in sweet ecstasy as he set the rhythm.

Faster and faster, harder and harder, he pulsed against her. She felt his lips on her knee, his teeth grazing as he drove into her.

"Shane!" she cried out, her voice shaken by his steady thrusts.

"I'm with you, baby," he said, letting her legs fall as he leaned over her, plastering his body against hers as his body continued to pulse.

Lucy felt his release seconds before her own. Wrapping her legs around his waist, she pulled him as close to her as possible. Tears sprang to her eyes as she felt herself climax.

"My sweet, sweet Lucy," Shane whispered in her ear as his body shuddered with his release.

She looked up at him through teary eyes. He smiled at her as his hand glided over her cheek. His eyes hardened. "You're mine, Lucy. No matter what happens, you will always belong to me."

"Yes," she breathed.

"Say it," he said. "Say you belong to me."

"I belong to you and I always will," she said.

Shane leaned forward and closed his mouth over hers.

## *Chapter 8*

Lucy looked at her reflection in the mirror. What had she done when she told Shane she would always belong to him? She knew his heart belonged elsewhere, with the woman who had called earlier in the day.

When she'd heard his anxious voice on the phone, Lucy had to walk away. She didn't want to hear him voice his love for someone else. Still, after giving it some thought, she made her way back to the pool and waited for his return. Lucy had been given a wonderful gift. Shane was hers for the weekend. There were no promises for the future. In less than twenty-four hours, they would leave the island and resume their lives. Shane would go back to Lena and Lucy would pick up where she had left off, alone.

Life would appear unchanged on the surface. For her, life would never be the same.

Her eyes slid over her naked body in the reflection. She was desirable. Shane had shown her that in so many ways this weekend.

Lucy suspected Shane's words were spoken in passion. He had never felt bigger inside her than he did when he held her legs apart. He'd been affected by it himself. Demanding she would be his forever must have been spoken in the heat of passion.

Lucy ran a brush through her hair and glanced at herself. She was preparing for their last night together. Shane insisted he be the one to make dinner. His only request for the evening was that neither of them wear clothing. Lucy was expected to join him in the grand dining room nude.

A smile crossed her lips as she regarded her image. Her cheeks glowed with a healthy pink hue. Her breasts, small but firm, heaved in anticipation of the evening's events. Her fingers grazed her taunt nipples as she imagined what Shane would have planned for her tonight.

Lucy resisted the urge to run her hands over her thighs. It was time to go to down to dinner.

She felt her hair slide against her naked shoulders as she left the room and made her way down the staircase. The railing felt cool beneath her fingertips as she slowly walked down.

When she turned the corner into the dining room, she gasped. Candles lit the room with a soft glow. A silver candelabra illuminated the dining room table, set for two, with other candles carefully placed around the room.

When Shane stepped out of the shadows, he smiled down at her. Her eyes focused on the smattering of hair on his chest, a black bowtie around his neck.

It looked completely ridiculous against his gloriously nude



form.

"I thought we were going casual tonight," Lucy said as she chuckled. "I'd have at least found a strand of pearls to wear if I'd known."

Shane laughed lightly as he stepped up to her. His eyes drank in her nakedness. "You're nothing less than perfect," he said as he touched her cheek. "I wanted to surprise you with the bowtie."

"You certainly did," Lucy said as she smiled up at him.

"Very formal."

Shane pulled out a chair and guided her to it. When she sat, he pushed the chair in and leaned over her. His lips grazed her neck and then her shoulder. "If I had my way, you'd never wear clothes again."

Shane lifted the cotton napkin from her place setting and shook it out before he carefully placed it on her lap. His hand grazed against her stomach and slid upward, pausing over her breasts. He gently pinched her nipples before he stepped away.

Lucy reached over her shoulders in an attempt to keep him close. "I'm not hungry," she said, her eyes hooded with desire. "Let's skip dinner."

"No, my sweet," he said. "I know you won't be disappointed. Besides, you need sustenance to keep your energy up for later."

Lucy leaned back against the chair. "You're all the sustenance I need," she breathed.

Shane laughed as he pushed through the door to the kitchen. "Just wait, my love."

A smile on her lips, Lucy bowed her head. She couldn't imagine what he planned to serve, but she knew it would tie into the promised night of passionate lovemaking. Oysters, perhaps. Not that either of them needed the aphrodisiac.

"Do you mind if I join you?"

Lucy's head snapped up when she heard the purr of a woman's voice. Her eyes widened with shock when she saw the voluptuous blond standing just inside the dining room door. Full ruby lips pulled back in a sarcastic smile as she slowly walked into the dining room.

Lucy stared up at the woman as she made her way to the table and pulled a chair back. When the woman sat across from her, Lucy found her voice. "Who are you?"

The woman placed her elbows on the table and wrapped her fingers together. "Lena," she supplied, as she leaned forward. "I'm Shane's wife."

Lucy blinked and her mouth went dry. "I don't understand," she stammered.

Lena's smile widened. "Ah, but I do. You're my husband's latest fuck." Her eyes raked over Lucy, from the top of her

head to her chest. "And honestly, my dear, I'm not clear on what you have to offer."

Lucy's heart throbbed in her chest. The fact she was naked, sitting across the table from Shane's wife was almost too much to process. She felt the need to cover herself, to keep the woman's eyes from focusing on her breasts.

Lucy's hands flew to the tablecloth. Dishes clattered as she pulled the white linen up to her chin. She opened her mouth but no words came out. Instead, she uttered a strangled cry.

"Don't be upset," Lena said. "You're not the first woman Shane fucked during our marriage and I don't expect you'll be the last."

Lucy struggled to find something, anything to say. Nothing would come forth. She rose from the table, pulling the tablecloth with her. The candelabra fell over, the candles scattering over the teak table, and dishes clattered to the floor and smashed as Lucy pulled the cloth around her body. The door from the kitchen opened and Shane whisked through. "Lucy, are you all right? I heard a crash," he said. Lucy's eyes darted to Shane as the silver tray in his hands slipped to the floor with a loud crash.

His gaze slid from Lucy, who stood near the table wrapped in the tablecloth, back to Lena. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

"I told you we needed to talk," Lena said, barely able to contain her laughter. "Nice bowtie, by the way." Her eyes slid from his chest to his penis and back up again.

"I told you there was nothing to talk about," Shane said.

The fact he was nude didn't seem to faze him. "I told you that you wouldn't get another penny out of me and I meant it."

Lucy edged away. "I think the two of you have a bit to talk about. I'll leave you to it."

Both Lena and Shane spoke at the same time. "No ... stay where you are!" She wasn't sure who had said what, but she wasn't about to stand there with a tablecloth wrapped around her body while the man who'd been screwing her all weekend had it out with his wife.

Lucy turned and ran. When the tablecloth snagged on something as she took a corner, she let it fall away and ran full tilt up to her room.

Once inside, she pushed the door closed and leaned against it. The heavy oak door felt cool against her heated body.

She ran her hands over her flaming cheeks and pressed her fingers over her eyes. *Oh God! How crazy is this? How insane am I? He's married! The man I love is married!*

Lucy's back slid against the door as her knees slowly gave way. She landed on the floor. *The man she loved?* Had she lost her mind? She'd known Shane for less than two days and already her heart was involved.

*You stupid, stupid fool!*

Tears flowed unchecked down her cheeks. How could she have been so damn stupid?

\* \* \* \*

Shane stepped over the tray and scattered food as his eyes pierced those of his ex-wife. "How the fuck did you know where to find me?" he asked through gritted teeth.

Lena took a few steps back as he approached her. "I went to see Cordelia and she let it slip," she said.

"Like hell she did," Shane countered. "She'd never tell you where I was, even if you put a knife to her throat. She never liked you, always thought you were only after money."

"Oh, all right," Lena said, "I went to see her and got it out of one of her servants. There, are you happy now?"

Shane didn't need to know the truth. He knew Cordelia never would have told her where to find him. "You haven't told me why you're here."

Lena snickered as her eyes glided over his naked body.

"Would you like to put some clothes on before we talk?"

"Why?" Shane seethed. "You know what I look like and always liked my size when you were horny. It was never enough for you, though, you always wanted more."

"I must admit," Lena said, "Your cock was always your best feature. What you lacked in personality, you made up for in girth."

"If by that you mean I wasn't willing to join the country club and be the perfect asshole, I guess you're right," he said.

"I never wanted anything to do with your rich father's friends. That always bothered you, didn't it?"

"I never understood why you wouldn't join Dad's practice," she said, nodding. "You could have had so much and yet you chose not to."

"Your father respected me for it," Shane said.

Lena's face pinched, her blue eyes grew cold. "And that's why he left me out of his will. That's why I need money. If it wasn't for you, Dad would have left me his money, rather than leaving it all to cancer research."

Shane laughed lightly. "He realized how spoiled you were. He wanted you to make your own way in life."

Lena stamped her feet, her hands balled into fists. Shane fully expected her to hold her breath until her face turned blue, spoiled brat that she was. "You have to give me more money," she demanded.

Shane shook his head. "I don't have any to give you. I invested every last penny I have in a new venture."

Lena's face turned crimson. Her hands flew to her hair.

"You can't do this to me!" she screamed. "You can't shut me out. I need money to live on. If you don't help me, I'll have

nothing!"

Shane shook his head. He sincerely felt sorry for her. The moment her father died and left all his money to charity, she'd been left with nothing. She'd counted on inheriting her father's fortune to continue living her opulent lifestyle.

When their marriage fell to pieces, she sued Shane for every last cent she could get. He sold his classic Mustang, their middle-class house, his shares in her father's company. He gave her all he had and was left with nothing.

He slowly rebuilt his life, reestablished his credit. He worked day and night to find the money to start over. On Monday, Shane was going to begin his new life.

While he felt sorry for Lena's position, he wasn't willing to take chances with what he'd worked so hard to establish. Lena would never learn if she wasn't forced to make her own way. Her father hoped to teach her exactly that by leaving her out of his will. Shane had no choice but allow it to happen, to let her hit rock bottom.

Shane and Lena stood looking at each other, neither knowing what to say when the phone rang.

Shane reached for the antique phone perched on a shelf near the kitchen door. "What now?" he barked.

"I'm so sorry!" Cordelia's voice reverberated over the phone line. "I just found out Lena tricked Stanton into telling her where to find you."

"She's here," Shane said.

"Shane, please know I had nothing to do with this. Lena came by when I was in the sauna. She told Stanton some kind of sob story and tricked him into telling her where to find you."

"I'm not surprised," Shane replied.

"I hope she didn't disrupt your last evening with Lucy," she said. "Stanton is on his way right now to pick her up."

Shane breathed a sigh of relief. At least he wouldn't be stuck with his ex-wife all night. There was no point in telling Cordelia how Lucy had reacted to meeting his ex-wife.

"Sounds good to me," Shane replied. "I'll make sure Lena's ready."

When he hung up, he turned to Lena. "Stanton's on his way over. He'll take you home."

Tears sprang to her eyes. "You're not going to toss me out," she cried. "Shane, I need you. I'm begging you to listen to me."

Shane shook his head as he herded her to the front door.

"There's nothing left to say."

"No," she cried. "Shane, I'm begging you not to shut me out. I can't make it without you."

"The only reason you haven't moved on is because you haven't found a man with money," Shane said as he opened

the door and pushed her out. "You don't want me. I haven't got a damn thing left to offer you."

Lena continued to scream at the top of her lungs as Shane closed the door and locked it. Her voice was muted as she pounded on the heavy door, unwilling to give up.

"Trust me, Lena," he whispered as he walked up the stairs, "I'm doing you a huge favor."

## Chapter 9

With the door closed tight and the air conditioner apparently not working, the air in her room felt oppressive. Lucy pulled the curtains away and opened the window over the front courtyard. She saw the flash of lights turning into the winding driveway and heard Lena's cries as she pounded on the front door.

"Shane," she wailed, "I'm begging you not to shut me out of your life. Please! I love you! I will never love another." The court lights surrounding the pavement at the front of the house glinted against the black limousine as it pulled up. "Lena," she heard Stanton's distinctive voice. "You're to come with me."

"No!" she cried. The pounding resumed, each thud pulsing against Lucy's heart. "Shane, please don't send me away!" Her plea went unanswered.

"Please," Stanton said, "get into the car."

Lena sobbed as Stanton led her to the limo and opened the back door. He pushed it closed and got into the driver's seat. Lucy watched as the limo slowly pulled away from the house. She pressed her hand over her mouth as tears flowed down her cheeks.

How could Shane be so cold?

She realized she didn't know him at all. And how could she? They'd only met two days ago.

She'd listened to him, believed him when he told her she was beautiful. And now, everything shattered into a million pieces. No matter how much she wanted to touch him, to have him touch her, she knew in her heart she had made a huge mistake. Shane couldn't be trusted. He said what she wanted to hear to get what he wanted.

Why he wanted anything from her was beyond Lucy. She had so little to offer. Even Lena saw it when she walked into the dining room that evening.

Lucy turned from the window and gazed around the room. She had to get out of here. She had to get as far away from Shane as she could and she had to do it now.

She dove across the bed, reached for the phone and quickly dialed numbers.

"Von Helt residence," a nasal-sounding woman said as the phone was picked up on the second ring.

"Tell Stanton to turn around and come back to Cordelia's summer house," Lucy said.

"I'm not authorized to give Stanton orders, ma'am. I'll have to get Mrs. Von Helt."

"No," Lucy cried but knew she'd been put on hold anyway. She didn't have to wait long to hear Cordelia's voice on the line. "Lucy?"

"Cordelia," she said, "I want you to call Stanton and tell him to come back to the house. I want to leave."

"Oh, my dear," Cordelia said. "I heard the tragic news and I'm so sorry it happened. You see, Stanton has only been with me for a few months and he wasn't prepared—"

Lucy didn't care what Stanton was or wasn't prepared for.

"Just tell him to come back and get me," Lucy cried. "I want out of here and I want out now!"

"Calm down, darling," Cordelia said. "I don't think you understand."

"I understand all I need to. You set me up with a married man!" Lucy said. "I slept with him, damn it!"

"You did?" Cordelia replied with a measure of glee. "I knew you wouldn't be able to resist each other. I'm so happy to hear—"

"Fuck you!" Lucy surprised herself with the brash word and knew Cordelia was just as shocked. "I want out of here and if you don't help me, I'll manage it without you!"

Cordelia took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "All right," she said. "I don't want to force you into anything you don't want to do. I'll try to reach Stanton and send him back for you."

"Try?"

"Well," she replied, "There have been some issues with his car phone lately. I've tried to get it fixed, but you know what the phone company is like. No matter how much money you toss at them, they do as little as possible."

"Just call Stanton and tell him to come back for me," Lucy said. "I'm packing my bags now."

"All right, darling. I'll do what I can."

\* \* \* \*

"What?" Shane said as he gripped the cell phone tightly in his hand. "When did she call you?"

"Just minutes ago," Cordelia replied. "She asked me to contact Stanton and have him return to pick her up."

*For fuck's sake!* She wasn't even going to give him the chance to explain.

"I told you she was an injured soul," Cordelia said.

"Have you called Stanton?"

"No," she replied. "I told Lucy the car phone wasn't working well these days and that I might not be able to get through to him."

"Good," Shane said. "Don't call him. I want the chance to talk to her first. If she won't listen to me, I'll call Stanton myself."

"I knew you would," Cordelia said. "Good luck, Shane."

"Thanks," Shane said. "And, Cor?"

"Yes?"

"You were right. Lucy and I really are a perfect match."

"I just hope you can convince her of that," she said before she hung up.

Shane pressed the end button on his cell phone. "I hope so, too," he whispered. "I really do."

\* \* \* \*

Lucy opened her door carefully and peered up and down the hall. She breathed a sigh of relief when she realized Shane was nowhere in sight.

She pulled the strap of her bag over her shoulder and winced when the door creaked as she pulled it closed. She didn't want anything to alert Shane.

She slowly made her way down the stairs and, with another sigh of relief, reached the front door and pulled it open. She tossed her bag on the front step and smiled to herself.

She'd done it. She'd escaped the house unscathed. Now all she had to do was wait for Stanton to arrive and she'd be home free.

*Anytime now, Stanton. I can't wait forever.*

Lucy knew simply wishing him to appear with the limo wasn't going to make him arrive any sooner. Cordelia said she'd pass her message along and, since there was no one else in this world she could trust, she had to keep her faith alive. If Cordelia said she'd help her escape, then she would and that was that.

*Wasn't it?*

Lucy hated when she found herself questioning the intentions of the only person she trusted.

Cordelia would respect her wishes. *Wouldn't she?*

Lucy pushed the questions out of her head as she sat down on the steps and waited to see the lights of the limo turning into the courtyard.

Lucy laughed at herself. Look at how terribly paranoid she was. Cordelia would never do anything to hurt her.

"Lucy," she heard Shane's voice behind her. She squeezed her eyes shut. Stanton would be here any moment to whisk her away because Cordelia would move Heaven and Earth to see to it.

"Stanton's not coming," he said. "I asked Cordelia to give me a few hours to explain things to you."

Lucy didn't look up; she didn't want to see his face. "Thank you, Cordelia," she whispered to herself. "It seems I don't mean anything to you either."

"That's not true at all," Shane countered. "Cordelia loves you very much."

Lucy leapt up from the steps and turned to face him. She



hadn't meant her whispered words for his ears but since he had heard, he might as well know exactly what she was feeling.

"You son of a bitch," she seethed. "Do you have any idea how I felt when I was sitting at the table totally nude when your wife walked in?"

"She's my ex-wife," Shane said. "And I can imagine you felt very uncomfortable."

Lucy shook her head, offering a sad smile. "It was uncomfortable," she said. "However, the way you treated her terrifies me."

He frowned and Lucy went on before he could reply. "I opened the window in my room and I heard her beg you to understand. I heard her tell you how much she loves you." Lucy's voice cracked and she turned away from him, unable to look at him any longer. "You left her crying at the door."

"You don't understand what tore us apart," Shane said.

"Lena and I have a long history. By far, she is the best actress I've ever known."

Lucy curled her fingers into fists. "She needed you, Shane," she said. "And you turned her away."

Shane laughed bitterly. "What Lena needs is money. The moment she finds another man willing to give it to her, she'll forget all about me."

"What about the sex? Are you going to tell me you weren't good together?"

Shane smiled as he approached her. "We were good together. But it was nothing compared to you and I."

Lucy backed away from him. "Really? And when you tire of me, will you use the same excuse when you meet the next one?"

Shane's face darkened, his eyes bore into her. "I suppose I should be grateful you've moved on from thinking I was paid to fuck you," he said. "But I don't know what's more insulting. The fact you thought I was paid to have sex with you, or that you think I've used you."

"I don't know either," she said. "All I want is to get the hell out of here."

"And you will," Shane said. He leaned down and picked up her bag. "We have one more night together and then Stanton will take you home."

He tossed her bag toward the door and gazed down at her.

"But our last night together will not be taken away from us. Stanton is not coming to get you and you will spend the night in my bed."

With that, Shane disappeared with her bag into the house.

Lucy stared after him.

She could call Cordelia again, but since she'd been misled by the woman she thought she could trust, there was little

chance she'd help this time either. She had no recourse but to follow Shane back into the house.

## Chaptez 10

Lucy's heart was heavy as she walked up the stairs to her room. All she could really hope for was to be left alone in her sorrow for the night. Tomorrow, she'd call Cordelia again and talk her into sending Stanton to pick her up early.

When she reached her room, she twisted the doorknob to open the door. It resisted. Lucy frowned and tried it again. Nothing, it wouldn't allow her in.

"The door's locked," Shane said from behind her.

Lucy whisked around to see him standing in the door of his suite. Keys dangled from the end of his index finger.

Anger welled within her when she saw his smug smile. "I guess you'll have to spend the night in my suite," he said. Before she could reply, he disappeared inside the room.

Lucy stomped down the hall and stepped inside. She gazed around her, looking for the man that had set her blood boiling.

The door slammed shut behind her and Lucy pivoted to find him standing with his back to it. She so wanted to wipe away the smug look on his face with her fist.

When she stepped forward, Shane clasped her raised hand in his. He twisted it behind her back as he wrestled her toward the bed. Lucy gasped when he pushed her away from him. She bounced lightly as her body connected with the soft mattress.

"You bastard!" she seethed. "You don't own me. You don't have the right to manhandle me."

Shane's eyes narrowed, his face dark and dangerous.

"Strip," he said.

Lucy didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "I beg your pardon?"

"I said, strip," Shane said through clenched teeth. "Take your clothes off and do it now."

Lucy's heart raced as she stared at Shane. His face clouded with anger, his eyes dark and ominous. She watched as he tore the shirt he wore from his body and tossed it aside. His chest expanded with each breath he took.

Lucy's heart shuddered in fear ... and filled with excitement. She felt her nipples pebble, her core dampen.

When she tried to get off the bed, Shane leaned forward and pushed her back down. "Take your clothes off right now and assume the position."

Lucy blinked. "What?"

"Don't play shy with me. You've spread your legs often enough for me to know what the position is," he said.

Lucy's excitement grew as she slowly unbuttoned the blouse she was wearing.

"Don't fuck around," Shane said, his anger mounting as his

fingers curled around the band of his jeans and pulled them off. His erect penis sprung free as he tossed his jeans aside. When her blouse fell open, Lucy quickly tossed it aside. She reached behind her to unhook her bra. Her fingers shook so much, she fumbled with it.

Shane moaned and moved over her. He didn't bother with the clasp at her back. His fingers curled beneath the elastic under her breasts and yanked the fabric away.

Lucy winced when the elastic pulled against her back and finally snapped. Shane might have thought it was a sexy thing to do but Lucy knew elastic didn't break away without leaving a welt.

None of which mattered right now since Shane settled his focus on her jeans and ripped them down her hips. His fingers caught her panties and dragged them away at the same time. He tossed both over his shoulder and gazed down at her naked body.

His dark eyes connected with hers. "I want to taste you. Spread your legs," he ordered.

Lucy did as she was told. Shane pulled her legs over his shoulders and dragged her down on the bed until her butt reached the edge. He fell to the floor. He pulled her legs tight, her thighs connecting with either side of his head, as his mouth closed over her vagina.

Lucy cried out as his tongue sucked her clitoris so hard, it almost hurt. His hands slid up her thighs and his fingers finally pushed inside her, setting a rhythm that matched her beating heart.

Lucy's fingers ran through his hair, pulling the long strands and pulling his face closer toward her. Her need to touch him rose with every stroke his fingers made inside her.

"Let me take you in my mouth," Lucy gasped as she bucked against his fingers. "I want you in my mouth!"

Shane chuckled as he pulled away from her. "I've never been opposed to the feel of your mouth on my cock," he said.

"Get on top of me."

Lucy found herself poised over him, her legs spread over his face as she gazed down at his massive erection. Delighted with the freedom to move, Lucy instantly wrapped her hand around the base of his penis and touched the tip with her tongue.

"God, yeah," Shane groaned as she took his penis in her mouth. Her tongue twined around the hard shaft as her hand gripped the base and glided over it. She set the rhythm, filling her mouth with him as her fingers anxiously kneaded his soft flesh.

She felt his hands grab her buttocks and pull her down over him. His velvety tongue lapped at her, his fingers pressed inside her, rocking her body to the same rhythm she

had set.

When she could take no more, Lucy pulled herself away from his touch. With her back to him, she squatted over his erection and slowly moved downward. His penis folded beneath her weight and Lucy cried out in frustration, so needing to be filled.

Shane laughed lightly as he pushed a hand beneath her and lifted his penis. "Try again," he whispered as Lucy slowly settled over him.

Her body opened to receive him, the different position providing friction Lucy had never felt before. Leaning back slightly, Lucy ran her hands down the length of her body to feel their connection. She gasped when her fingers touched the base of his penis, slick with her womanly juices, the veins bulging with unshed desire.

Shane's hands gripped her hips and set the pace. Her body shimmered with perspiration as he pushed her away and then pulled her back down, hard, as he thrust his hips upward.

"Lean back a bit," Shane said as his hands flew to her waist and guided her. "That's it, my darling," he said as his hips bucked up. One hand held her waist as the other slowly slid to her clitoris. He pressed his knuckle over the slick nub, pushing lightly.

Lucy felt as though she was about to explode. The intensity frightened her and she pulled away from him. She fell on the bed beside him, landing on her stomach.

"Oh no, you don't!" Shane laughed. "You're not getting away from me now." Shane followed her immediately.

Nudging her legs apart, he pulled her hips off the mattress as he thrust into her from behind.

Lucy pressed her face into the pillow and cried out as he filled her again, this time, pumping with more force. He reached around and pressed his fingers against her clitoris again.

"Stop!" Lucy cried out, unable to handle much more.

"Let it happen," Shane grunted as he continued his assault. "Just let it come, sweet Lucy."

Lucy wasn't sure what he was talking about. All she could feel was an intensity that threatened to explode within her. She couldn't take much more as a tidal wave overtook her body. She screamed, certain her heart was about to give out, certain her life was about to end.

Shane groaned his own release and collapsed over her, pressing her against the soft mattress. She felt his heart thundering against her back as he gasped air into his lungs.

Lucy squirmed under his weight until he finally rolled away, resting on his back beside her. His long hair splayed across his damp face as he rested an arm over his chest and drew his knees up slightly. "Jesus," he whispered as his hand

pressed against his chest.

Lucy tried to keep the tears at bay. She pressed her face into the pillow and bit her lip. Damn it! The tears began to flow in spite of herself.

No one ever made her feel the way Shane did. No one had ever touched her soul and made her feel so wanted and needed.

And yet, Lucy knew it couldn't last. When daylight came, they'd both be whisked away from the summer house and would likely never see each other again. The sorrow she felt in her heart was almost too much to bear. Shane would never love her, not in the way she needed to be loved.

"Hey," Shane whispered as his hand glided over her disheveled hair and rested on her shoulder. "Are you crying?"

Lucy shook her head but couldn't stifle the long sniff.

Shane chuckled as he gathered her into his arms and pulled her against his chest. "That's okay," he whispered. "I was pretty close to tears myself. That was damn amazing."

Lucy snuggled into his chest. Best to let him think it was the sex that caused her tears. This was their last night together. There was no need to tell him the truth. She wanted to spend their last night together in his strong arms, feeling protected from the world outside.

*Hold off tomorrow for as long as you can.*

When she felt the slow rhythm of his breathing, she knew he was fast asleep. She lifted her head and looked down at his face. "I love you, Shane," she whispered before she rested her head on his chest and allowed sleep to overtake her.

## Chapter 11

Daylight streamed through the windows as Shane slowly woke. He gazed down at the woman snuggled against him and smiled. Lucy was everything he needed in a woman. So warm and giving. In his arms, she held nothing back. Where the hell had she been all his life?

Shane grimaced. He knew where she'd been. She'd been everywhere he hadn't been looking since the breakup with Lena. He hadn't been ready for someone like Lucy to come into his life. At least, not until now.

He had twenty-four hours before he started his new life.

He'd chosen to move so he could start over, begin with a clean record where no one knew him. He'd grown tired of having a different woman every night of the week, tired of never feeling committed to anything but his work.

Shane kissed Lucy's forehead and slowly untangled himself. He slid off the bed and breathed a sigh of relief when Lucy rolled over, her sleep undisturbed.

He had things to do. He had to clean a few things up to make room for Lucy in his life. First and foremost, he had to find Lena and deal with her. Forging a lasting relationship with Lucy wasn't going to happen unless he cut Lena out of his life once and for all.

When Shane rose from the bed, he gazed down at the sleeping woman. He'd heard the words she spoke to him the night before. She said she loved him when she thought he was sleeping. At first, he thought he was sleeping too, that he had dreamed hearing the words. And then she settled against him, her heart beating in unison with his.

At that moment, Shane knew what he had to do.

Lucy moaned softly in her sleep and rolled onto her back.

Shane's eyes roved over her naked body. He twitched with the need to touch her again, to feel her skin against his as he drove into her.

He backed away from the bed. No, no matter how tempting her sweet body was, he had to set things right in his life first.

\* \* \* \*

"Lucy." Hearing her name dragged her out of the most wonderful dream. She and Shane were running naked on a secluded beach. He wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her down to the cool sand. His lips covered hers as he touched her everywhere.

"Lucy, wake up!"

*No, I don't want to wake up!*

"Lucy, it's almost noon. It's time to go."

She opened her eyes slowly and focused on the woman standing over her. She blinked.

"Cordelia?" Lucy rose to her elbows as she stared at the woman. "What are you doing here?"

"Stanton is waiting outside," Cordelia told her. "It's time to go."

Lucy frowned. "Where's Shane?"

Cordelia's eyes softened with regret as she plunked down on the bed beside her. "I'm sorry, dear," she said. "He left hours ago."

Lucy swallowed hard, her throat felt as though it would close completely. "He did?"

"Yes." The older woman nodded. "He called Stanton at six this morning. When Stanton refused to pick him up without you, Shane said he'd get a cab."

Lucy blinked. After the incredible night they'd shared together, not just the lovemaking but sleeping in each other's arms, she couldn't believe Shane would leave without saying goodbye.

"Stanton wasn't going to arrive for you and Shane until this evening but when I heard the news, I wanted to come right away to see if he had left," Cordelia said. She sighed. "I guess he did. All his things are gone."

"Oh," Lucy said, it was all her mind would let her say out loud. "I guess he's not great at saying goodbye."

Cordelia touched her hand lightly. "So it seems, my dear," she said, regret lacing her voice. "I thought I knew him so well. I would never have set you two up together if I believed he'd do something like this."

Lucy rose from the bed, not caring her friend would see her naked body. "I guess there's no way to predict how anyone will act."

Lucy's heart ached as she pulled her robe over her body. How could Shane do this to her? Hadn't he told her again and again that she belonged to him? He said she'd never know another man's touch as long as he lived. Had he been lying? Had he said those words to get what he wanted from her? Lucy turned her back to Cordelia as tears stung her eyes. She gulped air into her lungs before she spoke. "I hope you don't mind if I take a shower before we leave."

"Not at all, my dear," Cordelia said. "I'll be downstairs waiting for you."

\* \* \* \*

"It would probably help if you talked about it," Cordelia said, finally breaking the long silence between them as Stanton took them into the city.

"There's nothing to say," Lucy said, her eyes not leaving



the view along the road.

Cordelia leaned forward and pressed the button that closed the window between the driver and them. She leaned back on the plush seat. "Well, did you and Shane make love?"

Lucy's head whipped around to look at her. "I already said I don't want to talk about it."

Cordelia grinned. "I'll take that as a yes."

Lucy moaned and pressed her hands over her face. "Yes, we made love."

"And it was good I take it?"

Lucy nodded. "It was more than I ever thought possible."

"He showed you that your body is desirable," Cordelia said.

"Shane proved to you that Jon was wrong all those years and you were wrong to believe him." It wasn't a question.

Lucy nodded again.

*Well, that's right on target.* Lucy pulled her hands away from her face when she heard the whispered words. Her eyes squinted as she regarded Cordelia.

"What did you just say?"

Cordelia smiled. "All right, I admit I set you up with Shane for that very reason. I wanted him to show you that you are a desirable woman. I wanted him to prove to you any man would want you if you felt desirable from the inside out."

"You *did* hire him!" Lucy cried. "He denied being paid to have sex with me but I knew it all along!"

Cordelia touched her chest with gloved hands. "I most certainly did not hire Shane. He went of his own accord. How could you think I'd do such a thing?"

"Why would he agree to go along with it unless you paid him?" Lucy asked, anger building with every word.

"Shane was a good friend of Hendrick's. In fact, he was a snot-nosed gang member when my husband found him on the street. He believed Shane had a lot going for him, and cleaned him up. Hendrick even helped Shane through school. If it wasn't for Hendrick, Shane would have died in the gutter years ago."

Lucy processed the information. So Shane had help cleaning up his act and was set on the right path in life. Good for him. But...

"So you felt Shane owed you something?"

"Of course not," Cordelia replied. "Shane was on another destructive path. All I did was set him straight again. I did nothing less than Hendrick would have done for him."

Lucy looked out the window and saw the familiar surroundings of the streets near her home. She peered back at the older woman sitting in the seat beside her. "In other words, you played God with Shane's life."

"I know you met Lena this weekend. Imagine being married to that?" Cordelia said. "We were horrified when

Shane married that gold digger but had to sit back and let Shane do what he thought was best for him. When their marriage broke up, Lena took everything she could get her hands on. By the time the divorce was finalized, Shane had nothing left. He had to start all over again."

Lucy frowned. "They're divorced?"

"Of course, they are," Cordelia said. She ran her gaze over Lucy. "I suppose Lena told you they were still married."

Lucy turned away, unwilling to admit she was right. She needed to process the new information on her own. Shane hadn't told her the truth. Perhaps when he came to her, he fully intended to. But one thing had led to another and, well, it just never came up.

As the limo slowed to a stop, Lucy was anxious to get out. She needed time to think, to figure out what she was feeling. She pushed the door open and got out. She stood on the curb as Stanton slowly walked to the back of the limo and opened the trunk.

Cordelia leaned forward and looked at her. "Do you really think I'd force you to spend a weekend with a married man?"

No, Cordelia Von Helt was many things, but even she would never do a thing like that.

As Stanton handed her the bag, she smiled at him. "Thank you," she said. He nodded and returned to the driver's seat. Lucy looked down at her friend. "I'm really sorry, Cordelia. I need some time to think. I'll call you after work tomorrow."

Cordelia smiled in return. "Please do," she said. "I want to know you're all right."

"I will," Lucy said. The limo pulled away and merged into traffic. Lucy watched it until it turned a corner and disappeared from view.

Shane. She didn't even know his last name. She was in love with the man and didn't even know his last name!

Lucy turned and walked into her apartment building. She had a lot to think about tonight. She might never see Shane again but she needed to make some sense of the weekend they'd spent together.

## Chapter 12

"You absolute and complete asshole!"

Shane winced when he heard Cordelia's voice on the phone.

"Do you have any idea what you did to Lucy when you disappeared on her?"

Shane said, "If you insist on berating me, I'll hang up on you."

Cordelia's tone softened slightly but she was no less angry, he could tell by the way she carefully chose her words. "I'm glad you finally called me," she said. "I've been trying to get a hold of you since we dropped Lucy off at her apartment today."

"I had some things I needed to take care of," he told her.

"Like what?"

"There's a house I had my eye on when I got to Toronto last week," Shane began. "It's in a nice part of town. When I saw it before, I didn't think it was for me. Too big, too many rooms to ramble around in alone."

Cordelia's voice softened again. "Why would you want to buy a house?"

Shane grinned. "Because Lucy and I didn't use protection this past weekend. There's a good chance she's pregnant and, if she is, we'll need the room."

Cordelia snorted in the phone.

"That was unbecoming," Shane said as he chuckled.

"You'll have to excuse me," she replied. "I thought you said you hoped you impregnated Lucy."

"I did," Shane replied.

"What makes you so sure she'd want you, even if she is pregnant?"

"Because when she thought I was sleeping, she told me she loved me, that's why."

Cordelia chuckled. "You sound very smug. Almost as if she'd be crazy not to accept your proposal."

"I'm not being smug," Shane said. In fact, he wasn't sure how he'd handle it if she refused to marry him. "But I know one thing for sure. She's the only woman who has ever made me feel whole. I need her in my life and I'm willing to do anything to make sure she wants to be in mine."

"Taking off on her this morning wasn't a good way of showing it," Cordelia said. "She was devastated. And you didn't even bother to explain about Lena."

"I know," Shane said. "I wanted to clear things up first. I wanted to buy this house, talk to Lena to make sure she wasn't going to interrupt our life all the time."

"So, have you accomplished this?"

"As a matter of fact, I have."

"Even Lena?"

Shane grinned. "Yes, even Lena. As luck would have it, she turned up at my door just when my neighbor came by for a visit. He's an investment banker. Their eyes met, she saw his fat wallet and bid me farewell."

Cordelia laughed out loud. "Well, that's a relief. I just hope you can lure Lucy back into your life as easily."

Shane turned solemn. He held the phone tight in his hands. "I hope so too, Cordelia. My life is nothing without her."

"Well, if nothing else, you'll surprise the heck out of her tomorrow. All I can suggest is that you pounce before she has time to think about it. If you give her room to consider, you may never see her again."

\* \* \* \*

*For he's a jolly good fellow! For he's a jolly good fellow!*

*For he's a jolly good fellow, that nobody can deny!*

Doctor Benton grinned as he stood over the massive decorated cake. "I am sincerely glad you have never felt the need to sing to me before now."

"*Boo!*" some of the gathered group called as others laughed hardily.

"Another glass of champagne, Doctor Benton?" Lucy asked as she held the bottle over his empty glass.

He gazed down at Lucy and smiled. "Go on, if I can't walk home, I know Bonnie will drive."

He glanced at his wife as she laughed and slapped his arm lightly. "I've had more champagne than you have," she said.

"We'll both have to walk home."

Lucy filled his glass and then turned to fill other empty glasses in the small group that gathered after the dental office closed that afternoon.

"Speech!" someone called just as Lucy put the empty bottle in the recycling box near the door.

Doctor Benton grinned as the knife he held sliced through the cake. Bonnie placed each piece of cake onto a paper plate and passed them around the room. "One thing at a time," the doctor said. "You all know I was never good at multitasking."

The crowd laughed as each received a slice of cake. When he finished cutting the cake, he placed the knife on the table and lifted his glass of champagne.

"You all know I'm a man of few words," Benton said. He looked at his wife with a mischievous grin. "Bonnie has always been happy to do all my talking."

Another round of laughs as his wife pinched his side lovingly.

Benton's face grew solemn as he shifted on his feet. "I've been a dentist for almost fifty years," he told the group.

"Bonnie always said I would know when I was ready to retire. She waited patiently and knew when the time came, it wouldn't be easy for me. But the fact is, I'm getting old and the time has come."

He waited while some in the group protested he wasn't old at all while others booed and hissed. Benton held up his hands to silence the group. "No matter what anyone here thinks, the time really has come. I want to spend some time with my wife before I'm too old to enjoy life anymore. And so, I want to thank each and every one of you for being a part of my practice." He turned to Lucy and raised his glass. "Lucy, you have been, by far, the best secretary I've ever had. I wish you a very long and prosperous life."

Lucy bit back tears as she smiled back at him. Benton turned to the rest of the group. "Everyone here knows what role they've played in my life and in my practice. I salute you all." Benton tipped his glass to his mouth and said, "Cheers." *Hear, hear! Cheers!*

As the group broke into applause, Benton raised his hands to silence them. "There's more," he said. "I know everyone here has been wondering about my successor. I've kept quiet about him until this point, but it's time to tell you who he is." Lucy tipped her glass to her mouth just as Benton turned to the closed door and said, "Everyone, allow me to introduce to you, Doctor Shane Wilson."

The door burst open and Shane entered the room.

Lucy felt the glass slip from her hand and crash to the floor at her feet. The sound went unnoticed as the room burst into applause.

Dressed casually in a black t-shirt and tan trousers, his long hair pulled back in a ponytail, Shane looked good enough to eat. Her heart tripped over itself at the shock of seeing him.

She took a step back as people went forward to shake his hand. He smiled as he clasped hands and accepted many pats on the back.

When his eyes collided with hers, he offered her a secret wink. Lucy wasn't sure how to respond. The only thing that came to mind was to flee.

She turned on her heels and headed for the door. She needed to get out, to be anywhere but here! She dashed down the hall to the front door.

"Lucy, wait!" She heard Shane's voice, but kept running. She landed against the front door and pushed. It didn't open.

*Damn!* She should have known the front door was always locked after office hours. Doctor Benton and his staff always stayed on when the last client came in but Lucy was always free to leave ... and she always left through the front door. She'd completely forgotten it was locked not long after she

left work at night.

She whirled around, pressing her back to the locked door. She felt like a caged animal as Shane stopped a few feet away from her.

"Let me explain," he said breathlessly. "We need to talk."

Lucy shook her head. "There's nothing you couldn't have said Sunday morning," she spat. "Of course, you would have had to stick around long enough to talk to me."

"I'm here now," he said as he took a step toward her.

"Hear what I have to say now."

"Not a chance," Lucy said as she ran toward him. As he opened his arms to receive her, she took a quick turn to the left and jumped over the receptionist's desk. She landed on her backside but quickly jumped up and headed for the back door.

As she pushed her hands against the door, it gave way and opened. *Home free!* But just as she would have ran through it, arms wrapped around her waist and pulled her off the ground.

"No!" she cried as she was pulled against Shane's unforgiving chest.

"I asked you to hear me out and come hell or high water, that's what you're going to do!" Shane said.

He grunted as she kicked her legs back, connecting with his shins. "Damn it, woman!" he said as he hoisted her up over his shoulder. He turned to the crowd watching them.

"I'm sorry, folks, please go on and enjoy the party." He slapped his hand over her butt, making Lucy cry out with anger. "The little lady and I have something to work out." Just as Shane pushed through the back door, Lucy lifted her head and saw Cordelia standing among the crowd. No wonder no one had come to her aid.

"Help me!" she cried.

"I am," Cordelia replied as she waved.

"I hate her," Lucy cried as Shane carried her outside.

She felt a stinging slap on her thighs as Shane reprimanded her. "You have her to thank for many things," he said. "Don't say something you don't mean."

Lucy fought to catch her breath as her eyes caught the gleam of Cordelia's limousine. Stanton stood by the back door and pulled it open.

"Stanton," Lucy cried. "Help me! I'm being kidnapped!"

"Shut up," Shane said as he dumped Lucy into the limo and dove into the seat beside her. "Drive!" he called to Stanton.

Shane held Lucy down as the car pulled out of the parking lot and onto the road. "Let me go," Lucy cried, tears welling in her eyes. "What are you trying to do to me?"

Shane's eyes softened and he let up slightly. "I didn't know

what else to do to make you listen to me. There's something I want to show you."

"There's nothing you have I could possibly want to see,"

Lucy said, tears spilling down her cheeks unchecked. "Do you have any idea how I felt when Cordelia woke me up yesterday morning? You left without a word, not so much as a note to say 'thanks for the good time'."

Shane pulled her into his arms as she sobbed. "I know I hurt you, and I'm sorry," he whispered. "I needed to sort some things out."

"Why didn't you tell me Lena is your ex-wife?" she said against his chest.

"I wanted to," he told her. "I fully intended to explain it all to you. And then, there you were, looking so damn beautiful. I couldn't help myself, I needed you to know you were mine and would be forever."

"Where are we going?"

"We're going home," Shane replied. "The place you and I will live and raise our family."

"What?" Lucy couldn't believe what she was hearing. "Our family?"

Shane slid his hands over her cheeks and tipped her chin up to him. "My darling, I know we've only known each other a couple days, but my love for you is timeless. There's also the fact we didn't use protection this past weekend. You could be pregnant."

Lucy took in his words as the car slowed and pulled into a long driveway. When it came to a stop, Stanton opened the back door.

"Come look at our house," Shane said as he pulled Lucy from the limo. "It's a nice place with lots of room. There's a yard out back where our children will play. And when my new practice grows, we'll move up to something bigger, something more spectacular."

Lucy looked at the beautiful brick home with a grand front entrance. As Shane led her to the front door, Lucy pulled out of his hand. He looked back at her.

"There's something else," she said.

Shane frowned as he looked around at the lush green grass and perennial-filled beds. "What's that?"

"Do I get to keep my job as your secretary?"

"Of course," Shane said. "Doctor Benton said he couldn't run the practice without you."

Lucy nodded, her heart beating like a drum in her chest.

"And when do I get the official proposal?"

Shane threw his head back and laughed. "How about now?"

He gathered her close to him and looked down at her.

"Lucy," he said. "Will you marry me?"

"Yes," she said as she pressed her lips to his.  
Shane pulled his lips from hers. "I can't wait for you to see our bedroom," he said. "It's the only room I've got furnished right now."  
As Shane opened the door, Stanton cleared his throat. They both looked at him.  
"Shall I wait in the car, sir?"  
Before Shane could answer, Lucy piped up. "Yes, Stanton. I hope you brought a good book to read. We might be awhile."  
Stanton tipped his hat and turned to the limo. "I always do."

*THE END*