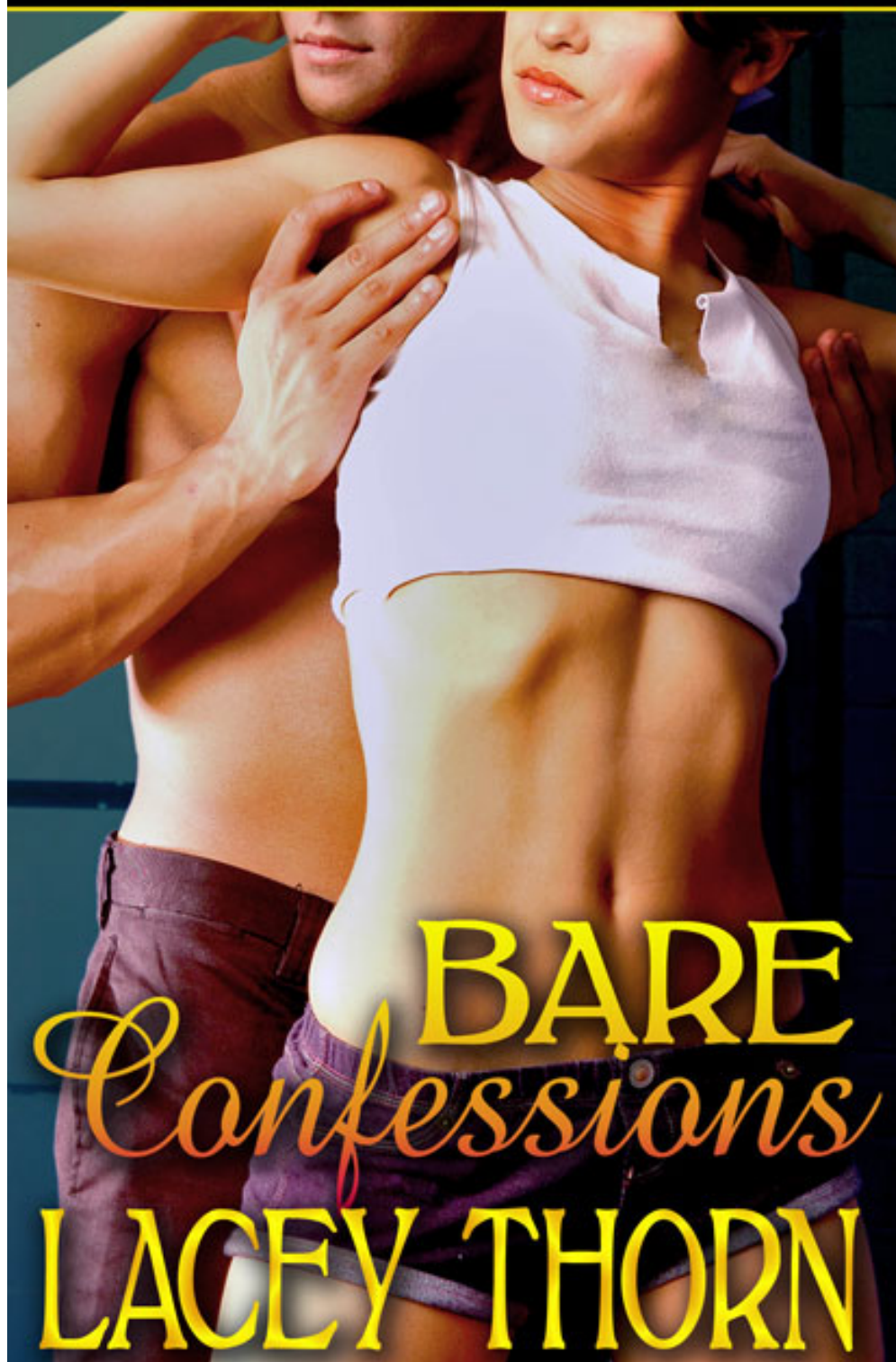


ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



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Bare Confessions

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BARE CONFESSIONS

Lacey Thorn

This book is dedicated to the following people:

To my best pal and the one person I can always count on to listen to all my wild ideas: Shelly, I couldn't do it without you.

To my sis: I love you girl!

To Helen: who wades through my chaos and makes it beautiful.

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Chapter One

“Secrets and lies... Everyone in the world deals with these every day of their lives. To protect themselves. To protect someone else. It is all in the way that you look at the situation.”

Katie remembered her favorite professor’s words well. They had always stuck in her mind as she had planned on working as a high school English teacher. All that had changed now and as she re-read the letter from the school board she thought again of secrets and lies.

We are sorry to inform you that the school board has decided that it is in the best interests of the parents and students of Legacy High School that we rescind the offer of employment for this school year.

It still blew her away how quickly things could change. Just a few months ago she had everything planned out. Now it was all changed. Now it was all chaos. Her oldest brother Gil was making plans to marry his girlfriend Moira Madigan. They had met when he and his partner were tracking a serial killer who had targeted Moira. Moira had almost died. Gil still found it hard to let her do things on her own without him or someone else he trusted hovering over her.

Moira was ignoring him as best as she could. She owned a health club called Knowledge Is Power. It had started out as a safe haven for women of abuse to come and learn how to defend and protect themselves but now it was open to just about anyone. They did keep a list of known abusers who were not allowed on the premises, mostly men against whom one of their members had a restraining order. A lot of the other members were cops like Gil and his best friend and partner, Detective Ben Marcum.

Ben Marcum, now there was a man she would like to get to know in the biblical sense. He was tall at six foot three but then anyone was tall compared to Katie’s own five foot one inch. He had blond surfer boy hair and the lightest blue eyes she had ever seen. They contrasted nicely with her own dark blue Daniels’ eyes. Katie shared the same eye color with all three of her brothers, Gil, Griff and Doug, so everyone referred to them as “Daniels’ blue”. All of them also shared the same ebony black hair. Katie’s was kept in a cute little pixie cut that went well with her diminutive height and she kept red highlights in it. She thought that she and Ben would make a great-looking couple.

She had thought that was going to happen after the incident at Moira’s club. Ben had stayed right with her, helping her through everything. She still remembered him holding her close, placing kisses on her head. It had felt like heaven but unfortunately it hadn’t lasted. It seemed that he felt she was off limits since she was Gil’s little sister. She would give just about anything to change his mind.

Her brother Doug was busy with his business partner Damon Roberts moving their business to Legacy. He said that they had just played things out where they grew up but she wasn't that stupid. Her brother had taken over their father's construction company, Daniels Construction, when he had died. There was always a need for a construction company. No, he and Damon were moving to get away from a town that knew too much about their personal business. She was well aware that Doug and Damon liked to share their women. Hell if either one of them ever fell in love the other probably would too, with the same woman. But Katie was an innocent little girl in her family's eyes so she wasn't supposed to know anything about all of that.

Griff was the only one who knew she wasn't as innocent as everyone thought. He was four years older than her twenty-two years and pretty much her best friend. What made Katie so angry was that he had just driven away right after everything happened. When she needed him the most he had just walked away. Oh she knew that he was probably dealing with the fact that Katie was the one to rescue Moira from the deranged killer who had been stalking her. But Katie had acted without thinking. She would have gladly let Griff be the hero if she had thought about it.

She remembered laughing and joking with Griff as they had parked his car and headed toward Moira's gym. She had been teasing him about sex and their mom maybe dating. Griff had been horrified. Then there was the scene that greeted them at the locked doors of the gym. Moira had been on her belly on the floor trying to crawl away from a man. The man had been trying to kill her.

The glass was shatterproof and Griff had expended untold energy trying to break it anyway. Katie had called 9-1-1 and then headed to the back door for which she had a key. She had taken her handgun out of her purse and gone through the dark building to try to help Moira.

And when she had come upon them in the entryway of the club, Katie had done the only thing she could think of. She had raised her gun and killed the man who was trying to kill Moira. Now she just had to learn to live with it.

* * * * *

It was dark outside the window of Gil's old apartment. Katie lived there alone now that Gil had moved in permanently with Moira. But when the knock came at the door Katie was anything but surprised. It seemed like someone was always stopping by with one excuse or another but Katie knew they were checking to make sure she was all right.

Expecting it to be one of her brothers, she left her robe folded on the end of the couch, hoping that when they saw her in the short blue nightie they would prefer not to stay. But she was the one surprised when she opened the door to none other than Ben Marcum.

He took her in from head to toe before moving past her into the apartment. "Expecting someone?" he asked with a touch of anger in his voice.

Interesting, Katie thought. Could it possibly be that he was a little upset at the thought of her with another guy? Maybe she could use that to get him right where she wanted him—in her bed.

“No, I’m just getting ready for bed and since I wasn’t expecting anyone, I just figured you were one of my well-meaning brothers. Which I guess you could be—a brother I mean.” Katie said the last just to see what his reaction would be. She almost laughed when she saw the scowl on his face.

“I just wanted to check on you. I hear that you start your first day of work at Moira’s gym tomorrow. Are you sure that you’re up to it?”

“If I had been teaching I would have already started so, yeah, I’m sure. Besides, I’m just going to be leading some group therapy sessions for those who are interested in it. I do have a degree in psychology, Ben.”

“I know that. It’s just that some of the things those women have been through are pretty serious. I hate for you to have to listen to it.”

“I’m not some little doll who needs to be sheltered and protected. I wish you and my brothers would get over that idea.” Katie turned and stomped over to the window. “I shot and killed a man, Ben. Just how innocent do you think that leaves me?”

Ben stepped up behind her and pulled her back against his body, being careful to keep enough distance between them so that she wouldn’t feel the pulsing hardness of his straining cock. That little blue number she was almost wearing was hell on his libido. He wanted her so badly and had to keep reminding himself that Gil would likely kill him if he touched his baby sister.

“You did what you had to do, Katie. No one can fault you for that. Moira would likely be dead now if you hadn’t shot him.”

She turned in his arms and buried her head against his solid chest. “I keep telling myself that but I still wonder what if. What if I hadn’t shot to kill? What if I had just ordered him away from her? What if...”

“Don’t do that to yourself, Katie. The guy had already murdered several other women—at least four that we knew of for sure. Can you honestly make yourself believe that he would have just stepped away because you asked him nicely?”

Katie gave a shaky laugh at the look of incredulity in Ben’s eyes. “I know that you’re right. I know that in my head. It’s just going to take me a little longer to accept it, that’s all.”

Katie burrowed closer to him. Close enough that there was no mistaking what that rigid length straining his zipper was. Without thinking she began rubbing her stomach against it. They both moaned at the same time. “I know that you want me, Ben. Why won’t you do anything about it?”

Ben groaned again as he held her hips to try to get her to stop rubbing so wantonly against him. “Gil would kill me if he knew that I touched you.”

"Why does Gil have to know anything about it then?" Katie was feeling reckless. The only thing that she knew for sure was that she wanted him between her thighs right now.

"What are you saying, Katie? That we should just have sex and not let anyone know?"

"Why not? I'm sure that you've had one-night stands before. This shouldn't be new to you. We could just scratch this itch we have for each other and move on."

Ben wasn't sure that he could do that. He was afraid that once he had Katie he would never be able to let her go. "I don't think that is such a good idea. Secrets always have a way of getting out and I'm not so sure that I could lie to Gil."

"Who says you have to lie, Ben?" She moved her hand down to squeeze him through his jeans, making him groan. "Besides, if you're not interested I'll just go find someone who is. So really you'll be doing Gil a favor by making sure my first time is with someone who will make it really good for me."

Ben gulped and moved away. "Your first time? Shit, Katie, I've never been with a virgin."

Katie smiled at him as she began working the ties open on her nightie. "I promise that I won't hurt you. I'll make it really good for you, baby." On the last word her nightie fell completely open, exposing her high, firm breasts. She wasn't as well endowed as her soon to be sister-in-law who was an impressive thirty-six D-cup. Katie was on the smaller side at a thirty-two C-cup but what she had was round and firm and her nipples were a dark cherry red. She could tell by the look on Ben's face that he liked what he saw and that there was no way that he would be able to walk away from her.

"What do you say, Ben? Will it be you or should I look elsewhere?"

Ben seemed to come out of a fog. He stalked toward her and scooped her up into his arms, striding to where he knew the bedroom she used was. "I'll kill anyone else who even tries to!"

With long strides he carried her to the bed and placed her on her knees on the mattress. Then he bent down and took her mouth in an incredible kiss. Katie had been kissed before but never like this. This was no quick kiss. No, Ben thrust his tongue in her mouth and explored before pulling her tongue into his mouth and sucking it firmly. She could already feel her panties growing wetter.

Still kissing her, he shoved her nightie off her shoulders and down and off her arms, leaving her in nothing but the boy-cut lace panties that matched it. Then it was her turn to groan when he took both of her nipples in his fingers and began pulling and softly pinching them. She pulled her mouth away and arched her back, thrusting her breasts more fully into his hands. Ben followed the line of her neck with his mouth, nipping and licking his way down to her chest. Once there he licked all around her breasts but ignored her engorged nipples.

Katie fisted her hands in his hair and tried to force him to her nipple but he wouldn't move.

"What do you want me to do, Katie? Tell me what you want."

If he had meant to shock Katie by making her tell him what she wanted then he would be the one surprised. Katie might technically be a virgin but she had used her toys for years. She had read dirty books and magazines and even watched porn. She was well educated so she had no qualms about telling Ben exactly what she wanted.

"I want you to wrap your lips around my nipples and suck them hard."

Ben pulled back to look at Katie with shock. She had taken him completely off guard.

"I want you to do it right now, Ben." Katie used her fists in his hair to give him a jerk back toward her breasts.

This time Ben didn't hesitate. He latched on to one of Katie's cherry nipples and sucked it hard, lashing it with his tongue and teeth. Katie cried out her pleasure and shoved more of her breast into his mouth. He went back and forth between her nipples until they were both swollen and red from his mouth.

Then Ben nudged her gently to her back and eased her drenched panties from her legs. He knelt on the floor beside the bed and, pulling her hips to the edge, placed her knees over his shoulders. Then using his fingers, he opened her pretty little pussy wide for his eyes. He bent forward and inhaled deeply of her musky scent before taking his tongue from her dripping channel to her swollen clit. Katie gave a keening cry when he reached her clit and Ben couldn't stop from sucking it into his mouth.

Just that easily Katie came. It burst through her in waves and she cried out his name with pleasure. Before she could catch her breath Ben was devouring her. It was like he had lost all of the control that he had been using with her. He licked and sucked at her pussy, lapping up all of the juice that was gushing from her. He was forcing her up again. She could feel the pressure building again. Her hips were lifting into his mouth, straining to give him more. She was so close. Ben placed a finger in her pussy and slowly began working it in and out. Then he had two fingers in her. She could feel him widening his fingers, stretching her for his cock. Then he latched back onto her clit and she exploded again. She was bucking hard against his mouth now, her inner muscles clenching around his fingers.

Then he was gone and Katie was struggling to get her breath back. Just when she thought that she might be able to breathe again Ben was back. He had quickly removed his clothes and was now beautifully naked. But before Katie could really enjoy the view he was lifting and turning her until she rested on her hands and knees at the edge of the bed. She felt him moving behind her, pushing against her lower back to make her arch more, and then he was thrusting deep.

Katie cried out at the feel of his cock deep in her pussy. Ben stilled, holding himself completely still deep inside her.

"Are you okay? Did I hurt you?"

Katie thrust her hips back against him, forcing him deeper. Ben groaned. "Fuck me, Ben. Fuck me hard and fast."

That was all it took to set Ben off again. He pulled back until only the bulbous head of his cock remained and then slammed deep again. Again and again he thrust hard in her tight pussy, reveling in the tight, hot depths of her. And his little Katie was enjoying every thrust. Hell she was a wild cat more than a virgin. She was slamming her hips back to meet every thrust and screaming for more. Begging to get it “harder”, “deeper” and “faster”. It was enough to make him explode and he was determined to make her come again before he did.

Reaching around her hips with his right hand, he found her clit and began milking it with his fingers. This made Katie buck and scream beneath him so he used his left hand to grip her hip tightly and hold her where he wanted her. When he didn't think he would last much longer he pinched her clit hard and when she bucked he slapped her ass with his other hand. Katie came with a screaming moan and that was all it took to send Ben over as well. It wasn't until he felt the spurting of his seed deep in Katie's pussy that he realized that he had really done the unthinkable. Not only had he just thoroughly fucked his best friend's baby sister but he had fucked her without protection.

His last coherent thought was that he was truly good and fucked now.

Chapter Two

Katie awoke alone the next morning. It appeared that Ben had snuck off at some point during the night. She remembered him withdrawing from her pussy and then she had crawled up the bed and that was all. She must have fallen asleep while he was cleaning up in the bathroom. And the son of a bitch had just walked away and left her. Her thighs felt sticky and that jolted her wide awake.

Shit! They hadn't used any protection. Katie had been a virgin before last night and her cycles were like clockwork so she was not on any form of birth control. What the hell had she been thinking? What the hell had Ben been thinking? She quickly went to the calendar and groaned. She was at the perfect place in her cycle to get pregnant.

Hell! she thought. She couldn't even do a one-night stand the right way. Unfortunately she had overslept this morning and didn't have time to worry any more about it. One way or another she would know in two weeks if she was going to add "unwed mother" to "failure" and "killer". Wasn't life just grand?

Katie hurried through a shower and grabbed a granola bar and water bottle before heading off to Knowledge Is Power. She was only ten minutes late, which she considered a definite plus. She had to laugh at the thought of her leading a group therapy session. She was probably more screwed up than anybody.

"Not a nice thought, Katie," she reminded herself. Everyone needs a safe place to talk without judgment and that was what she was here for. Now if she could only quit worrying about her own mess she would make it through the day.

Moira entered the therapy room that had been set up in the woman's center portion of the gym. She looked like perfection in her gym shorts and sports bra. Her long blonde hair was pulled back in a loose ponytail on top of her head and the sheen of sweat drying on her skin reminded Katie that Moira had just finished her morning spin class.

"Hey, Katie! I was wondering when you were going to drag your sorry butt in here."

"I know. I know. I overslept this morning. I must have forgotten to set the alarm and anyway, I'm here now."

Moira looked closely at Katie and gave a whoop of laughter. "Oh my God! You had sex last night, didn't you?"

Katie could feel her skin turning red. "How the hell could you know that?"

"You've got that look about you."

"What look?"

"The look of a well-pleasured woman. Trust me. I see it every morning in the mirror."

"Please. I already know more about your sex life with my brother than is comfortable. I mean he is my brother."

Moira laughed again and sat down in one of the chairs set up for group. "So how was it? Who was it? When can I meet him?"

Katie shook her head. This is what she had missed all her life, having a sister, a close girlfriend. Growing up with all brothers, she had been quite the tomboy, tagging along after them. It had usually been Griff and bless him, he hadn't minded a bit. "As you can see from the glow it was incredible. But you won't be meeting him."

"Why not?" Moira looked affronted that she wouldn't be allowed to meet him.

"He was just a one-night stand, Moira. No big deal, okay?"

Moira looked concerned now. "That doesn't sound like you, Katie. Are you sure that you're okay? Do you need to talk?"

Katie wanted to talk more than anything but she couldn't, she wouldn't unload her problems on Moira. "I'm fine, really. Besides, isn't that what group is for?"

Moira just took her hand in hers and gave it a squeeze. "Just remember that I'm here if you need anything, okay? Even if you just need someone to talk to."

"Thanks, Moira. I will."

"I'll leave you to get set up for your first group then. I'm not sure who, if anyone, will show up. We've posted it all over the gym, but we'll just have to wait and see. Let me know how things go. We'll hook up later for lunch if that's okay."

"Lunch sounds great. See you then."

Katie watched as Moira breezed out the door. She had made a remarkable recovery. She had broken her nose in the scuffle with her stalker and had a few other scrapes and bruises as well. She had healed physically and it appeared that she was doing well emotionally as well. It probably helped having someone love you as much as she knew that her brother loved Moira. They were truly perfect together.

Katie shook off her mood and got busy. She filled and started the coffee pot and set out some water bottles as well. Then she laid out some cookies that she and Moira had stocked up on beforehand as well as some muffins. As she was finishing up, the first person entered the room. She looked young and was so skinny that it looked like a gentle breeze would knock her over. She was tall but seemed to hunch her shoulders, trying to make herself smaller. Moira smiled and said hi but left her alone other than that.

This was a big step for most people. She wanted them to feel comfortable and at ease with her. By the time they were ready to get started there were four other women in the group, giving them a total of six including her. There were two women who looked to be in their forties, an Asian woman who looked to be in her late twenties to

early thirties, a girl who couldn't be much over eighteen and the tall thin woman who had first entered.

Katie took a deep breath and prayed that all went well.

"Good morning, everyone. I'd like to welcome you to our very first group therapy session here at Knowledge Is Power. My name is Katie Daniels and I'll be your group leader. If we could I'd like to take a moment to go around the circle and have everyone introduce herself." Some of the women looked worried so Katie hurried to add, "First names only are fine."

She turned to the woman on her right. She was one of the forty-somethings, a black woman who looked like she had seen it all in her life.

"My name is Tory."

"My name is Sandy," said the other fortyish woman who sat next to her. They seemed to know each other and appeared comfortable together.

"My name is Michelle." This from the pretty Asian girl.

"My name is Jessica." This was whispered by the youngest of their group.

"I'm Pilar." Katie wondered at the way the tall girl seemed to try to blend with the chair she was sitting in.

"I'm so glad that you all are here. First I want to make it clear that this room is a safe zone. Whatever is said here stays here. I need you all to agree to that before we start."

Everyone nodded their agreement and Katie continued her opening speech. "Next I want to let you know that you don't have to share if you don't want to but this is group therapy so I hope that you are all here to share and grow. We live in a society that is filled with secrets and lies. There are lies that we tell to each other and lies that we tell to ourselves. There are secrets that we keep to protect others and secrets that we keep to shield ourselves. There is no room for that in this group. I will demand honesty from you and from myself. I hope that you will all demand the same thing."

Katie looked around at the faces in the group. "We can talk about anything that you want to here. Nothing is taboo in this group. However, if someone is uncomfortable with a topic I will do my best make it easy for you without interfering with the running of the group. We will meet three times a week from nine thirty to ten thirty in the morning. I will also hold an afternoon group session three times a week. So if you can't make one time it is okay to come to the other. Come when you can as often as you want."

Katie was just winding down from going over the rest of her planned topics when Tory interrupted her.

"I guess you have a degree from college, but what makes you think that you can handle what we have to talk about? You look like little Ms. Kewpie Doll and, honey, my life has been anything but roses."

"I understand your concern, Tory. Let me assure you that I am a lot tougher than I look though. I don't know how long you have all been coming to this gym but I am sure that you all have heard about the man who was shot and killed here a few months ago."

"Yeah, it was some stalker, killer dude who was trying to hurt our girl Moira. Heard whoever shot him hit him right through the chest and he died before the ambulance even got here."

"I'm the one who shot and killed him."

After that everyone seemed to accept Katie and they spent the rest of group talking about the gym, Moira and her friend Cassie, who was still home at her parents' caring for her dying mother and the fact that Katie had killed a serial killer who raped his victims before bludgeoning them to death. It appeared that Katie's confession had not only broken the ice but had led them to accept her as well. It was more than she had hoped for on her first day.

Chapter Three

Moira met Gil and Ben for lunch at Dee's Diner, a place where her best friend Cassie used to work. It was a trendy little mom-and-pop place that served homestyle meals that were delicious. When Cassie had worked here, she and Moira had eaten a lot of Dee's food.

Gil and Ben were already at a table waiting for her. Gil stood when he saw her and immediately pulled her close to his chest for a deep kiss. Moira melted against him with a deep sigh. The man sure could kiss her socks off.

"I missed you this morning," Gil murmured. He had been called out at the crack of dawn on a case that he and Ben were now working on. Usually they at least had breakfast together. Sometimes they even managed a nice, long, hot morning shower that always left Moira tingling in the most delicious places for the rest of the day.

Moira nipped his jaw. "Ummm...I missed you too."

"Hello, there are other people in the room." Ben laughed at their love play. "You're shocking us young and impressionable people."

Gil grinned as he seated Moira at the table and took his own seat. "Young and impressionable my ass."

Moira laughed in delight.

"I thought that Katie was coming with you," Ben asked lightly.

Moira just quirked an eyebrow at him. "I don't think that Katie was up to facing big brother yet."

"What does that mean? What happened?" Gil demanded and then frowned as Moira just laughed at him. "You better tell me, baby. Otherwise I will feel compelled to go hunt up baby sister and confront her myself."

Moira scowled at her fiancé. "Sometimes you can be such an ass, Gil."

"Ahh...but you love my ass, baby. Now be a good girl and tell me."

"You have to promise me something first, Gil." When he raised his eyebrow at her she sighed deep. "I mean it, Gil. I want your word that you will let her be for now."

"Is it that bad?" This was from a now very interested Ben.

Moira ignored him and kept her attention on Gil. "Your word, Gil, or my lips are sealed." She let her eyes roam down his broad chest to his lap with clear intent. "And I do mean sealed."

Gil just grinned and leaned close to where she sat beside him. "I bet I could get you to open them." He ran his hand up her thigh and let his fingers lightly graze the lips of

her sex through her shorts. "I bet I could make you open real wide for me." The last was said on a husky sigh.

Moira leaned even closer and whispered in his ear, "Promise me and I'll let you do anything you want tonight." She licked and nipped at his earlobe. "You can even bring your cuffs into the bedroom."

Gil leaned back and grinned that sexy grin that always made her toes curl. He had been trying to talk her into letting him cuff her to the bed for the last month. It was one of his fantasies, to have her body completely in his control. She had planned to let him do it anyway, but he didn't need to know that.

"Tonight?"

"Your word, Gil."

"Why do I feel like I've missed way too much of the good part of this conversation?" Ben asked dryly from across the table.

They both continued to ignore him.

"All right. You have my word, baby. Just remember that I'll be home by seven and I'll expect you to be ready."

Moira leaned forward and kissed him again, just a light tease of her lips on his. "I'll be more than ready. I'll be eager."

Gil's eyes went smoky with promise and Moira shivered.

"Maybe I should just excuse myself and have my lunch elsewhere," Ben said.

Moira turned to him and grinned wickedly. "Now where would be the fun in that? Besides I'm just getting to telling you about Katie."

Ben shrugged but Moira was well aware that there was something between Ben and Katie. She knew that Katie had a thing for him and if she could still trust in her own instincts, she was pretty sure that he felt something for Katie as well. This conversation should show her just how much.

"Katie was a little late getting into work this morning."

"That's not like Katie. She's always at least five to ten minutes early."

"Well, she said that she must have forgotten to set the alarm but when she arrived she looked very relaxed and well rested physically."

Gil frowned. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

Ben compressed his lips and said nothing. Now wasn't that interesting.

"It means that Katie looked a lot like I do when I wake up after a night with you."

Gil's frown turned into a scowl. "You think my baby sister is seeing someone."

"No, Gil, I think that Katie is having sex."

"Then she must be seeing someone. I haven't seen her with anyone. Have you?" He looked toward Ben.

Ben just shook his head and kept his mouth firmly shut.

"It's no big deal, Gil. Katie is a grown woman. Besides, she said that it was just a one-night stand and didn't really mean anything."

"What?!!" Ben and Gil both exploded from the table.

Moira just grinned up at them and shook her head. "Now. Now. Now. You gave your word, Gil. Besides, I think that it's great that Katie is getting on with her life. I've been really worried about her since the shooting."

Gil's eyes softened as he looked at the woman sitting at the table. She was alive and she was his. And it was all because Katie had done what he hadn't been there to do. He would gladly overlook anything for Katie. He sat back down and took Moira's hand in his. "You're right, baby. I just don't want to see her hurt, that's all."

"I'm sure she'll be fine. Besides, I don't think that it's possible for meaningless sex to hurt you."

Ben was shaking he was so furious. A one-night stand. Didn't mean anything. Meaningless sex! He couldn't wait to get his hands on Katie. He would probably choke her. No he would probably throw her down and fuck her until she admitted that he was more than a one-night stand. Turning on his heel, he stormed out of the diner.

"Where do you think he is going?" Gil asked.

"I'm not sure," Moira murmured, but she was smiling. Oh she had a really good idea of where he was going and she had a feeling that Katie's one-night stand had just turned very furious. Throwing her head back, Moira laughed while Gil looked at her with questioning eyes.

* * * * *

Katie was drained after her first day at work. Her first group had gone pretty well and her afternoon class had been okay too. She had spent the time in between running some personal errands. She had called a local gynecologist and scheduled an appointment in two weeks. That would be long enough for her to know if she might be pregnant or not. If she was then she was. If she wasn't then she would see about getting a prescription for the Pill. Then she had gone to the pharmacy and picked at random a box of condoms.

Now she sat on her couch reading the box with morbid fascination. Only she would randomly grab a party pack. No wonder the woman at the counter had looked at her so funny. There were all kinds of things in the box. Something called a French tickler that sounded like it might be enjoyable. There were ones that were ribbed "for her pleasure". But what really got her were the flavored ones. There was cherry, strawberry, banana, watermelon and grape.

She could see perfectly using one of those on Ben. She'd roll it onto his hard cock and then take long, slow licks, tasting whatever flavor they were using. Just the thought made her hot enough so that she shed her flannel lounge top, leaving her in a sheer tank top and flannel pants. She moaned at the thought of taking that massive cock deep into

her mouth and sucking on it. She'd play with his balls while she worked her mouth up and down his length. There would be no way that she could fit him all in her mouth but she would gladly try.

Katie was really hot and bothered now. She could feel her stiff nipples pressing against her top. Her skin was flushed with pleasure and her breaths were coming in short gasps. At some point in her fantasizing her hand had crept into her pants. She was grinding her palm against her engorged clit while sliding her fingers through the slippery wet lip of her pussy. She was just ready to plunge her fingers deep when there was a hard knock at the door.

Katie glanced at the door in horror. She didn't want anyone to show up now. Not when she was so close to orgasm. She would just sit quietly and hope that they would go away.

"I know that you're in there, Katie. And I'm not going away until you answer this door," Ben shouted from the hall.

Katie gasped and jumped to her feet. Forgetting her appearance in her joy at Ben being here again, she went to the door and flung it open. Ben barreled past her and took in the shirt on the back of the couch and the party box of condoms on the coffee table. Turning, he took in Katie's flushed appearance. Her turgid nipples and dilated eyes.

"Where the hell is he?" Ben demanded as he started searching the apartment. He crushed the bag he was carrying in his hand and dropped it on the floor. "I'll kill him."

"Who?" Katie tried to follow what Ben was saying as she quickly shut and locked the door but she was still so turned on that it was hard. "What are you talking about, Ben? What are you even doing here?"

"If you think that you can just ignore what happened between us last night then you can think again, Katie. I am not some one-night stand that you can ignore. The sex between us was hot and explosive and a thousand other things. But it was not meaningless."

Katie shook her head in confusion. "What in the world are you talking about?"

"I'm telling you that if you think that you are just going to walk away from what we shared last night and move right along to someone else then you can just think again. What we shared was special, Katie."

Katie frowned at Ben and said in a sugary sweet voice, "So special that you snuck out before I even woke up this morning?"

"Gil and I got an early call this morning, Katie. I did not sneak out. I made as much noise as I could, hoping to wake you up before I had to leave. It's not my fault that you sleep like the dead. If you don't believe me you can ask Moira. She'll tell you that Gil was called out early too."

Katie looked embarrassed for a moment. "So you didn't sneak out? Why didn't you at least call me today?"

Ben shook his head and guided her back to sit on the couch. "I thought that I was going to see you at lunch with Moira and Gil, but you didn't show up. Then when I left to find you, you were gone from the club. I missed lunch running around trying to find you. I just left work a few minutes ago and came straight here."

Katie flushed bright red. "Ohh."

Ben leaned back beside her. "Is that all you have to say?"

Katie glared at him. "Well, I'm not exactly a mind reader, Ben. What was I supposed to think when I woke up alone? Was it too much to even leave me a note?"

Now it was Ben's turn to flush. "Sorry, sugar pie. I'm not real good at this stuff."

"Sex? You sure could have fooled me last night."

Ben flushed even redder. "That's not what I meant. We have more than sex anyway, Katie. Tell me that you feel it too?"

Katie nodded her head. "What are we going to do about it?"

"What do you mean? We're going to see where this goes?"

"Do you want to keep it quiet?" Katie asked in a whisper.

Ben shook his head at her. "I'm thirty-two years old, Katie. I'm not going to sneak around behind your brothers' backs like a kid. If you don't want to be seen with me then tell me now and I'll walk away."

"No!" Katie shouted then continued more softly. "I mean that I don't want you to walk away. I don't want to hide. I've wanted to be with you for quite a while, Ben."

Ben pulled her on his lap. "I know, sugar. I just needed some time to work things out in my own mind. I'm not much on relationships and you're not a just-for-sex kind of woman."

"I'm not sure how to take that," Katie murmured as she stroked her hand up and down his chest. "But I think that I'll see it as a good thing."

"It is a good thing. I had planned to say something to Gil today at lunch but I got sidetracked by other things." He could recall every word that Moira had said. He leaned forward and picked up the box of condoms from the coffee table. "Now do you want to tell me about these?"

Katie blushed bright red and buried her head in his chest. Ben laughed and she enjoyed the feel of his rumbling chest against her ear. "I just wanted to be prepared in case there was a repeat of last night."

"And you bought a party pack? Interesting choice, sugar."

"Oh shut up," Katie said as she playfully swatted at him. "I just reached out and grabbed a box as quickly as I could. I had no idea that there were so many different boxes of condoms at the drugstore."

Ben laughed again. "Were you embarrassed that someone would see you buying condoms?"

"Yes," Katie hissed as Ben started laughing again.

He thrust the box into her hands and stood up with her cradled in his arms. He stooped to pick up the package that he had dropped earlier on the way to her bedroom. Once inside he tossed her on the bed and tossed his bag on her nightstand. Then he began to quickly remove his clothes.

"Now what could you possibly have been doing when I got here that had you looking so deliciously flushed and aroused?"

Katie flushed at his words even as she devoured each inch of bare flesh that he revealed. "I was just thinking," she mumbled.

Now totally naked, his engorged cock bobbing against his stomach, Ben leaned over Katie and started helping her out of her clothes as well. "Just what were you thinking, sugar?"

Katie could feel Ben's hands on her flesh as he stripped her tank over her head and then immediately pulled her flannel pants down her hips. As Katie had not been wearing any underwear she was now totally naked before him and Ben groaned his pleasure. As his lips began skimming over her stomach Katie closed her eyes and remembered her fantasy.

"Ummm...I was thinking about what it would be like to use one of those flavored condoms on you."

Ben's head snapped up and he zoomed in on her face. "You were? What were you going to do?"

Katie was fascinated by the way his interest made her feel in control. "I was thinking of rolling it on and then taking my time licking and sucking all of that flavor off." She shoved him to his back and climbed on top of him.

Ben groaned in sheer pleasure at her words as well as the feel of her sweet body lying on top of him.

"Would you like me to do that, Ben? Would you like me to slide one on you and have my wicked way?" Katie nipped and licked at his throat and jaw as she spoke.

"God yes, sugar. All that and more, much, much more. Whatever you do next just know that I won't last long though. You've got me too worked up."

Katie kissed her way down his broad chest and rippled stomach. "Well then, we wouldn't want to waste one of our flavored condoms now would we?" she whispered against his flesh.

Before he could feel any disappointment though Katie had taken the swollen head of his cock deep into her mouth and was sucking firmly on it. Ben groaned deep and tried desperately to keep his hips from thrusting. She was working him deeper and deeper into her mouth while using one hand to cradle and play with his balls. He was going to spew like Old Faithful.

"Katie, I'm going to come, sugar. If you don't move I'm going to come in your mouth." Ben wrapped his hand in her short black hair and tried to gently pull her off his cock, but Katie only sucked harder, taking him deep into the back of her throat. And

just like that, he came. He could feel the suction of her mouth, hear her swallowing his seed and he was sure that he had died and gone to heaven.

He released the hair that he had unknowingly clutched in his hand and gently stroked her hair, the side of her face as she turned up to look at him. Life with Katie was certainly going to be interesting Ben thought. As he looked into her soft eyes, her mouth flushed and swollen from his cock, it hit him like a bolt of lightning. He was falling in love with Katie Daniels.

Chapter Four

Katie woke up slowly the next morning to the slow, smooth strokes of Ben moving in and out of her pussy. She moaned and reached up to wrap her arms and legs around him, rubbing her breasts against the pale blond hair on his chest. They both groaned at the feel of her hard nipples on his flesh.

Ben smiled down at her. "Morning, sugar. I was hoping you would wake up soon. I'd hate to think that anyone could make love to you and you would just sleep through it. Plus it doesn't say a lot for my technique either."

Katie laughed softly. "Actually it probably says that someone kept me up all night having his wicked way with me. It's a good thing that you brought a box of condoms as well."

Ben laughed this time and Katie groaned and tightened her legs around his back at the feel of what that did to his hard cock buried deep inside her. "Didn't want to waste any of the flavored ones, huh? I'll have to see if I can't get you some flavored body oils. What's your favorite flavor, baby?"

Katie just shook her head and tried to slide her legs farther up his back. "Just shut up and fuck me, Ben. Fuck me now!"

Ben grabbed her legs and slid them up and over his shoulders, palming her ass and lifting her higher into his thrusts. Katie didn't look comfortable with her knees tight against her chest but the look on her face was one of pure ecstasy. And when she clenched her hands into the sheets and arched farther into him, Ben lost all control. He fucked her tight pussy hard and fast, pushing his cock as deep as he could. Katie was screaming her pleasure as her orgasm hit her, tightening her pussy like a vise on his engorged cock. That was all it took to make Ben come as well.

Gently, he eased her legs down to the bed and rolled to her side, trying to catch his breath. He could hear Katie gasping for breath beside him. It was time to ask her something that he should have asked her when he first got here last night.

"I didn't use a condom the first time, Katie."

Katie sighed beside him. "I know," she whispered.

"Could you be pregnant?"

"I don't know, possibly. I'll know for sure in two weeks."

"I want to know as soon as you do, Katie." He turned to her and cradled her face in his hands. "Promise me that you will let me know as soon as you do."

"I will, Ben. I made a doctor's appointment for two weeks. I'll either find out that I'm pregnant or I'll find out that I'm not and I'll get a prescription for birth control." She

reached up and kissed him gently on the lips. "I enjoyed the feel of you inside me, Ben. Just you with nothing between us."

Ben groaned. "I did too. I've never been with a woman like that before. That was a first for me, sugar."

"I like that I was a first for you in some ways too. It makes me feel special."

"You are special, Katie. You are the most special woman in the world to me." Then without thinking about what he was saying, "I think that I'm falling in love with you."

"Oh Ben," Katie's eyes misted with tears. "I've been falling in love with you for a long time."

"There is so much that you don't know about me, sugar, stuff that even Gil doesn't know. I find that I want to talk to you, to share with you. It scares me."

"I want those things with you too. I want to share everything with you. I want to ask you things to know what you think, how you feel."

"Let's go away together this weekend. Just the two of us. I'll make all the arrangements, just say that you'll go with me."

"I'd love to go with you, Ben. Just tell me where and when and I'll be ready."

"I want to surprise you," Ben said, hopping out of bed and reaching for his pants. "Just be ready to go Friday night. I'll pick you up after work." Ben frowned as he continued pulling on yesterday's clothes. "By the way, why don't you pack some stuff and spend the night at my house tonight? I can't keep staying here and then rushing home every morning to get ready for work. I could always pack a bag and come back here I guess, but I'm not sure how late I'll be in getting back tonight. Plus I'd really like you to see my house. What do you say?"

"You own a house?"

"Yeah, I bought an old fixer-upper a few years ago and I've been working on it nights and weekends since. It's just about finished except for the screened-in back porch. I'd love you to see it."

"I'd love to." Katie bounced up on the bed and Ben groaned at the way her breasts bounced with the movement.

"Show some modesty, sugar, or I'll never get out of this bedroom."

Katie laughed at his pained expression and grabbed a pillow and held it against her chest. "What time do you want me to show up? What is the address?"

Ben grabbed his wallet and watch from the top of her dresser. Grabbing a pen and a piece of her opened stationery, he jotted down an address. He picked his keys up and took one off the key ring and handed it to her. "This is a key to my house. Show up whenever you want. Make sure you bring an overnight bag as I plan on you staying the night. The fridge and pantry are fully stocked so feel free to make dinner if you want." He grinned at her and batted his pretty blue eyes, making Katie laugh. "I'll be home sometime between six and seven depending on how the day goes." He leaned over her on the bed and kissed her deeply, thrusting his tongue in and out of her moist mouth.

He pulled back with a groan. "I gotta go if I'm going to make it home in time to shower and shave before heading off to work. I'll look forward to you waiting at home for me."

With that he turned to leave the room but stopped in the doorway and looked back at her. "And, sugar, I'm going to tell big brother today that we're seeing each other."

With those parting words he was gone, leaving Katie reeling with questions. Was he telling Gil that they were dating? Having sex? That she was planning on sleeping in his bed tonight? Katie groaned and threw a quick prayer to the powers that be on her way to the shower. *Just make sure Gil doesn't try to kill him! Please!*

* * * * *

When Ben made it into the station Gil was already there whistling while he made his way through a pile of paperwork.

"Looks like someone is really happy this morning," Ben said as he took a seat behind his own desk, which sat facing Gil's.

"Umm. You don't know the half of it. I had the best night of sex of my life last night." Gil's grin was so big that Ben couldn't help but grin back at him.

"So I take it Moira finally let you tie her to the bed."

"Even better, she let me use cuffs." Gil bobbled his eyebrows at Ben. "When I got home she was already on the bed. She had cuffed herself with my spare set of cuffs."

"Damn, man. Should I even be hearing this stuff?"

"All I'm going to say was that it was the best four hours of my life."

"Four hours?" Ben sputtered. "I'm seriously impressed."

"I got two, she got two," Gil replied and glanced back down to the paperwork, whistling once again.

"Wait a minute. Are you saying that you let her cuff you to the bed too?"

Gil shrugged. "What can I say? She talked me into it at a weak moment."

"You're always weak when it comes to Moira. You better hope that she never finds out just how weak you are. She'll have you buying her personal hygiene products at the store for her."

When Gil flushed bright red Ben burst out laughing. "Oh man, that is just sad, my friend."

Gil shook his head and looked closer at Ben. "What about you, my friend? You look pretty relaxed this morning. Have a good night, did we?"

It was Ben's turn to flush. "I need to talk to you, Gil. But I want your word that you'll let me finish before you say or do anything."

"What is it with you people lately? You all act like I have no control over my temper."

"Well, you have been known to hit first and ask questions later."

"Whatever. Just get on with it. I promise that I'll sit here like a good little boy until you're all done."

Gil folded his hands on top of his desk and eased back in his chair, giving Ben his total focus.

"I'm seeing Katie."

"My baby sister Katie?"

"Yes, I'm seeing your baby sister Katie. We just started seeing each other a few days ago but I've been thinking about it for a while and so has she."

"Were you the one-night stand Moira was talking about?" Gil asked calmly.

Ben scowled. "I was not a one-night stand. That was all a misunderstanding. We got that early morning call and I left without waking her or leaving a message. We cleared the air last night." Gil was still sitting there calmly listening. "The thing is, Gil, I think that I'm falling in love with her."

Gil shook his head. "I knew you would fall eventually, I just had no idea it would be for my sister."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Ben, you're my best friend and I know that Katie couldn't find anybody better. Saying that, you are my best friend and I'm quite aware of all your sick little perversions. I don't even want to think about you spanking my sister." Gil shuddered. "But I trust you. Just promise me that you won't hurt her."

"I would never intentionally hurt her, Gil," Ben reassured him. "And the reason you know about all my sick little perversions is because you are my best friend and because you have some of the same ones."

"Yeah, but Moira isn't your sister."

"I'll just quit sharing with you."

Gil shook his head. "That's probably a good thing."

"Just so you know I asked Katie to go away with me this weekend and she agreed. Also I plan on telling her about my family."

Gil wondered if Ben knew what that said about how he really felt about Katie. Gil was the only one who knew about Ben's family and how they had washed their hands of him when he joined the police force. Ben's grandfather had set up a trust fund for Ben that as far as Gil knew he had never touched. Frankly, Ben was loaded. And although he didn't think Ben completely realized it yet, Ben was a goner. His friend would probably be joining him in wedded bliss soon. Gil and Moira's wedding was just two short months away in October and he figured maybe Ben would be wedded by Christmas.

"Just take good care of her," Gil replied and he started whistling again as he continued with the never-ending paperwork that seemed to take over every detective's desk. He was already thinking about talking Moira into letting him tie her up again.

Chapter Five

Katie waited for Moira in her office. There was still a temp at the front desk as Moira had yet to hire anyone to replace Lacey. Lacey Meadows had been one of the victims of the killer who had stalked Moira. Katie knew that Moira still felt a lot of guilt over Lacey's death. She felt that she had led the killer right to Lacey. Maybe Moira would like to come to the group with her morning class, Katie thought. She knew that Moira had a class on Monday at that time but she was free on Wednesday and Friday.

Moira breezed in a few minutes later and went straight to her mini fridge for a bottle of water. She glanced at Katie on the way and tossed her a bottle too.

"What's up, Katie? Did group go okay yesterday?"

"Group was great and I'd like to talk to you about that in a little bit but first I want to get your opinion on something else."

"Like you and Ben?"

Katie gaped and Moira laughed. "Gil already called me after he and Ben talked this morning." Katie looked concerned so Moira reassured her. "Gil is fine with it. You know that he already sees Ben as his brother so what makes more sense than seeing the two of you together? In fact Ben even told him that you were planning to go away for the weekend."

"Wow. Ben sure said a lot to him this morning. Are you sure that Gil's okay with this? And if so can he make sure that Griff and Doug are okay with it as well?"

"He'll stand behind you both. Besides, you know that Doug likes Ben just fine. And who the hell knows when we'll hear from Griff again. Unless you've heard from him?"

"No, I haven't heard from him," Katie replied angrily. "I think that he is afraid to call me because he knows that I will yell at him. I still can't believe that he just walked away."

"Cut him some slack, Katie. It must have been hard for him to look through that glass and see you in there with both me and the killer and him still locked out. Then to have to watch you shoot and kill someone. His hands were raw after slamming the glass trying to get your attention and he couldn't walk away and leave us for a minute. Even then he couldn't get in until Gil and Ben arrived with my keys and unlocked the door. Gil came to me and Ben went straight to you. He must have felt like we didn't need him. I can't imagine how hurt he must have been. I know that he told Gil he couldn't seem to make his legs work. He guessed that you must have gone around and entered through the back but he just couldn't move. He was scared something would happen to you, Katie, and even with the glass between you he couldn't walk away."

"You're right, Moira. I didn't look at it that way. If only he would have stayed though he would have found out just how needed he was. Ben was only there that day then he started backing off."

"Yeah, but he's not backing off anymore. Besides, I heard from a little birdie that you bought a party pack of condoms."

"If Ben told my brother that I will kill him." Katie was bright red and mortified all the way down to her feet.

Moira laughed so hard she had to hold her sides. "No, Kat was in there filling her prescription and saw you. She said that you were so absorbed in the selection that you didn't even hear her say hi."

"Oh lord, I could positively die just knowing that."

"Relax, it was only Kat. She only told me because she knows you're Gil's sister."

"Well, thanks for that anyway."

"I just want you to know that you can talk to me about anything. Cassie is the closest thing to a sister that I've ever had. Now I have you too. When Gil and I get married in a couple of months we will be sisters. So know that I am here for you no matter what."

"I was a virgin before Ben," Katie blurted out. "I never wanted anyone before him."

"I was the same way with Gil. He was my first, my only. I couldn't imagine being with anyone else."

"Then you know just how I feel."

"Yeah, I do. Gil is amazing. And don't look at me that way, I know that he's your brother and I'm not talking about sexually. Although he does rock my world every day, numerous times. I'm talking about the little things that he does without even realizing it. The way he looks at me takes my breath away."

"You love him very much, don't you?"

"With all my heart and soul, I love him."

"Now tell me about this 'numerous times'," Katie grinned at Moira.

"This is your brother we're talking about, remember?" Moira laughed. "Let's just say that Gil can be insatiable."

"Ummm..." Katie murmured. "So it seems that I get it naturally then."

They both started laughing. They were still laughing a few minutes later when Gil and Ben walked in.

Gil walked straight to Moira and pulled her to him for a quick kiss. "So what's all this giggling that we've interrupted?"

Katie was unsure how to act with Ben with others around but Ben had no such problems. He sat in the chair next to Katie's and pulled her into his lap for a deep and thorough kiss. It was pure heaven and Katie forgot that anyone else existed until Gil interrupted.

"Geez, Ben, that's my baby sister you're sucking face with."

"Sucking face with? What, are we back in junior high school?" Ben replied while Katie hid her scarlet face in his chest. "Besides I constantly have to watch you 'suck face' with Moira."

"Yeah, but she's not your baby sister, man. So that makes it okay." And with that he kissed Moira again while Ben and Katie laughed.

When he came up for air, Moira pushed some distance between them and asked, "So what brings you both here at this time of the morning?"

Gil sat in her chair behind the desk and pulled her onto his lap. "We got a call from Doug this morning. It seems that someone broke into their house last night. Nothing really missing."

Katie snorted and turned to face her brother. "Well, I'm sure that it was probably that Nikki chick who's been causing them problems."

Gil looked like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming semi. "What do you know about Nikki?"

"I'm not some little naïve girl who has no clue what is going on around her, Gil. I've always been well aware that all of my brothers have an active sex life." At that Gil flushed and narrowed his eyes at her. "Don't look at me that way, big brother. I couldn't stay a little girl forever, no matter how hard you all tried to make me."

Ben squeezed her tightly and whispered, "Thank God for that."

Katie smiled at him and gave him a chaste kiss on the lips. "Besides, do you think people weren't eager to talk to me about Doug and Damon's sexual escapades? Trust me, they were all too eager to let me know all about it."

Gil jumped to his feet, nearly dumping Moira on the floor. He caught her just in time and managed to set her on her feet beside him. "Who told you? What did they tell you?"

"It doesn't matter now, Gil. The point is that it's time for you guys to quit treating me like a child. I know that Griff likes women, all women, all shapes and sizes. I know that Damon and Doug like to share their women and it wouldn't surprise me if they didn't end up both falling in love with the same woman. And, my dear big brother, I know that you can be insatiable." With those words Katie waggled her eyebrows and gave Gil a mock leer.

Ben burst out laughing and Moira flushed bright red from toes to nose. Gil looked like someone had sucker punched him. He turned and glared at a mortified Moira.

"Just what have you been sharing with my baby sister?"

Moira in turn glared at Katie and said, "Just that she gets her own sexual drive naturally."

Just like that Gil looked uncomfortable, Katie hid her scarlet face in Ben's chest and Moira glared at both of them. Ben threw his head back and laughed 'til it hurt.

Chapter Six

Katie spent an interesting night with Ben at his house. It was a beautiful old home that Ben had managed to refurbish. Katie was amazed to know that Ben had handled most of it on his own. Occasionally Gil or one of the other guys from the station would come over and help out. Mostly Ben had put in long hours at night and on weekends to get it the way that it was now. And it was gorgeous.

Katie showed up around five hoping to have dinner cooked and ready when he got home. She parked her car at the side of the house. His house was set back off the road and was surrounded by woods, giving it the feel of isolation although there was another house just on the other side of the woods, which were only about a half a mile wide. The key Ben had given her was to the back door so she had opened the gate to the fenced-in portion of his yard and found the back door, which led right into her dream kitchen.

His kitchen was state of the art. He had every clever gadget imaginable to make cooking easier. The countertops were black marble and all of the appliances were a crisp, cool white. The floor was some type of black and white mosaic tile. There was an island in the middle of the room with pots and pans of every shape and size hanging from the ceiling above it. She loved his house and this was only the kitchen. She quickly put her few groceries away and went to explore.

Now she left the kitchen behind and wandered through to the other rooms. The ground floor also held a dining room, spacious living room with a beautiful open fireplace and bay windows at the front of the house, a room that he was using for an office, a full bathroom and a laundry room. After taking in all of these rooms, Katie headed up the stairs to the second floor. There were four bedrooms upstairs, all completely furnished, but none of them looked like where Ben slept. There were two more full bathrooms on this floor as well.

Katie noticed another set of stairs at the end of this hall and headed up them as well. The stairs went up and then she actually stepped down into what could only be the master bedroom. The big king-size bed seemed to dominate the room. There were skylights placed directly over the bed so that you could lie in bed and watch the changing sky overhead. The carpet was a rich plush blue that made Katie want to kick her shoes off and dive in. One entire wall was nothing but closets with mirrored doors. Katie could just imagine making love in his big bed while watching it all in those mirrors. She blushed and grew hot just thinking about it.

He had a beautiful antique-looking dresser and matching armoire on the other side of the room. Just beside the door that she had entered through sat a cabinet that housed a television, VCR/DVD combo unit and an awesome stereo. A tower stood next to it

that housed all kinds of CDs and DVDs. Katie went ahead and kicked her heels off and headed across the room to the other door that she was pretty sure would lead to a master bathroom.

She was right. There was a Jacuzzi tub that looked like it would seat at least six people that took up half the length of the wall. There were steps leading up to it and flowering plants and lush greenery surrounded it on three sides. There was a bank of windows right beside it and just looking at the opulence of that tub made Katie feel naughty and horny.

Next to it on that wall was a walk-in shower with what looked like four shower heads. There was a long bench along the side and Katie's imagination went wild with what all she could do with Ben in there. There was a partial wall that had been added to the room and just on the other side sat the sparkling white toilet. Finally there was a big double sink on the opposite wall beneath a bank of mirrors. It seemed that Ben must really like mirrors.

Katie wandered back into the big bedroom and walked over to the bed. There was a beautiful table next to the bed that held a lamp and remote. Satisfying her curiosity, Katie sat on the bedside, pulled the drawer open and gasped at the plunder inside. It was filled with a variety of oils and lotions and tubes of lubricant. There were flavored ones, ones that heated on contact and something that claimed to numb. There were padded handcuffs and ankle cuffs, nylon straps and all sorts of interesting toys.

One in particular caught her eye and she pulled it out and hit the switch on the side. She wasn't exactly sure what it was but it was similar to her own eager beaver. There were little balls in the bottom that rolled around and pulsed. Looking at it, she imagined that part of the toy would be right at the sensitive opening of her pussy. She was pretty sure that the two ear-looking things worked just like the beaver and would vibrate against her clit. The stalk of the toy was long and thick and she knew that it would fill her completely when it was inserted. She also wondered if Ben had ever used these on anyone else.

"I bought those just for you yesterday when I got the condoms," Ben spoke from the doorway and made Katie jump and squeak in mortification at being caught looking into his naughty drawer. The dildo dropped beside her on the bed and Katie clutched a hand to her shuddering chest.

"You scared the hell out of me, Ben," she claimed. "What are you doing here so early anyway? I was hoping to have dinner ready before you got home."

Ben looked pointedly at her on his bed and the dildo lying beside her on the covers. "Oh yeah, and what were you planning on serving because if it's in this room then I am definitely hungry." He took in her flushed cheeks while he moved across the room toward her, shedding his clothing as he went. "You could even say that I am starving for a taste."

Then he was there pulling her to her feet and stripping her out of her own clothes before sliding her back onto the bed. He grabbed a bottle of oil from the drawer and

poured it into his hands. "We'll start slowly, Katie. I know that you were a virgin before me so I will take it as slow and easy with you as possible. But I do like to play games. I like to dominate and you need to know that I am in charge in this bedroom. Whatever I tell you to do in this room you will do without question or you will be punished. Do you understand?"

As he was now working the oil into her breasts and nipples it was all Katie could do to concentrate on what he was saying and nod.

"That's a good girl, sugar. Eventually I will have you tied face down on this bed with that," he indicated the toy still on the bed, "shoved deep in your pussy while I take my time fucking that incredible ass of yours."

Katie swallowed hard and felt both fear and excitement at his words. She looked pointedly at the length and girth of his engorged cock and gave him a look that told him quite plainly that she didn't think that he would fit.

Ben gave a husky laugh as he finally left her breasts and moved down her stomach. "I'll fit real snug in that tight hole back there. I'll oil you up and oil my cock up as well before I take you there. I'll make sure that you are as stretched and ready as I can get you and you'll enjoy every moment of it. I promise you that."

Katie moaned as his hands moved to her sex. Without another word he pulled the lips to her dripping pussy wide and dove in head first or should she say tongue first. He stabbed his tongue in and out of her pussy, taking all of her juice in his mouth and going back for more. Then he moved up to her pulsing clit and latched on, sucking it deep and hard. Katie came with a scream as she bucked and fought against his strong hands, which held her in place against his probing mouth and tongue.

Then Ben took a finger and moved it through her juice until it glistened before taking it back to her anus. He kept this up until her anus was well lubricated with her own juices and the oil that was still on his finger. Slowly he worked his finger up her virgin ass, never letting up on the assault on her pussy. While he continued to suck and lick her there his finger worked deeper into her ass until he was fucking in and out with slow strokes.

Katie moaned and begged Ben, to stop, to never stop, to fuck her.

Ben grinned at her, "Oh I plan to fuck you, Katie. I'm going to fuck this pretty little pussy 'til it can't take anymore. But first I'm going to let you feel how good it is to have my cock buried between the cheeks of this gorgeous ass of yours." He had moved her legs up over his elbows and had her spread wide to his eyes and touch.

When Katie tensed at his words he moved one of his hands and gave her a smack on one cheek of her ass, leaving a red print behind. "You will like it, Katie. I promise you. But you have to relax for me and let me in." He moved his hand back to play in her pussy, working her slowly back up to an orgasm. When it finally broke over and through her he dived in and used his mouth to take her deeper, higher until she thought that she would die from the pleasure.

She was still in orgasm-induced euphoria when she felt the first bit of pressure from his cock on her anus. He had lubed his cock with something, her juices or more oil, and with just a little bit of pushing against the tight pucker of her ass he was in. They both groaned as he worked himself deeper into her snug back door, rocking in and out until he was finally seated fully inside her.

It was an intense feeling having him this way. The pressure was incredible. There was a slight burn as she adjusted to his size and she wondered if it would always feel like this. He was still playing with her clit and the pleasure was overwhelming. Slowly he began pulling out and pushing deep again, setting up a gentle rhythm that kept her on the edge between pleasure and pain.

Sweat was glistening on his face and chest as he worked in and out. "I'm going to bring you to orgasm like this, Katie. You're going to scream your pleasure for me while I fuck your ass."

Katie moaned and tried to move against him but he was easily able to contain her movement in the position she was in. Her legs were spread high and wide, hooked behind his elbows. He had grabbed her hands and was holding them captive with one of his own hands beneath her ass, keeping her elevated for his thrusts. Katie shook her head back and forth and cried out as he thrust a little harder this time and pinched down on her clit. She had nowhere to go but up and he was working her there at a steady pace that would kill her she was sure.

He removed his hand from hers but when she started to move hers he gave her another sharp smack on her ass. "Keep your hands where they are, sugar. Don't make me tie you down yet. Use your hands to keep that ass high for me." He moved his other hand up to her breasts, shoving one of her legs over his shoulder before pinching and pulling at her nipples.

Katie fisted her hands in the comforter beneath her and bucked and screamed. Ben picked up his pace until he was pounding deep and hard into her snug little ass. He thrust two fingers deep into her pussy and fucked her in tandem with the cock filling her ass. Shoving both legs over his shoulders, he moved his other hand to pinch and rub at her clit while bending to suck a puckered nipple into the hot moistness of his mouth.

Katie exploded into a thousand pieces. It seemed as if her whole world was centered between her legs and the punishing pace Ben was setting. She flew high and higher still as he pumped and heaved in and out of her ass. Her body seemed to clench tightly and she heard Ben holler out as he filled her ass with his rich cream but she was too far gone in her own orgasm to give it any attention. Colors and bright lights exploded in her head and the room seemed filled with them and then there was nothing. Nothing but a deep blackness that settled over her and pulled her with it as a sexual euphoria that she had never imagined existed floated through her body, helping her to relax and sleep.

Chapter Seven

Katie awoke the next morning as Ben was hurrying to dress. Every little movement made her sore muscles scream, including those she'd rather not think about. Ben bent over and gave her a rather chaste kiss before bending to put his shoes on.

"I got a call just a few minutes ago. I didn't mean to wake you, sugar."

Katie stretched and yawned. "What time is it anyway?"

"Just barely five a.m. So go back to sleep if you can. The alarm is still set for seven. You know where the bathroom is. I put some things for you in the top drawer on the left in the cabinet under the sinks. Help yourself to whatever. The coffee maker is set for six forty-five and there are fresh bagels."

"Wow, Ben, you really know how to make a lady feel special."

Ben sat back up and hauled her against his chest for a very thorough, very wet kiss that curled her toes. "You are very special, sugar. I'll see you tonight if I don't drop by the gym today."

"Okay. My apartment or here?"

"Why don't you just pack a bag and plan on staying here for a few days. I like seeing you in my bed."

Katie smiled and lay back against the pillows as Ben grabbed his wallet, badge and keys from the top of the dresser. His gun was already in the shoulder holster under his jacket. He wore his just like her brother Gil did. He turned in the doorway to give her one more hot look before hurrying down the stairs and outside.

There was no way that Katie would be able to go back to sleep now. She gently got out of bed and groaned at the soreness between her thighs and the cheeks of her ass. Ben had been insatiable last night. After that first time he had awoken her and taken her again. He had placed her on her hands and knees and entered her anus that way. That time he had used a small silver cylinder to fuck her pussy at the same time that he fucked her ass. Katie had screamed her pleasure until she was hoarse. He had brought her to orgasm at least three times before letting himself go.

The next time that he woke her he had been licking and sucking at her pussy. He had brought her to orgasm twice with his mouth and fingers before sliding his cock deep and riding her until they both came again. Then he had turned them so that she was facing him on her side with one leg thrown over his and him still buried deep inside her. They had fallen asleep that way and would have probably made love again this morning if not for his early call.

She made her way gingerly to the bathroom and started the water running in the big Jacuzzi tub. When she opened the drawer that Ben had told her about she caught

her breath and tears filled her eyes. It was filled with bubble bath, bath salts, bath beads, lotion, body wash, a loofah and just about anything that she could imagine and all in her favorite scent of vanilla spice. He was an amazing man and she was falling head over heels in love with him.

Katie sat on the closed lid of the toilet and took deep breaths. She could be pregnant with his child. They hadn't used a condom the first time and they hadn't used one that last time last night either. She wondered if Ben even realized that. She was in love with him and the thought of carrying his baby in her body was incredible.

Katie took a deep breath and stood up to look at herself in the mirror. She was in love with Ben. She could possibly already be carrying his child. It was obvious from all the little things that he did for her that he cared for her as well. Now she just had to be sure he had fallen in love with her. Because Katie was going to get her happily ever after. And she was going to get it with one Detective Ben Marcum.

* * * * *

Ben drove to the station with his mind in chaos. He had made love to Katie again without a condom. He had to wonder if he was doing it subconsciously in hopes that she would get pregnant. If she was pregnant then she would be more likely to stay with him, to marry him. What in the world was wrong with him? He had fallen in love and lost his mind all in just a few short days.

But Ben knew what he had to do. He was in love with Katie. All he had to do was make sure that Katie was in love with him too. No more slip-ups with the condoms either. He had to know that she was with him because she wanted to be and not because she was trapped by an unplanned baby. But lord, the thought of her round with his child was enough to bring his cock to full attention.

But what would she say if he shared everything with her? Would she be able to accept the things that he had done, the changes he had made in his life? Would she understand his reasons why or his need to keep it secret? Would she stand by him or walk away once she knew everything there was to know about his life? Should he even tell her or should some things remain only with him? Ben shook his head, refusing to let fear and doubt swamp him.

Bottom line was that he wanted Katie. And frankly he would do whatever it took to get her. Besides, didn't they say that all was fair in love and war?

* * * * *

It was the same group that met for group therapy that Wednesday morning plus Moira. Katie had finally invited Moira to join them on Wednesday and Friday mornings so that she was familiar with the program. Actually Katie wanted Moira to be there so that she could see just how much the ladies of the gym respected and admired her. Plus Moira had been through a lot lately and it never hurt to have a place to talk.

Pilar was the first to arrive again. Katie figured when she stood straight she would be close to six feet tall but the girl was always slumped over. Jessica came in with a bruise on her cheek and sat quietly in the corner. Michelle entered next and Katie was struck by just how beautiful the woman was. Katie had guessed her to be in her late twenties but Michelle had told them that she was turning forty in a few weeks.

Last to enter were Tory and Sandy, and Tory was her usual self. The woman was a dynamo. She refused to hide from anything and wouldn't let you hide either. Plus she seemed to mother the younger girls in the group. She commented to each as she entered.

"Pilar, honey, set yourself up in that chair and quit trying to blend with the furniture. You're too pretty to blend no matter how hard you try. Jessica, you get yourself up here with the rest of the group and quit hiding back there. Everybody already sees that bruise on your cheek." Tory moved right to her and cuddled her against her full breasts. "You okay, baby?" At Jessica's nod Tory escorted her to a seat beside Sandy before taking her own.

"Katie, how you doing today, girl? You look pretty happy this morning." When Katie blushed Tory threw her head back and laughed a loud belly laugh. "Ain't nothing wrong with being that kind of happy, girl."

Finally her glance landed on Moira. "Why if it ain't Ms. Madigan among us. It's good to see you, girl. You doing okay after all that unpleasantness?"

Moira couldn't help laughing as well. Tory always made her smile. "Yeah, I'm doing much better now, Tory. It's good to see you and Sandy here. How are you two doing?"

"We're fine. Just fine." Tory glanced over at Katie. "Do you have something planned today or is it just up to us?"

Katie smiled and answered, "I figured I would let the group decide what they wanted to talk about today, but I was hoping that we could get to know a little bit more about everyone. Last time we spent most of our time talking about me and Moira and the shooting here at the club. So is there anything that's on anyone's mind today?" She looked at everyone but no one other than Tory and Sandy seemed willing to talk. "Remember that whatever is said in this group remains with this group. No one will repeat what you say."

"Maybe Sandy and I will just tell you a little about us today," Tory spoke. "I worked for Sandy as a maid for ten years. Of course back then I called her Mrs. Forrester whenever I saw her, which wasn't all that often. We were both married then and dealing with our own problems." Tory seemed to be looking far away at something only she could see. "I was married and had three little boys to take care of. My family didn't like my man but I stuck with him as much out of spite for their interference as for my boys. Lloyd started hitting me after our first son was born. Knocked me around a little but always made me feel it was my fault. I should have left after that first time but I didn't want to crawl back home with a baby and admit that I had made a mistake.

Besides I figured my daddy would tell me that I made my bed so now I had to lie in it. I stuck it out for eight years, six months and three days. Then in one single moment everything changed."

Tory looked at Sandy and she took up her part of the story then. "I was betrothed to Michael Forrester from the time I turned sixteen. My father thought that was what was best for me. Michael was forty at the time. He had never been married and I was scared to death. Michael treated me like I was made of glass with the IQ of a gnat. He chose what I would wear, what clubs I would join, what charities I would help with. He told me who I could be friends with, who to have lunch with and even what I could eat while I was at lunch. I was a decoration. My hair was styled exactly how he wanted and I was never allowed to change it."

Katie could see that Sandy must have been a gorgeous girl as she was still a very beautiful woman. Her blonde hair was in a bob around her face, accenting her high cheek bones. Her eyes were still a beautiful coffee-colored brown and she had lowlights in her hair that were almost the exact same shade. She was still trim and seemed in great shape.

"I was never allowed to get pregnant. It would distort my figure and that was something Michael would not have. Above all else I was to maintain my beauty. When I complained to my family I was told that I was selfish. Any woman would be delighted to live with all that I had. I should be grateful for all that Michael allowed me to have. Allowed me." Katie could hear the bitterness in her voice. Tory reached over and clasped hands with her. "It's still a bitter pill to swallow sometimes. Anyway I maintained for ten years before everything changed."

Tory gave her hand a squeeze and took up the tale. "One day I came home and caught Lloyd raising his hand to one of my babies. I just came unglued. It never occurred to me that since he was hitting me he was most likely hitting my boys as well. I hustled the boys into the other room and ended up taking the beating of my life that night. It was the first and last time that he hit my face. Always before he had been sure not to leave any visible marks that would cause questions while I was at work. We depended on the money that I made. After he was asleep I left that night with my three boys, a broken arm and a battered and bruised face. I managed to deflect most of the blows with my arm, which is probably why my arm broke and my face didn't. I went home and when my daddy opened the door I broke down. I told him that I knew that I had made my own bed but my boys hadn't and I begged him to take them in. My mama was standing right beside him and I could see that she was crying. My daddy just looked at me and turned to head back in the house. I thought I would die when he turned away. My mom looked at me and said that if there was one thing they had thought they had taught me it was that family was always there. She took my boys and led them into the house. I could hear her asking them if they were hungry. I stood there for a moment unsure of what to do when my daddy came back. He was dressed and he held the keys to his old truck in his hand. I begged him not to take me away from my boys. I'll never forget what happened next. My daddy pulled me to his chest and

hugged me close. I could hear the tears in his voice when he told me that I should have come to him for help. He told me that he loved me, that he would always love me. Then he took me to the hospital and helped me talk to the police and file charges against Lloyd." Tory looked up and it seemed that every eye in the room was filled with tears. "You see, my parents never gave up on me. I was the one who pulled away from them because I thought they would be disappointed in me. I was very wrong."

"When Tory came back to work I couldn't help but notice the cast on her arm. Michael was gone for a few days on a business trip so I found every excuse I could to spend time near Tory. We talked a lot. As much as she had been through I found that I envied her." Sandy filled the quiet with her voice.

"Why would you envy her the hell she had been through? The beatings?" Jessica sounded outraged at the very idea.

But it was Pilar who shocked everyone when she replied, "Because it was living. Because even though it was something bad it was living."

Sandy smiled at the young thin girl and nodded. "You're right, Pilar. That is exactly how I felt. I had never been allowed to experience anything that wasn't planned for me. And here was Tory who it seemed to me had experienced everything. I was thirty years old at the time and had never really had sex."

"But you were married," Jessica said.

"Yes, I was. Michael didn't like me rumped though. He said sex was a messy business and he would spare me that as often as he could. I assume he took care of his needs elsewhere most of the time. He only came to me when he had to." With this she glanced at Pilar who flushed and looked away.

"When Mr. Forrester came back we had to sneak to see each other. We were becoming friends and we both liked it," Tory said.

"We both needed a friend," Sandy added with a smile and a squeeze to Tory's hand.

"Then Lloyd showed up at the Forresters' house to confront me. He had a gun and planned on using it. I thought that I was a goner for good when Mr. Forrester and Sandy came around the corner. Sandy, bless her heart, took one look and made to run over to help me. Lloyd saw them and turned toward them. Mr. Forrester shoved Sandy out of the way and yelled at Lloyd to take his piddly-ass problems somewhere else. Lloyd shot him three times in the chest before shooting me and then himself. I awoke three days later in the hospital with Sandy and my daddy sitting in the room talking to each other like old friends."

"Michael and Lloyd died instantly. I rushed to Tory and applied pressure to her temple to try to stop the bleeding. The bullet had clipped her on the left temple and I was scared to death that she was dying. I didn't know then that head wounds always bleed heavily though. I just knew that the one friend I had in the whole world was lying unconscious in a pool of blood." Sandy shuddered as she seemed to relive the moment. Tory patted her before taking up again.

"When I woke up in the hospital I found out everything that had happened and I was devastated. I never would have thought that Lloyd could do anything like that. Hell, I didn't even know that he owned a gun."

Sandy spoke up again, "I had talked Tory's father and mother into coming to work for me. I had fired all of Michael's staff as soon as I went home that first night. Everyone who had kept an eye on me for him and reported my every move was sent away without a reference. Tory's mom agreed to cook and her dad who I found out was retired from the Army agreed to take over security and staff checks. Tory and her three boys moved in with me when she was released from the hospital. We've been a big happy family ever since."

"My youngest boy just graduated from college this past summer. He's headed off to medical school now." Tory looked at Sandy with pride and joy on her face. "We did good, girl."

Sandy smiled back. "I was lucky enough that Tory took over the hiring of staff and the running of the house. I went to college and achieved my degree in business and finance. I took over the running of the Forrester Foundation and it's been growing stronger every year. And Tory, my best friend in the world, shared the joys of motherhood with me by letting me help with her kids."

"Letting you help? Hah, girl, like I could have stopped you. Besides it ain't a picnic running that house of yours. I needed your help and the boys love you."

Sandy wiped a tear from her eye. "They do love me, don't they? They really accept and love me."

"Yeah, baby, they do," Tory answered and hugged Sandy tightly. "You saved my life, Sandy, how could we not love you?"

"And you brought me to life, Tory. How could I not love you?"

Tory wiped her eye and sat up straighter in her chair. She turned to face a crying Jessica who sat just on the other side of Sandy. "So I've been there and done that, girls. Now I want you to tell Mama Tory what happened to your face, Jessica girl. You're too young and too pretty to be taking abuse in your life."

But Jessica just shook her head, lurched to her feet and was out the door. Katie and Moira both rose to follow her but Tory stopped them.

"She just needs some time. She'll be back, if not today then for Friday's session. And she'll tell us what's going on with her."

The session broke up after that. Michelle left to head to the women's weight room. But Pilar headed right to Sandy and although no one knew what she said to Sandy they all saw Sandy hold her arms open and a crying Pilar go right into them.

Chapter Eight

Katie met her mother Catherine for a late lunch and some early shopping. Katie wanted to talk to her mother about Ben and what she was going to do. With three brothers Katie and her mother had always been exceptionally close. Katie knew that she could talk to her mother about everything and today she was going to test that.

Catherine Daniels, fifty-seven-year-old matriarch of the Daniels family, was already seated at the table waiting for her. She had her short brown hair in a bob that framed her face and emphasized her big brown eyes. Katie always thought it was a shame that all of the Daniels kids had inherited the black hair and blue eyes of their dad. Her mom was still a beautiful woman with a trim and toned body and was more often than not considered to be Katie's sister. They both stood five foot one in their bare feet, only Catherine had a lush figure with fuller breasts and more rounded hips, thanks she said to giving birth and breastfeeding four children.

"Hi, Mom! I'm glad that you could make it on such short notice." Katie leaned over to give her mom a kiss on the cheek before taking her own seat.

"I always have time for you, my love. You know that." Catherine patted Katie's hand. "Besides I needed to talk to you about fittings for the bridesmaid dresses for Gil and Moira's wedding. Moira wants to go with a nice fall color. She doesn't want something that you and Cassie will hate though so she said for us to discuss it and get back with her."

"Moira is too nice sometimes. She should pick whatever she wants and that is it."

"She knows that you will be the one stuck with the dress and is just trying to make sure that you're not stuck with something that will never leave your closet again. You just don't want to pick it out either."

Katie laughed. "As a matter of fact, I had planned on asking you to go do a little early Christmas shopping with me. We could always take a look at Pat's Palace at the mall. They carry all types of formal wear there. It would give us a good idea."

Catherine's eyes sparkled with delight. "Oh that sounds wonderful, darling. Plus we need to discuss the bachelorette party for Moira. I've spoken several times with Cassie on the phone. She will try to make it. But you and I will have to take care of most of the details from here."

"So are we getting strippers, Mom?"

Catherine didn't even blink. "What bachelorette party would be complete without them? Just don't let your brother know beforehand or he won't allow it. You know how they are."

Katie burst out laughing. "I just wish that one of them could be here to hear you even say the word 'stripper'. You're a mother, you know. You're not allowed to have impure thoughts."

"And just where do they think they came from? The baby fairy?"

"Hey, you don't have to tell me. I'm the little sister. I'm not supposed to have impure thoughts either."

"Ahhh. But now that you're seeing Ben I'm sure all that has changed."

Katie actually blushed, thinking about all the things that she and Ben had done over the past few days. "How did you know that I was seeing Ben?"

"Your brother Doug told me." At Katie's arched eyebrow Catherine continued. "I'm sure that he heard from Gil who probably got it straight from the horse's mouth."

Katie just shook her head. Even with all the attempts at secrecy it was almost impossible to keep a secret in her family. It amazed her that anyone even still tried. "How is Doug doing anyway?"

"You mean about the break-in by that Nikki girl?"

"They know that she did it."

"Not that they can prove anything but I'm sure we all know that's what happened. Doug and Damon have learned a very unfortunate lesson about discretion and safe sex. They should have chosen more wisely."

Katie dropped her mouth open. It was one thing that she knew about the sexual natures of her brother and his best friend but it was another to know that her mother knew as well.

"Close your mouth, dear. I know all kinds of things that I'm sure would curl your toes and send your brothers into a tizzy."

Katie giggled at the thought of her brothers in a "tizzy". "You never fail to amaze me."

With that they enjoyed a great lunch and headed off to the mall. Katie held her mother's arm clasped tightly within her own. "I need some advice."

"I wondered when you would get around to that," Catherine smiled at her daughter. "You know that you can talk to me about anything, Katie. I'm always here for you."

"So much has happened so quickly, Mom. I feel like I can't catch my breath."

"You and Ben have slept together?" Katie bit her bottom lip and nodded at her mother. "And he was your first?"

"Yes, he was my first. And he is so incredible, Mom. I don't know if I'm being naïve but I think that I'm falling in love with him. No, that's wrong. I feel like I am already in love with him."

"And you're afraid that you're confusing love with great sex?" Katie looked at her mom with eyes that filled with tears. "Oh baby, don't cry. Tell me what makes you think that you're in love."

"The way that I feel when he's around me, the way that I feel when I'm only thinking about him make me believe that it must be love. The little things that he does for me that I'm not even sure he is aware of. He invited me to stay the night at his house. He went out and bought all kinds of things for me. He filled a drawer in his bathroom with lotions and oils and bath things just for me in the exact scent that I use. It's the way that he can't be in the same room with me without touching me in some way even if it's just him touching my hair. And the way that he makes love to me. I swear that he can make the earth move."

Catherine smiled and pulled her daughter close for a hard hug while tears filled her eyes. "I felt the same way with your father." She pulled away and ran her own hand down Katie's hair. "That man could make me melt with just a look. I'm very happy for you, baby. I wouldn't wish anything less than a love like that for any of my children."

"How did you know that Daddy loved you as well? I mean Ben said that he thought he was falling in love with me but how do I know for sure?"

Catherine laughed. "Your dad was the one who told me first. He literally swept me into his arms and told me that he loved me and would not live without me. We were married within a week and I spent the best thirty-four years of my life loving him and being loved by him."

"The age difference didn't matter to you?"

"Your father was almost twenty years older than me. I was twenty-one when we married and he was thirty-nine. I think that it bothered him a little at first. He felt like he was robbing the cradle, but it never bothered me. I offered once to go away and grow up a little more before we married if it would make him happy."

"What did Daddy say to that?"

"He took me to bed and that is all that I'm willing to tell you. Just between us girls though, your father was my first too. I've never regretted that."

"Are you saying that you've never been with anyone else? Not even since Daddy's been gone?"

"Your father's only been gone two years, Katie. Would you get over Ben so quickly?"

"I can't fathom the thought of ever being with anyone else, not now, not ever."

"Then it's love. I have faith in you, Katie. You wouldn't fall in love with someone who couldn't love you back. Besides, I think Ben's showing signs of having feelings for you already so I would trust in what he says. He's a fine man, Katie."

"I agree, Mom," Katie shook her head and doubt filled her big blue eyes. "But I can't shake this feeling that there is something more with him right now, something that he is hiding from me."

"You think that he is just using you?" Catherine didn't look very happy with that thought.

"No," Katie hastened to reassure her mother. "I don't think that is it. Honestly I don't know that it has anything really to do with me. I just feel like there is something he is holding back. And it makes me really scared."

"Do you trust him?" Catherine questioned her daughter.

"I want to, more than anything I want to trust and believe in him. In us," Katie was quick to respond.

"Then do it," Catherine informed her softly cupping Katie's cheek in her palm. "If it is meant to be then it will be. Trust in yourself and in Ben. If you love him, if you really love him, then give him the chance to prove himself. If he is hiding something you'll know it. But somehow I think that Ben will do the right thing. He has always seemed to be an honorable and trustworthy person."

"I know that, Mom, but thanks for saying it." Katie grabbed her mother's hand and steered her to the lingerie shop. "So you feel like buying something for ourselves?"

"I'm sure that we could find a little something for Moira as well. Lingerie will be a good shower gift. Besides, if all goes well maybe I'll be planning another wedding some time soon."

Katie smiled so brightly that it lit her whole face up. She would love to marry Ben. Perhaps if she found just the right thing to wear on their weekend away she could help him realize how great they were together. Then it would be just a hop, skip and jump to him falling in love with her too.

* * * * *

Ben sat in the car next to his partner Gil Daniels and wondered if he could talk to his best friend about Katie. She was Gil's little sister and that made things weird between them for once. He really wanted to talk to Gil about the jumbled thoughts floating through his head and get a fix on things. Where to begin though was the question of choice.

"Just spit it out already. I can see the wheels spinning in your head from over here," Gil mumbled as he pulled into the parking lot of the station.

"I'm not sure how to talk to you about this or even if I can." At Gil's pointed look Ben clarified. "It's about Katie. More specifically it's about my relationship with Katie."

"I figured that, Sherlock. As long as you don't want to talk to me about having sex with my sister I'm okay with whatever you say. Tell me what's on your mind."

They both stayed in the car after Gil turned the engine off. They had a few more minutes and Ben didn't really want to have this conversation in a place where too many of his cop buddies would overhear it. He felt so unsure about everything.

"How did you know that you were in love with Moira? How did you know that she was the one you wanted to spend the rest of your life with?"

"So it's like that, is it?"

"I'm not sure. I find that I'm not sure about a lot of things right now."

"Yeah, I know just how you feel. With Moira it was inevitable. I felt the pull to her from the very first. Hell, you remember the chemistry between us."

"Oh yeah. You two could set a room afire just looking at each other. Hell, it was like no one else existed."

"That's the way it still is. I look at her and I can't wait to get my hands on her. I think about her constantly throughout the day. She's the last person that I see every night and that's the way I always want it to be. She infuriates me more than anyone I know but she will also have my back in an instant. She's everything to me."

"I kind of figured that was why you were marrying her."

"God, don't remind me of all this. She wanted to just elope but I insisted that she have a wedding day to remember. What the hell was I thinking? I should have just gone with what she said she wanted and we would already be married."

"You'll be married in just two short months, my man. That will be here quicker than you realize."

"I hope to God that you're right. But back to your question of how did I know. When I saw her lying on the floor of that gym with blood all over her face and bruises already showing up I thought that I would die too. I have never known fear like that and I have never known desperation like that either. In that moment I knew that I would kill for her but even more I knew that I would die without her. I already knew that I loved her but that showed me just how much."

"I'm happy for you. You and Moira both deserve the happiness that you've found."

"Along those lines I want to let you know that you'll always be my best friend, Ben, but if you hurt my baby sister I will kick the shit out of you."

Ben grinned at him. "Point received loud and clear. Problem is I think that I just might be in love with her."

"So what's the problem with that?"

"How do I find out if she feels the same way? She says she does but she's only twenty-two. So how do I know that she really knows? There's ten years between us. I know that there's ten years between you and Moira too. How did you know that Moira loved you?"

Gil gave Ben a look of pure disbelief. "What's not to love about me? I'm a hell of a catch."

Ben laughed with him and shook his head at his best friend. Gil was a good-looking man. He was just the opposite of Ben in looks though they both stood tall at six foot three. Gil had the same jet black hair as Katie and the Daniels' blue eyes. He still carried his well-toned Marine build years after leaving them behind for the exciting life of a Legacy police officer. Of course Moira was nothing to scoff at either. She ran her own gym for one and had the body to prove it. She was all toned muscle and curves with a

full chest sitting right up there to keep a man happy. She had long blonde hair and slanted green cat eyes. She was a hell of a woman and perfect for Gil. Actually Ben felt left out as it was an ongoing joke within the Daniels family about how they had all seen Moira in the nude. Ben used to tease her about that and how she should just go ahead and strip for him since he was like family anyway. That was before he made love with Katie though. That one experience had changed his entire life. And that thought brought him right back to his earlier question.

"Whatever you need to tell yourself, buddy," he told Gil.

Gil gave a put-upon sigh and shook his head like he couldn't believe he was going to say what he was. "I told her that I loved her and she said it back. But it was more than that. It will always be more than the words. It's the way she looks at me and makes me feel like I'm the only person in the room. The way that she can sense my tension and soothe me without ever saying a word. It's the way that she kisses and touches me. It's things that I could never put in words but that she makes me feel every day."

Ben shook his head. "Okay, I get that. Thanks for this."

"Are we done now? Ready to head back to the grindstone?" At Ben's nod Gil shook his head in disgust. "It's a damn good thing because I was starting to feel like I was trapped in some damn Hallmark commercial or Lifetime movie moment. Just tell the woman how you feel and trust in yourself. Katie is not some flighty girl so trust in her feelings too. Now let's get the hell out of here and don't even think about hugging me or some other crap."

Ben threw his head back and laughed. He could feel some of the tension leaving his body. He was in love with Katie. He had to let her know that before they found out whether or not she was pregnant. He wanted her to know that he loved her with or without a baby on board. But boy, the thought of her body swollen with his child was a sweet thought indeed.

Chapter Nine

Katie was late getting back from shopping with her mother. They had spent the best day together. It had been too long since they had spent a day with just the two of them. Next time she would have to remember to invite Moira along. She was family now too even though the wedding was still two months away. Besides, Katie had picked out the most fabulous bridesmaid dresses and it would have been nice if Moira had been there with them. Catherine had called Cass on the phone to tell her and see what she thought.

Cass' mom was in hospice care for cancer and was barely hanging on. Cass was staying with her parents until the bitter end. She wanted to be around for the rare lucid moments that her mother had left to be able to talk to her and listen to her mother's memories. Unfortunately with the amount of morphine that they had her on those moments were all too few. That was why even though Cass was the maid of honor it was Catherine and Katie who were taking care of the arrangements and plans. Catherine made a point of keeping Cass aware and up to date on everything though.

The dresses that Katie chose were strapless like Moira's wedding gown. They were fitted to the waist and then flared into a full shimmering skirt that stopped just below the knee. The best thing was that Katie had found them in a gorgeous shade of red that would compliment her and Cass' darker hair and eye color. Moira loved the idea of red and black as wedding colors. Gil and Ben and Doug would all be wearing black tuxes. Ben and Doug would both be standing up with Gil just as Katie and Cass would be standing up with Moira. Damon and Griff, if he bothered to show up, would be the ushers. Katie was looking forward to the wedding. She didn't want one for herself, not with her dad gone now, but Moira's was going to be beautiful.

She had so many shopping bags that she could barely see where she was going. She had bought some really gorgeous lingerie that she hoped Ben would like. She usually slept in little nighties but they were usually cotton. Today she had bought things made only of silk and lace. Sheer nighties with tiny little g-string panties, delicate lace bras with matching boy-cut lace panties. She had even bought this white bustier with matching thong and stockings to attach to the garter belt and a similar one in black without the matching garter and stockings. Then she had gone to a shoe store and picked up a pair of three-inch white high heels and a pair of thigh-high black boots with four-inch heels. She would be okay as long as she didn't have to walk too far in them. Her mom had surprised her by picking up some risqué lingerie as well and a few new pairs of shoes. It made her wonder if there was someone special in her mom's life as well.

She hurried into her apartment, not bothering to lock up as she hurried into her bedroom for the suitcase that she already had packed. She wanted to throw in a few of

her new purchases before she headed to Ben's. She was already late and hoped that he was running late at work too. She had just picked up the bedside portable phone when she heard a noise behind her.

Katie turned with a smile, expecting it to be her mom or maybe Ben, and was brought up short by a stranger instead. A big hulking male stranger who was blocking her bedroom door. She hit speed dial one, which would reach Gil and Moira's apartment, and prayed that they were home. She cradled the phone to her chest as she confronted the stranger in her door.

"Can I help you with something? Are you looking for someone?" Katie gave an inward groan at her own foolish manner. He was in her apartment in her bedroom doorway – what were the odds that he was just lost and looking for someone else? She could hear Moira's voice on the phone. "Why are you in my apartment? Who are you?"

"Are you Katie Daniels?" The big guy eyed her from the top of her head down to her comfy shopping shoes but otherwise stayed in the doorway.

"Yes, what can I do for you?" Katie was edging toward the bedside table behind her. Her gun was in the bedside drawer. She vaguely wondered what people would think if she shot and killed another man. This was not looking good for her.

"I want you to tell me where the hell Jessica is. Then I want you to keep your do-gooder nose out of our lives. You understand me, bitch? Now where the hell is she?" He advanced toward her and Katie made a leap for the drawer. He beat her though, moving faster than she would have expected someone of his girth to. She made a sharp turn and went to leap over the bed but he caught her ankle and she fell hard to the bed, banging her head on the headboard hard enough to see stars. He flipped her and fell on top of her, knocking out what little air was left in her lungs and making her gasp. "Maybe I'll just show you what happens to a do-gooder who interferes where she shouldn't." He pushed his jeans-covered erection against her thigh for emphasis. "You want that, girlie? Maybe that's what you need is a man to show you your place."

With that he bent to kiss her and Katie fought like hell against him. He took her jaw in a bruising grip and held her as still as her struggling would allow while he tried to force his tongue down her throat. Katie gagged and then bit down 'til she tasted blood. The hulk reared back with a cry of pain and then brought his hand down hard against her face, splitting her lip. He seemed to forget his intention to rape her and started smacking her instead. Thank God he wasn't using a fist. She could feel his hands connecting with her head as she tried to turn away from the blows. She heard more than felt the rending of her shirt as she was struggling to deflect the raining blows. But when she felt his teeth bite down hard on her bra-covered nipple she slammed her head down toward his snapping teeth and bucked and screamed. The next thing she knew the hulk was gone. She vaguely heard him yelling and then she blacked out.

* * * * *

Ben roared with anger at what he had walked in on. The only thing that kept him from killing the now motionless man on the floor was the thought of anyone else coming in and seeing Katie lying there with her shirt ripped open. He moved to the bed and gently pulled the tattered edges of her shirt together. Her face was swollen and bloody and Ben felt an anger like he had never known consume him. He was very close to forgetting who he was, what he was, and killing the man on the floor for what he had dared to do to his Katie when she spoke from beside him.

"Ben?" He could barely make out the words whispered through her bloody, puffy lips. Her face was still swelling up and he prayed that nothing was broken.

"Yeah, I'm here, sugar. Nothing is going to happen to you anymore. I'm here and you're safe. I'll never let anyone touch you like that again." He would kill the next person who even tried.

"Check Jessica. Tell Moira. Danger. Make sure...okay."

Ben shook his head in disbelief. Was she really concerned with someone else after all she had just been through? "Jessica who?"

"Jessica...group. Tell Moira. He...Jessica." With that Katie passed out again, which was probably best for her. He could hear people entering the apartment and prayed that it was not Gil yet. The scumbag on the floor should be removed before Katie's brother arrived. Ben was having a hard enough time not killing the guy. One look at Katie and Gil might not even try to control his instincts.

He could swear that he heard someone screaming his name but it was far away, sounding like it was coming through a tunnel. He glanced around and saw the phone lying on the bed almost under the pillow. He knew that Moira was on the other end of that phone. That was how he knew to get here. Katie had called Moira and Gil and Gil had used his cell to call Ben while he headed out. That left Moira on the phone and able to hear everything and not be able to do anything. Ben picked it up and held it to his ear but Moira was still screaming so he jerked it away and just held the mouthpiece up to his mouth.

"I'm here, Moira. Just stop screaming now and I'll tell you how she is." When he heard the silence on the other end he put the receiver back up to his ear again. "I'm here with her. I think that I got here just in time."

"How is she, Ben? I could hear her screaming and then she just stopped for a while and then...then it was the most terrifying scream that I've ever heard."

"The police and EMTs are here now, Moira," Ben said as people entered the room around him. "I have to go. Just get Catherine and go to the hospital. She'll be okay. Just meet us at the hospital." Ben hung up and moved from the bed so that the EMTs could do their job. He stood silently in the corner, watching and answering what questions he could as the man on the floor was checked over and then arrested and led away by two uniforms. It was a good thing that he hadn't come to before the cavalry had arrived. Ben watched as Katie was loaded on a stretcher and then followed them out and down the hall where he ran into Gil.

Gil's eyes shuttered when he saw Katie lying so still and silent on the stretcher. He looked at Ben and took a deep breath before he could speak. "Did he...?"

Ben shook his head. "I don't think so. I think that I at least got here in time to prevent that."

"Did she say anything to you? Or has she been out since you got here?"

"She was awake for a bit. She said something about someone from group named Jessica. My best guess is that someone from group left that creep and he came looking to scare Katie into telling him where she was."

Gil gave a hard shudder as he watched Katie get loaded into the elevator. His beautiful baby sister's face was so swollen and bloody that she was barely recognizable. He couldn't see the rest of her as she was covered by a sheet but he could imagine. He and Ben took the stairs two at a time so that they could reach the bottom floor when Katie did. Since Gil's old apartment, the one that Katie was staying in, was only on the second floor it wasn't that far. They caught up with Katie on the way out of the apartment.

Monique, one of the EMTs who was well known at the precinct because she was the wife of one of the other detectives, looked up from the stretcher and fired questions at them. "Is she taking any medication? Any family history they should know about?" and on and on. It was all nonsense to Ben until he heard her ask the one question that was constantly on his mind. "Any chance that she's pregnant?"

Gil looked at Ben but Ben couldn't meet his eye. All he could do was look at Katie lying there and shake his head. "Yes. Yes, there is."

* * * * *

It was a somber group that sat in the waiting room anxious for word on Katie. Gil and Doug were both pacing. Moira was sitting with Catherine holding hands and talking quietly. Damon was sitting lounged in a chair, looking deceptively calm as long as you didn't pay attention to his clenched fists and fiery eyes. Ben stood in the corner by himself. Gil hadn't spoken to him since he had told them that Katie could be pregnant.

Finally Gil stopped pacing and faced him. "So are you planning to marry her?"

Ben looked him straight in the eye and told him the only truth that he could. "That would be between Katie and me."

"The hell it is," Gil exploded.

Catherine rose from her chair and she and Moira both headed toward the two men who looked like they were both about to come to blows. Moira placed herself in front of Gil and wrapped her arms around his waist, plastering herself against his chest.

"That will be enough out of you, Gil. What is between Ben and Katie is their business and not ours." Catherine placed her hand on Ben's arm and made a move to pull him with her to where the chairs sat.

"Not if she's pregnant." Gil dropped that little bomb into a room gone suddenly deathly quiet.

Catherine looked up at Ben. "Katie could be pregnant?" When Ben nodded she took a deep breath and then another before continuing to the chairs and sitting down, still holding onto Ben, leaving him no choice but to sit beside her. "Then the last thing that Katie needs is for us to be fighting right now."

At this point Damon and Doug were both standing over Ben with hard looks on their faces. Moira had effectively cut Gil off by wrapping around him and allowing her tears of worry to fall. One look into her tear-filled eyes was all it took to glue Gil to her side.

Catherine looked up at Doug and Damon and squeezed Ben's hand with her own. "I said that will be enough. Now either sit down and behave or leave." She looked pointedly at Doug until he did what she said. Damon stayed where he was though.

"I think that Katie's family has a right to know what your intentions are since she may be pregnant," Damon said, doing his best to ignore Catherine's glare.

"You've all known me long enough to know the answer to that without asking. But I'll give you what I can anyway." Ben looked up at Damon without blinking his eyes. "I love her and pregnant or not Katie knows that. But what happens between us will be up to Katie just as much as it is to me. All I can do is tell you that I love her."

Catherine squeezed his hand again. "That's more than enough, Ben, that's everything."

Before anything else could be said the doctor entered the room and everyone was on their feet facing him. Luckily for him he didn't beat around the bush.

"I take it you're the Daniels family?" At their combined nods he continued. "She's being moved to a room right now. We'll keep her overnight, possibly two nights. Although there is a lot of swelling there are no broken bones on her face. I'm not sure how she managed that but she did. Her lip is split and her jaw has some fingerprint bruising. She took several blows to her face and the side of her head but there is no swelling of the brain so she should be okay in a few days. She might have a really mild concussion so she might have a headache and there will definitely be some stiffness but most of the swelling should go down overnight. We've given her a mild sedative and she should sleep through the rest of the night. The nurses will keep compresses on her face to reduce the swelling. I'm going to limit her visitors for tonight, folks, so I'd encourage you all to go home and come back in the morning. Two visitors tonight and the lady has already made her choices. She wants her mother and whoever's named Ben." Ben and Catherine stepped forward and the doctor nodded at them. "She's being moved to a private room on the third floor. You can head on up, just tell the nurse on duty that I sent you. Five minutes a piece though, if she lasts that long." At the looks of alarm sent his way, he clarified, "I told you that I gave her a mild sedative to help her sleep. I'm not sure how long she'll last before it takes effect. The rest of you," he nodded

to Gil, Moira, Damon and Doug, "come back in the morning. Visiting hours start at ten a.m." With that he turned and left them.

Ben took Catherine's hand and hurried to the elevators. He wanted to get there as soon as he could. He wanted a chance to talk to her before she went to sleep. Gil stopped them with a hand on Ben's shoulder.

"We'll wait for you here." And the look in Gil's eyes let Ben know that Gil was sorry he had blown like that. With a nod Ben continued with Catherine to the elevator. He understood all too well why his best friend had called him out and he also knew that Gil understood his own hurt at not being trusted. And just like that with a hand to the shoulder and a nod things were okay between them.

Katie was in the room when they got there. Ben let Catherine go in first and paced the hall in front of the room, waiting his own turn.

Katie opened her eyes when she felt someone take her hand. "Mom," she whispered when she saw Catherine standing beside the bed, her eyes bright with unshed tears. "I'm okay. Just a little bruised and sore. You know us Daniels kids though, heads are hard as rocks."

Catherine bit her lip to keep the tears at bay. "Good thing too. It looks like that hard head of yours saved you. Nothing broken and the doctor said the swelling should go down in a few days." Catherine smiled down at her daughter as she gently pushed a curl behind Katie's ear, being careful of the cloths on her face. "You can come home with me for a while until you feel like going back to the apartment." Catherine didn't want her baby girl ever going back to that apartment alone.

Katie fluttered her eyes open and shut a few times. "Ben?"

"He's in the hall, honey. Do you want me to get him for you?"

Katie nodded and closed her eyes again.

Catherine bent to kiss her daughter on the top of her head before moving out to the hall to tell Ben that Katie was asking for him.

"She's very tired but she's asking for you," Catherine told Ben before watching him enter her daughter's room. Then Catherine took a deep breath and headed back down to the waiting room and her other children, well, at least two of them. She would reassure them that Katie was going to be okay and send them home. She could wait to fall apart when she got home but first she would put in a call to her wandering son Griff. It was past time for him to head home.

* * * * *

Ben took in the sight of Katie's beautiful face swathed in some type of toweling and felt his heart stop. Then her beautiful blue eyes blinked open and he felt it turn over in his chest. He quickly went to her bedside and gently took her hand in his. Before she could say anything he spoke.

"I love you, Katie Daniels. I love you. I want you to marry me and spend the rest of your life with me. I want you to move in with me as soon as you're released and..."

Katie gave what he thought might have been her version of a smile judging by the new wrinkles in her face coverings. "Yes."

"You'll marry me? You'll move in with me?"

But Katie was asleep and Ben would have to pass a long night before he could find out exactly what she had agreed to. He slipped from the room and headed down the hall to the elevators. He would be back first thing in the morning before work regardless of visiting hours. He would be back with his grandmother's engagement ring, the ring that his grandfather had given him when he told him that he was setting up a trust fund for Ben.

Ben thought about that all the way home. His family had made their fortune in computer software and his dad had been furious when Ben had joined the police force. Preston, Ben's father, expected his sons to follow in his footsteps, obtaining computer-related or business degrees, and his brother had more than fulfilled that obligation. Preston's sons were not to be common laborers like policemen. Ben's brother had increased finances by creating some of the best security software available. His brother was a genius at creating programs and just about anything to do with a computer, but that wasn't for Ben. Preston had been furious and threatened to cut Ben off financially if Ben didn't toe the line.

Ben had walked away and never looked back. It had been hard after having pretty much whatever he wanted available to him to have to work his ass off to make ends meet, but he had done it. He had scrimped, saved and lived in some pretty unsavory places, places that would have made his mother faint, but he had done it and he had done it on his own. Then out of nowhere his grandfather had shown up. The old man had sat him down and told him that his father was a well-intentioned fool with too much pride. He had asked Ben as one man to another to forgive his dad and mend the fences before it was too late. Ben had been a twenty-four-year-old kid with plenty of pride of his own though and he had refused. His grandfather hadn't said a word about where Ben lived or the shabbiness of his limited furniture.

A week later the papers for the trust fund had arrived though. Ben could access the funds as he needed. Ben saw it as a way for the family to keep tabs on him though and had left it untouched. Then a few years ago his grandfather had sent him a box of personal things that he wanted Ben to have. In it were pictures, an old pocket watch and other little odds and ends and then a ring box with his grandmother's engagement ring and her and his grandfather's wedding bands. He could tell that the old man had taken good care of them. He had been surprised and worried about his grandfather's health. He had made some discreet inquiries and found out that the old man was healthy as a horse so he hadn't bothered to call him.

He couldn't say exactly why he had shut his grandfather out of his life. He was thirty-two years old and hadn't spoken to his father, mother or older brother in twelve

years. His grandfather would be in his late seventies now and he wondered if he was still alive. Since he had not received anything else from him he figured he probably was.

Ben parked in the drive and went through the gate to the back door. He entered the kitchen and continued up the stairs to his bedroom. He took the box down from the top of the closet and, opening it, took out the ring box. Still looking at the ring, he sank down to sit on the bed and reached for the phone, deciding to make a call that was probably long overdue, a call to a number that he would never forget no matter how far he ran. He knew that the one thing he could count on in his life was that his grandfather would always be there in the same house that the old man refused to leave. And his grandfather was the only person from his old life that he wanted to share this news with.

The voice answered on the third ring, sounding sleepy and irritated at being woken up.

“Hello, Grandpa. It’s Ben. I’m getting married.” And with those words Ben knew that he had changed the course of his entire life. The past he had shoved behind him for so long would have to be brought back out and dealt with once and for all. He just prayed that Katie would stick beside him when she knew all there was to know about Ben Thomas Marcum.

Chapter Ten

Katie awoke the next morning and felt like she had been hit by a truck. Her body was sore and felt battered. Her neck was stiff and damn it her face hurt. What the hell had happened? Then it hit her like a light bulb going off over her head in a wacky cartoon. She had been smacked around and almost raped by some guy looking for Jessica. She forced her eyes open and took in her surroundings. First thing she had to do was make sure that Jessica was okay.

Her mom sat in a chair by the bed. Catherine sat up when Katie opened her eyes. She brushed Katie's hair back off her face and smiled at her.

"It's good to see that you're awake now. I'm sure you wish that you were waking up somewhere else though. Does it hurt too badly, Katie girl?"

Katie could feel tears filling her eyes. Her dad had always called her his Katie girl. He was gone now but her mom was here for her just like Catherine had always been and it made Katie feel like a little girl again. She nodded her head at her mother and Catherine gently wrapped her arms around Katie and held her daughter while she cried.

"It's okay now, baby. You're going to be just fine. Everything is going to be okay. Mama's here and nothing is going to happen."

Katie took a shuddering breath and cringed as she realized there was a band around her head covering parts of her face. Well, no wonder her face hurt. That band felt awfully tight to her awakened senses. She felt a little nauseous and shaky and crying on her mother's shoulder hadn't helped anything. Now the cloths on her face were wet and sticky. "I'm okay now, Mom. I was really scared though. I tried to get to my door but he was too fast for me. I just couldn't get him off me no matter how hard I tried. I just couldn't!"

"You did everything right, baby girl. I'm very proud of you. He didn't rape you?"

Katie started to shake her head but decided against doing anything else that might damage the cloths on her face. "No. He wanted to but I fought with everything I had and then I think he just focused on smacking me around open handed instead."

"I should have gone up to the apartment with you, Katie. I should have walked up with you instead of just dropping you off."

"No, Mom. Then there would have been two of us for him to use against the other. You would have done whatever he said if he had threatened to hurt me in front of you." Katie waited until Catherine nodded her agreement. "I would have done the same thing to prevent him from hurting you."

"She's right, you know," Moira called from the doorway. "You could have been hurt as well." She came up on the other side of the hospital bed Katie was lying in. "So how does it feel to be a punching bag? Ahhh...I remember the feeling well. You'll have to tell me how you managed to come away with only slight bruising and nothing broken. Hell the swelling is probably almost all gone under those bandages. I, on the other hand, had to walk around for weeks with black eyes from my broken nose. You'll have to tell me your secret."

Katie smiled up at Moira. "Rubber bones?" she joked.

They all laughed then. Well, at least, Katie tried to laugh but her swaddled head made her feel like a mummy. Thank God the nurse entered then with a supply tray in hand that had Katie hoping she meant to remove the covering on Katie's face.

"I see that you are wide awake this morning." The nurse gently eased Moira out of her way as she went about checking Katie's temperature, pulse and blood pressure before picking up some small scissors and snipping at the cloths. "I have some things to go over with you if you feel up to it?" she questioned Katie as she removed the last cloth and placed it in the trash before looking pointedly at the other two women in the room.

Katie could tell by the look on her mother's face that Catherine was not going anywhere. "Yes, that will be okay. This is my mother and sister," well, almost sister-in-law but whatever, "it's okay to talk in front of them." Katie couldn't help but pat her face with her hands. Everything felt fine to her.

Moira grinned at her and confirmed it by saying, "I knew the swelling would be almost completely gone."

The nurse nodded in agreement then looked down at Katie's chart as she finished making a few notations, of what Katie could only guess. Finally the nurse looked up and smiled at her. "Just so that you know there was no permanent damage done to your face, no broken bones or damage to the muscles. The swelling is already going down and except for some beautiful colors on your jaw you should be fine in a few days. The doctor wants you to schedule a complete check-up with your personal physician in the next few weeks. This is just to make sure that all the swelling does go down and that the bruises on your jaw heal properly. Do you have any questions about any of that?" Katie shook her head no and the nurse smiled down at her. "Now when you were brought in there was a concern that you might be pregnant so we did run a blood test first thing."

Katie swallowed hard and looked over at her mother. She hadn't said anything to anyone but Ben about that. She just nodded her head and held tight to the hand that Catherine placed in hers. "Isn't it too early to tell? I'm not due to start for at least a week." Okay so she had told Ben it was longer. She wanted to know for herself first before she told him.

"We have tests now that can tell within twenty-four hours after conception." She looked closely at Katie before continuing. "Would you like to talk about this alone?"

"No, this is fine. Just tell me what the test showed. Am I pregnant?"

The nurse smiled again and nodded. "Yes, you are. I'm sure that your fiancé will be a happy man."

"Fiancé?" three voices questioned before looking down to the hand the nurse was pointing to where there was now a very tasteful diamond ring.

"He was here first thing this morning to see you. He said that he would be back later to check on you." Now the nurse looked confused by the changing expressions on the faces around her. "Is everything all right?"

Katie looked up and took a deep breath. "Did you tell him that I was pregnant? Does he know?"

"No, no one here told him. We believe firmly in patient confidentiality. You know all those never-ending forms you get to fill out at the doctor's office now? That means we don't share with anyone without your okay."

Katie felt a weight lift off her chest. Ben wanted to marry her. She had a vague memory of him asking her last night to marry him, to move in with him. The best part was that he had done it without knowing that there was a baby on the way. Or had he only done it because there might be a baby on the way? Or even worse, now that it seemed her whole family knew there might be a baby on the way, had they somehow coerced him into doing "the right thing"? Oh God, she had to think about all of this. But her time had already run out as the man in her thoughts suddenly materialized in her doorway.

Ben glanced into the room and took in the presence of the nurse as well as Moira and Catherine before focusing all of his attention on the woman in the bed. Katie was a vision without the cloths on her face, even with the slight swelling that remained and bruises coloring her jaw. She was the most beautiful woman in the world to him and his heart turned over at the thought of losing her. He wondered if she had noticed the ring on her finger yet. Either way he was happy to see that it was still in place and looking perfect on her. He stepped in and let the door shut behind him.

The nurse smiled, squeezed Katie's shoulder and quietly left the room. Catherine and Moira glanced at each other and then Katie before deciding to go find the cafeteria and coffee. Catherine promised to find Katie some salty chips, as she knew well her daughter's constant craving for salt, and left with a twinkle in her eyes. Ben moved to the side of the bed and sat beside Katie.

"How you feeling this morning, sugar?" He leaned over to give her a gentle kiss on the forehead before sliding his lips gently down her cheek to her mouth for a slow, soft kiss. "I came by earlier but you were still sleeping."

"The nurse came in and cut all the bandages off so I'm not doing so badly. Whatever they had on my face under those bandages did a good job on the swelling though." Katie assured him. "I heard that you were here earlier and left me a little gift." She wiggled the fingers of her left hand at him.

Ben picked her hand up and kissed her ring finger just below where the diamond sat. "You agreed to marry me last night so I was just sealing our deal so to speak."

Katie frowned at Ben. "Ben, why did you ask me to marry you?"

Ben took in her frown and felt a slight frisson of worry flit down his spine. "What are you asking me, Katie? Are you saying that you've changed your mind?"

Katie just looked deep into his eyes like she was searching for something. She took a deep breath and lied through her teeth. "I'm not pregnant, Ben. If that's the reason you want to marry me then I just wanted to let you know that there's no need to fall on the proverbial sword or anything."

Ben felt his heart squeeze tight for a moment. It was weird to miss something that never was but he did. "I guess maybe that is for the best then. The last thing I want is for you to think that anything I say or do is because you're pregnant. I told you that I thought that I was falling in love with you, but I lied." Katie gasped and Ben shook his head in frustration. "That didn't come out quite the way that I meant it to. I mean that I lied to myself. The truth is that I do love you. I think that I have since I looked through the door of Knowledge Is Power and saw you standing there with Moira and that sick psycho. I couldn't get to you fast enough."

"You could have fooled me. After the fact it seemed like you couldn't be in the same room with me, like you would rather be anywhere that I wasn't."

"That's because you scared me to death. I felt things for you, with you, that I'd never felt before. One look at you and I wanted to lay you on the first flat surface and fuck you 'til neither of us could stand up. Then I would look at Gil, your brother, my best friend, and I would feel like the biggest pervert in the world for wanting to do that to his baby sister."

"I may be his sister, Ben, but I'm still a woman."

"I know that, sugar. Sweet Jesus do I know that. Every time I get my cock in you it's like coming home."

"I love it when you 'come' home," Katie whispered.

Ben groaned. "Don't tease me, Katie. Just looking at you makes my dick hard as stone."

Katie thought of her bruised jaw and oily hair that she could feel hanging limp around her head and almost laughed. "I must look sexier than I thought if even this look can turn you on." Then Ben took her hand and laid it on his straining zipper so that she could feel just how much he wanted her. "Damn, Ben. I want you so much."

Ben smiled and then groaned as she rubbed against him. "If you don't stop that I'm going to come in my pants like some testosterone-happy teenager. Besides, I want to finish talking to you."

Katie reluctantly pulled her hand away and watched as Ben tried to re-adjust his straining cock. She licked her lips and then grinned up at Ben when he groaned. Her

face felt much better without the stuff on it and she really wanted to get frisky with Ben but she would try to sit still long enough to listen to him.

"The fact is simply this. I love you. When I walked in and saw that guy hitting you I wanted to kill him. It didn't matter that I was a cop. All my professionalism went out the door when I saw you lying on that bed not moving. I thought that I would die without you. I don't want to ever feel that helpless again. I want you to come home with me and stay there with me forever. I want you to marry me and when you're ready have my babies. I want it all. But mostly I just want you."

Katie smiled at him and sat up a little in bed. "I want to tell you something too. First I want you to pull the curtain so that we won't be interrupted." She waited until he did what she asked and moved back to the bed. "I love you too, Ben. I love you more than words can say. I would love to move in with you and marry you and have your babies." She stuttered over the last, catching her breath at what she would eventually tell him. "But first I want to feel you." She reached for his button and zipper and took advantage of the moment it took him to realize what she intended. She already had him in hand when he went to pull away from her.

"Katie, we can't do this here," he groaned as she licked the drop of pre-cum from the tip of his swollen cock while she continued stroking and squeezing him with her hand. "Katie, sugar, you don't have to do this. You must be in pain. We're in a hospital and someone could walk through that door any minute. We can't...Oh God, have mercy," he moaned as she went to work in earnest.

She blew her hot breath on him as she pumped her hand up and down his engorged shaft, gently squeezing with every stroke. With her other hand she reached down and palmed his balls, cupping and working them with her dexterous fingers. She needed this, him, for reasons she couldn't explain. She needed to erase the bad memory with one of Ben. She licked his cock, wanting more than anything to suck him deep but knowing that there was no way that she could right now. She heard his harsh grunt and held the head against her mouth so that every pulse of cum would spill exactly where she wanted it. Katie swallowed every luscious drop and then gently kissed him, taking the time to lick the few drops that still clung to the slit on the head of his cock. She had him tucked and zipped before he had caught his breath.

"I have to confess to you too, Ben," Katie whispered as she pulled him down to her so that his face was inches from hers, his mouth close enough to lick. "About the baby."

"It's okay, Katie. We'll have kids whenever you want."

"How about say in another eight or nine months or so?"

"Well, sure if that's what you want. We'll just use condoms 'til then so that you won't have to go on birth control and then quit." He frowned when Katie started laughing. "Just what do you find so funny about what I said?"

"You're not getting it, Ben. I lied also." Ben's frown deepened and his mouth drew into a thin line. Katie used her fingers to smooth over it. "I am pregnant. We're going to

have a baby in another eight or nine months. I won't know the due date until I see my doctor."

"But... You said..." Ben couldn't get a coherent sentence out probably because his thoughts were in such chaos.

"I lied," Katie stated simply. "I wanted to make sure that you weren't marrying me just because you thought I was pregnant."

"You sneaky little rat," Ben grinned while placing his hand over her stomach where his baby was already growing inside her. "A baby." He sounded completely awed by that fact.

"A baby." She smiled up at him.

The knock at the door startled them both out of the moment.

"Katie, are you decent in there?" Catherine called and Ben hurried to shove the curtain out of the way and open the door for Katie's mom.

Catherine entered, followed by Moira and Gil. Catherine placed a bag of salty chips on the bed next to Katie and smiled. "I know how much you love salt. This was the best I could find here."

Katie grinned at Ben and replied, "Ben brought me some salt, Mom. I'll just save those for later." Then she let out a giggle as the illustrious Detective Ben Marcum flushed bright red.

Chapter Eleven

By the time that Katie was released from the hospital that day, Ben had managed to have all of her stuff packed and moved from Gil's old apartment to his house. He had taken her straight there, carrying her through the kitchen and up the stairs to the master bedroom. He had placed her gently on the bed and shown her where he had placed all of her stuff. She planned to move some of it to more convenient places but it was the thought that counted. Katie was still just a little stiff but for the most part she was okay now. The swelling was completely gone now and her bruised jaw was not bothering her but even more important the baby was fine. She had moved her appointment to her personal physician now that she knew she was pregnant and he would see her in six weeks when they would be able to see the heartbeat on the ultrasound computer. She hadn't wanted to go to him as an unwed mom-to-be. The man had delivered her after all. Now she would be married by the time the baby was born so it was okay.

It didn't look like she and Ben would be going away this weekend but at least he was off work so they would still get to spend it together. She could hear him moving around downstairs and figured he was probably cooking. He must have been more scared than she realized because he had been treating her with kid gloves since they arrived at his house an hour ago. He had left her upstairs to rest and relax. What Katie was feeling though was restless and bored. She was also incredibly horny. Was it too early for the pregnancy hormones to be causing that? Probably so.

She hopped off the bed and headed to the master bath. She started the water in the huge Jacuzzi tub and added some bath oil from the drawer Ben had stocked for her. She stripped and sank into the tub, running the water until it was high enough that she could turn the jets on but not high enough to soak the floor when she did. It felt like heaven. The only thing that could be better would be if Ben joined her.

Just like that he was in the doorway.

"Care to join me?" she invited him with a slow sultry smile.

"Are you sure?" Ben asked even as he started stripping out of his own clothes.

Katie waited until he stepped in and sat behind her, pulling her against his chest. She could feel the full length of his impressive erection against her lower back. He felt wonderful. She groaned and rubbed her body back against his. "I've missed you, Ben."

Ben thumbed her nipples and licked up the side of her neck. "I've missed you too, sugar. I was hoping that you would feel up to this today. I wasn't sure how long I could hold out."

Katie snorted, remembering the episode earlier that day in the hospital. "I'm more than ready. I'm hot, wet and hungry." She turned her head and nipped along his jaw. "I'm so hungry for you. I need you now."

Ben turned her in the warm water so that she straddled him. When she was exactly how he wanted her he leaned forward and took her nipple in his mouth. He sucked it hard, nipping with his teeth and then soothing with the stroke of his tongue before moving to the other one. Back and forth he went until Katie was moaning and begging him to stop. Ben lay as far down in the tub as he could. When his head was just at the surface of the water he moved Katie so that she was floating on top of the tub with her legs spread wide over the sides of the tub, placing her sweet wet pussy right there for him to enjoy. He cradled her ass in his hands and held her still for his tongue. He stroked and licked and sucked at her. He used his mouth in the most interesting ways to bring her higher and higher toward an orgasm that just might kill her. His tongue fucked her pussy with quick, rapid strokes, searching for the juice inside. He moved one of his hands from her ass and used his thumb to strum across her clit. Katie crested higher, almost drowning herself when the waves broke over her.

Ben sat up, removing her legs from the side of the tub. He eased her to a sitting position before he stood and stepped out to get a towel. She was still riding high when he lifted her up into his arms and carried her to the bed. She heard the drawer open on the bedside table and wondered what he was planning now. She felt the cooling gel against her anus and knew exactly what he was up to and was more than willing to indulge him.

His fingers were working the gel into her, slicking the entrance for his cock. She groaned her pleasure and thrust her hips back on his fingers. Then she felt something at her pussy. It wasn't a vibrator, was her first thought. It felt like he was putting beads inside her, stuffing them one after the other in her sex. When she tried to sit up to see what he was doing he gave her a sharp smack on her ass.

"Just lie back and enjoy, Katie. I promise that you are going to love every moment of this."

"What..." Katie cut her own words off with a gasp as Ben placed the thick head of his rigid cock against her anus and pressed. She gave a keening cry as he pushed past that first tight ring of muscle at her opening and sank deep. He had her knees bent back toward her chest, her heels resting on his shoulders as he worked in and out in a slow, steady motion. It felt incredible. She was full, so full. She could feel his swollen cock rubbing against whatever he had inserted in her pussy with each smooth stroke. It was too intense, too much, too everything. Then he started tugging on what he had placed inside her. She keened and cried out at the startling sensations that shot through her.

"What..." she tried to ask him again but he had placed his other hand on her mound and was stroking his thumb in circles around her pulsing clit.

"Pearls, sugar. You've got nice thick white pearls shoved up this pretty little cunt and I'm going to pull them out nice and slow while I fuck this hot tight ass of yours."

Katie panted and groaned, begged and pleaded, screamed and demanded, and still Ben was slow and methodical, pulling on the beads so that only one pearl popped out at a time. When enough were out he took the strand up between the lips of her sex and rubbed them over and around her clit. Katie couldn't take it anymore.

"Fuck me! Damn it, Ben, fuck my ass right now! Please, God, fuck me hard!" Katie screamed her needs, throwing her hips at him, using his own shoulders to aid her movement.

Ben picked up the rhythm and began slamming in and out of her, tugging on the strand of pearls, popping more and more beads out with every stroke. Katie cried out her delight as she experienced an orgasm so intense that she felt shattered from the inside out.

"Yes! Oh yes! God yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Ben heard Katie screaming, felt her clenching around him and let pleasure wash through him. He surged deep, burying his cock to the balls in her ass, and spewed like a geyser. Hot jets of cum shot inside her, filling her to overflowing as he pulled the rest of the pearls out of her with one sharp tug, making her scream as her orgasm crested once more. He eased her feet from where she had them dug into his shoulders and, being careful to keep his cock buried inside her, moved her up the bed so that he could join her. He turned so that she was on top of him, pulling his cock until only the head was still buried inside her sweet ass. He kissed her brow and rubbed his hands up and down her back while they both struggled to catch their breath.

Just when Katie thought she might doze off and go to sleep she heard the unmistakable voice of her brother Gil.

"You think we should let them know that the family is here or just head on home?"

Moira's giggle carried up the stairs where Katie was trying to hide her mortified face in Ben's shaking chest. The blasted man was laughing. God only knew who all in her family was downstairs, had heard her yell what she had to Ben. She wondered if it was possible to die from embarrassment and then realized sadly that it was most definitely not when she heard her mother, her mother for God's sake, say, "Well, it appears you and Ben have more in common than I knew, Gil. Let's just carry this on into the kitchen while we wait for them to join us."

Moira's giggle was joined by someone whistling and Katie lay against a now openly laughing Ben and prayed for the floor to open up and swallow her.

"How could you forget that you had invited my family over for dinner? How could you, Ben?" Katie watched from the bed as Ben continued dressing. He had placed clothes on the bed for her too but she refused to put them on until she could gather some dignity around her.

"I got a little sidetracked when I came up here and found you deliciously naked in the tub," Ben replied as he finished slipping his feet into a pair of deck shoes. The man was gorgeous even in wrinkled khaki shorts and a pull-over white Polo shirt. "Now get that well-fucked ass," at this he wiggled his eyebrows at her, taking delight in reminding her what she had screamed at him, "out of bed, put your clothes on and haul ass downstairs. If I can face the music then so can you."

Katie couldn't help it—something just came over her and she stuck her tongue out at him.

"We'll use that later, sugar." He sat down beside her on the bed and stroked his hand down her cheek, tucking a curl behind her ear. "Don't worry. No one will say anything to you. It'll be me they harass. If you remember correctly this happened with Gil and Moira as well, so don't sweat it. Besides, if you feel uncomfortable just start your mom talking about the baby."

Katie smiled up at him. He was right about getting her mom to talk about the baby. Catherine was as excited as a kid at Christmas about her first grandchild. She was already telling them that they had to find out the sex of the baby. She planned on going to all the appointments that Ben couldn't make. She had a nursery planned and said that was going to be her gift. She had visited Ben's house straight away and picked out the perfect room for a nursery. In the next few months she would be taking over and redoing it. Neither Katie nor Ben minded in the least. They both realized how important this was to her and, as Ben said, it was one less thing for them to do. Besides, Catherine had excellent taste.

Katie took a quick shower after Ben left and dressed in white shorts and a blue t-shirt. She slid her feet into a pair of chunky sandals and, taking a deep breath, headed down to face the proverbial music. Thank God it looked like everyone was out on the unfinished patio with Ben by the grill. She could smell burgers and hot dogs. She passed through the dining room where the patio doors stood open to the breeze and headed to the kitchen. Buns were stacked on the counter and there was a big container of her mother's potato salad next to them.

Katie opened the refrigerator and took out the makings for a tossed salad. She could smell homemade macaroni and cheese keeping warm in the oven. While she was shredding lettuce, Moira walked in and picked up a knife to start chopping the onions, radishes and cucumbers that Katie had laid out. Katie stayed fixed on the lettuce and let silence reign for a few minutes.

"I know exactly how you feel," Moira finally said. "Hey, look at it this way—at least you've never had the whole family see you naked."

Just that easily the tension left Katie and she glanced up to see the sparkle of laughter in Moira's eyes. They were both laughing and chatting about the wedding when Catherine joined them.

Catherine shook her head and joined them at the counter, taking up the washed tomatoes and slicing them. "Have you and Ben discussed when you want to have your wedding?"

Katie glanced at her mother and blinked. "No, we haven't had time." At Catherine's raised eyebrow Katie blushed scarlet, embarrassed beyond belief that her mother knew exactly what they had spent their time on.

Catherine reached over and patted her cheek. "At least you didn't greet us stark naked. My goodness, the way things are going I shudder to think of what I'll be

exposed to when Doug and Griff find the right women. It's just not right for a mother to have to experience the things that I have with their children. We are entirely too close. I've made you all feel way too comfortable with me." She shook her head in mock disgust. "It's just like your father warned me. All that nudey time on the blankets when you were babies is coming back to haunt me."

Katie laughed and turned to hug her mother tight. "I'll have to make sure to limit that for this one," she cradled her hand over her flat stomach.

"Never," Catherine replied, putting her hand over Katie's. "This one is going to be spoiled rotten."

Moira laughed with them. "So other than the obviously great sex how are you doing?"

Katie shook her head. She would never live this one episode down. Of course she remembered how ruthlessly they had teased Moira about walking out of the shower of her apartment with her robe wide open, showing them everything. Her father always assured her that "what goes around comes around". It appeared he had been right.

"I'm doing okay other than these lovely colors on my face," Katie said, indicating the healing bruises on her jaw that were a delightful shade of green. They were healing pretty quickly though thanks to the cream Sandy had brought her in the hospital. The entire group had visited her *en masse* just before she was released except for Jessica who blamed herself for what had happened. It turned out that Jessica had run away from home as soon as she turned eighteen. She had met Butch—how appropriate a name was that for the brute who had attacked Katie—while she was living on the street. He had been wonderful to Jessica at first but then she had joined the gym and gone to group and basically become just a little bit too independent for his taste. He had taken to smacking her around and Jessica had finally got the courage up to leave him. She had gone to Tory and Sandy for help and they had welcomed her with open arms.

Tory had told Katie all about it at the hospital. Jessica had shown up on their doorstep shortly after they had headed home from the gym with Pilar who it turned out was the illegitimate daughter of Sandy's deceased husband Michael. Damn, could anyone say soap opera! Jessica had been a little roughed up but nothing like what Katie looked like when Butch was done with her. So now Pilar, whose mom had recently been killed in a hit-and-run accident, and Jessica were both living with Sandy and Tory. Tory was taking Jessica under her wing while amazingly Sandy was seeing Pilar as the child she had never been allowed to have. Jessica was going to be tutored so that she could at least get her GED if Tory didn't convince her to go back to finish up her senior year of high school. Pilar was hopefully going to get the self-confidence that neither one of her birth parents tried to help her with. All in all Katie was happy for them all and wished them the best.

"How is Jessica doing? Have you heard any more?" Katie asked Moira as she dumped everything Moira had chopped into the salad bowl and tossed it with the lettuce.

"Tory's helping her deal with it. The poor kid has been through hell. She reminds me a lot of me only she doesn't have a dad like mine." Moira smiled as she thought of her dad Jack and all that he had gone through to try to win her love and affection. She had put him through the ringer but he had never walked away from her like she had expected him to. She was very lucky indeed. "Jessica is so wrapped in guilt for so many things that she had no control over that it may be awhile before she can face you."

Katie shook her head in frustration. "Are you going to find someone else to take over group 'til I get back?"

Moira blinked her eyes in surprise. "I... Uhhh... Did you know that Tory has a degree in psychology? I invited her to take over while you were out and she accepted. She said that she needed something more now that all her chickens were out on their own. I told her that I didn't know if or when you would be back."

"What do you mean if or when? Of course I'll be back." Katie was surprised to hear that from Moira. "Why in the world would I not be back?"

"Well, with you pregnant and everything I just didn't know if you would be back or if you would spend more time at home," Moira answered.

"I plan on heading back to work as soon as I can. Once Ben and I get back from this little impromptu vacation he's planned."

"I heard that Ben had requested a week's vacation. Gil said that usually they have to force Ben to take his vacation." Moira shook her head before adding with a smile, "Of course, Gil used to be the same way."

"Where are you two headed anyway?" Catherine asked.

"I'm not really sure. Ben wants it to be a surprise. He said to pack prepared for anything, hot, cold and everything in between. So that's what I'm doing." Katie's eyes twinkled as she added, "But then he'll just have to deal with three suitcases."

Moira and Catherine laughed at Katie's revenge on Ben for not telling her where he was taking her. A woman always had a way to get her point across.

"It's a good thing that you're driving then," Catherine added.

"Yes, I only hope that there's room for his stuff as well." They all laughed at that because Ben drove a black Jeep that had very little room.

"Not to worry," Ben said as he and Damon entered the kitchen. He stopped to kiss Katie before opening the cabinet above her and taking out a platter to put the burgers and dogs on. "I traded the Jeep in this morning while I was out running errands. I'll finish the paperwork and pick up my new wheels tomorrow."

"What did you get?" Katie asked.

"I'll be picking up an SUV. We'll need something roomier and safer once the baby comes. You'll love it, sugar, plenty of room in it for a baby and all the paraphernalia that comes with them."

Katie watched as he headed back out to the patio with the platter, heard the ribald comment Gil made and the laughter that followed it and smiled. God help her but she

loved that man! Now if he would only share with her what seemed to be bothering him so much. She had caught him more than once watching her with a look akin to fear in his eyes. Surely he knew that she loved him? Perhaps if she shared more of herself with him on this little trip then he would finally open up and let her know what was weighing on his mind.

Chapter Twelve

Katie was in awe the next morning when Ben showed up to pick her up in a brand new fully loaded Dodge Durango. It was black just like the Jeep had been. Inside it was complete with all the bells and whistles, power everything, twelve-disc compact disc player and a built-in DVD player that dropped from the ceiling and an all-leather interior. Katie loved it.

"All-leather interior?" she questioned. "I thought you got this for the baby's comfort."

"Leather will be easier to wipe clean," Ben countered. "You know, in case of spills or spit-up or whatever."

"Umm...sounds good to me. I'll buy it. So where are we headed?" Katie asked as he finished loading the bags she had moved to the front porch and settled into the driver's seat beside her.

"We're heading to a place I want to share with you. I find that there are a lot of things that I want to share with you that I've never shared with anyone else."

"Secrets? I love secrets."

"I hope that you're okay with these."

Katie looked at him closely, seeing clearly the lines of worry around his eyes. "I hope that you know, Ben, that there is nothing you can say to me that would ever make me stop loving you. You could hurt me very badly with words, but you can't make me stop loving you."

Ben smiled and put his hand over hers, keeping only one on the wheel as he drove. "There are things about me that even Gil doesn't know, things that I haven't told anyone, things that I'm not proud of."

Katie just squeezed his hand to let him know that she was listening to him. She wanted him to feel comfortable talking to her. She wanted to know all of his secrets so she thought maybe she would ease some of his tension by sharing a few of her own. "I was there the day that my dad fell and died."

Ben looked over at her with startled eyes before facing the road again.

"I had just got home from campus. My only Friday class had been canceled so I was earlier than anyone expected. I wanted to surprise my dad and try to talk him into having lunch with me. We had a big fight the last time I was home and I had left without talking to him."

"What was the fight about?"

"I wanted to spend the summer with a friend backpacking across Europe. Dad said that we couldn't afford it and I told him that I would just work my way across. It was

the only time that I ever remember my father losing his temper with me. I always got my way. No matter what, Dad always took my side."

"Daddy's little girl, huh?"

"In every sense of the word," Katie agreed with a laugh. "My dad was six foot three and he was the average height in his family. My Uncle Pat is six foot seven."

"Griff must take after him."

"Yeah, he does in more ways than you know. Anyway, Daddy said he would be damned if his daughter would go traipsing around Europe with no family around if she got in trouble. He told me to get my butt in gear or I could just forget college and stay home and work for him."

"Wow, I bet that went over real well."

"You could say that. Bottom line is that I left the next morning without talking to him. He called me that week and left a message on the machine for me asking me to come back home so that we could talk. So that's what I was doing."

"Were you planning to try to talk him into letting you go?"

"No. The other girl was kind of flighty and she had already changed her mind and was planning to work in a theme park over the summer instead. Besides I knew that my daddy was right. Truth is I really didn't want to be that far away from my family. So I was going home to let him know that I was going to make the grand sacrifice and not experience Europe."

"Playing the guilt card. A truly classic move," Ben nodded and smiled at her.

"When I got there I parked across the street. I remember turning the key off and turning to get my purse off the seat. When I turned back I saw my father fall. He lay on the ground and never moved."

"Jesus, Katie."

"I sat there and watched as several men pulled Doug back just in time to prevent him from falling too. I watched Doug and others go to where Dad had fallen. I sat there until the ambulance came and went and everyone else was gone."

"Damn, sugar, no one saw you."

"No. I just sat there and sat there until finally Griff came and found me there later that afternoon. He had tried to reach me at school and my roommate had told him that I'd already left for home. He just happened to drive by the building site that Dad's construction company was working at and found me just sitting there in my car."

"Oh God, Katie. Didn't you tell anyone what you had seen? Even Griff?"

"I never told anyone for a long time. I knew that they knew that I was there and they knew that I had been aware that something happened but no one pushed me to confide. Eventually Mom and I spoke about it. She knew that I was blaming myself for what happened. If he hadn't been so worried about me maybe he wouldn't have fallen. I know in my head that it's not my fault but my heart will always wonder what if."

"What a thing to live with."

"We all have our secrets and lies, Ben, some to protect ourselves and some to protect others. Bottom line is we all have them." Katie looked at him, hoping that he would see what she was offering him, a moment to share everything with her.

Ben took a deep breath and spilled the biggest secret of his adult life. "My name isn't really Ben Marcum."

Katie glanced over at Ben with confusion in her eyes. "What do you mean 'your name isn't really Ben Marcum'?"

Ben let out a deep sigh and concentrated on the road while he prepared to tell someone for the first time in twelve years the things he had done. "I was born Thomas Austin St. John. My father named me after some great-great-great something or other."

"St. John? As in St. John Technologies?" Katie asked with now wide eyes. St. John Technologies was a well-known name in the computer industry. Their programs were used in police stations nationwide, not to mention the things they provided for the average Joe. They were a billion-dollar company frequently on the Forbes list and had a reputation for being very cut throat within the industry. In fact the St. John family was well documented as being a ruthless, "anything goes" type family. And Ben had come from that? She put her hand on top of her belly with wide eyes. Her baby was coming from that? Katie was completely speechless.

"Yeah, my dad is the one who started the company in the late sixties. He put every spare moment of time and care into that company and he expected his sons to do the same."

"And you didn't want to?" Katie clung to that thought like a life line.

"No, computers never interested me, which was a blasphemous thing to admit in my family. My older brother complied though and made my dad happy."

"So what happened? You're going too slowly! How did you change your name to Ben Marcum? Why? What happened?!"

Ben laughed for the first time since he began talking and it felt really good to release the tension. "I'm getting there, sugar, just be patient. My dad paid for college where he thought I was studying computer science. Instead I studied criminal justice."

"He never knew? My dad and mom knew every class that I took every semester. They knew what day I had what class and what time I had it as well. I can't imagine being able to pull something like that off."

"The difference is that your parents cared, Katie. Mine didn't have the time. No, that's wrong. Mine didn't take the time. He told me what to study and sent me on my way, never expecting me to differ from his plans."

"Had you always toed the line in the past?"

"Yeah, I did. It was the only way that Dad would permit me to spend time in the summers with my grandfather, my mother's father. I loved that old man and God help

him he must have loved me too." Ben smiled at the thought of the grandfather who was always there, refusing to be dismissed from Ben's life.

"You said that he must have. Does that mean that he doesn't anymore or that he's not around anymore?"

"He's around and he does love me. It's all so messed up in my head." Ben shook his head as if he were trying to shake things loose. "Suffice it to say that when my dad found out about my degree after graduation I was given the choice to either conform or leave with what I could carry on my back."

"So you left," Katie stated, trying to imagine what it would be like to grow up with a parent like that. In a family like that. Thankfully she couldn't. She had never felt more grateful for her own childhood—pestering brothers, had-to-know-everything parents and all.

"I left. Tossed some clothes in my backpack, grabbed my wallet and keys and left. That was twelve years ago and I've never gone back. I've not spoken to my mom, dad or older brother for twelve years."

"Oh Ben, I'm so sorry for them."

Ben glanced sharply over at her before pulling into a rest stop and parking the Durango. He turned to face her and there was no hiding his anger at her words. "How could you be sorry for them? They turned their backs on me, Katie. My mom didn't even try to stand up for me, and my brother just shook his head and said good riddance."

Katie unfastened her seat belt and turned to take Ben's face between her hands. "I only meant that I felt sorry for them for not realizing what a gem you were. They missed out on so many of your accomplishments. They've missed out on having a relationship with the most amazing man that I know. I feel sorry for them for what they've missed."

With that Katie leaned forward and kissed Ben softly and slowly, stroking her tongue across his lips until with a groan he opened for her. She gently licked her way into his mouth, taking small sips of him, teasing and enticing him. Ben latched onto her wandering tongue and sucked it into his mouth before thrusting his own into hers. He was neither gentle nor slow. He took her under with his kiss, igniting fires in her body that only he would be able to put out.

He opened the door and tugged her across the console to follow him out the door. "Come on," he murmured as he shut and locked the door behind them before pulling her by the hand into the men's room. Thankfully it was a small rest stop with just a one-room bathroom with a lock on the main door. Ben pulled her in, locked the door and pressed her against it. His mouth was on hers before she could think. He slid his hands beneath the skirt she wore until he palmed her bare ass cheeks and squeezed them. She was wearing a black thong, which Ben took great pleasure in ridding her of. All it took was one sharp tug and the lace material tore and fell to land unnoticed on the floor at their feet.

Katie expected him to lift her and fuck her against the door but when had Ben ever done what she expected? He dropped to his knees and drove his tongue deep inside her. Katie bucked and cried out in shock, in pleasure, in need. Ben showed her no mercy as he brought her to a very quick orgasm and continued licking and sucking at her pussy and clit until she broke again, screaming his name.

Ben stood up then and reached for his belt buckle and made quick work of it and the button and zipper on his jeans before Katie could even catch her breath. Instead of lifting her though he turned her so that she faced the door and braced her hands on the door. He pulled her ass back toward him, flipped her skirt up and used his own feet to spread hers wider.

"Am I under arrest here, Detective? Are you going to frisk me?" Katie purred.

"Yes, sugar, you're under arrest. You have the right to remain as silent as you can because anything and everything I have is most definitely going to be used against you."

"Do I need an attorney?"

"All you need is this hard cock that I have for you. So spread your legs, arch your back and give me that tight little pussy to fuck like I want to."

Katie spread, arched and bit her lip to muffle her scream when Ben slammed into her. He was so deep and he was fucking her so hard and fast. She took every hard thrust of his cock into her pussy and slammed her hips back at him for more. He had one hand on the small of her back keeping her just where he wanted her and the other on her hip. She looked down between her wide-spread legs and watched every sharp thrust he made, enjoying the sight of his cock all dewy and wet with her juices. She could hear his breath growing more labored behind her and knew that he was close to coming. He moved his hand from her hip to her clit and Katie came, her inner muscles squeezing and milking his cock until he threw his head back and roared his own release. She could feel the hot jets of his cum shooting into her pussy and wished she could taste them on her tongue.

While Ben was catching his breath Katie turned and squatted in front of him. She sucked his semi-hard cock into her mouth, tasting both of them on him. She licked and sucked until he was shiny clean from her saliva and as hard as he had been before. She looked up at him and smiled.

Ben tugged her hair until she took his cock back into her mouth and started sucking it again. "You look so beautiful with my cock in your mouth. I love to watch those lips stretched taut around the head of my dick." He cradled her head in his hands. "I'm going to fuck this mouth now, sugar. I'm going to stuff it with my cock then I'm going to fill it with my cream."

Katie moaned around his hard flesh and sucked eagerly while he stroked in and out of her mouth. She could feel her thighs trembling and both his and her juices running down her legs but she didn't care. She was focused on the big cock in her mouth and sucking it as deeply as she could. He pushed into the back of her throat and Katie

gagged a little, squeezing around the head and making Ben groan. He withdrew slowly and thrust deep again. The second time she gagged and tightened Ben came. He pulled back just far enough so that she wouldn't choke on his cum but stayed deep enough to ensure she swallowed every drop. When he finally pulled out he carefully pulled her to her feet and held her against his chest.

"That was incredible, sugar. The best blowjob I've ever had in my life." He moved them both to the sink and wet some paper towels for her. While she cleaned up her sticky pussy and legs Ben tucked and zipped his now sated cock. "Are you okay? Do you need to use the bathroom or anything while we're in here?"

Katie looked up at him, startled by his question. Then she laughed. The man had been about as up close and personal as you could get and she was embarrassed at the thought of peeing in front of him. How ridiculous was that?

In the end Katie had shooed Ben out the door and made him stand guard while she used the facilities in the men's room. Thank God it looked like someone had been there recently and cleaned. She was as quick as she could be, picking her panties up off the floor and stuffing them in her fist before heading out the door. No matter how clean it looked those panties weren't going back on until they'd been through the wash. Had they not been one of the new pairs she had just spent so much money on she probably would have thrown them away but the tiny thong had cost close to fifty dollars.

When Ben went to take her hand he grabbed the one with her panties in it. He grinned when he saw what it was and took them and shoved them in his front pocket before leaning down and whispering in her ear.

"It's going to be awful hard to concentrate on driving with you sitting next to me with no panties on."

"I'm sure you'll manage anyway," Katie assured him.

Once they were settled back in the car Katie waited until Ben was back on the road before she brought the conversation back to where they'd left off.

"So twelve years ago you just took off and left. Where did you go? To your grandfather's?"

"No. I moved around for a while, taking a few jobs here and there to earn a little money. Did some things that I probably shouldn't have. Nothing illegal but pretty close.

"What did you do that was pretty close to illegal, Ben?" Katie questioned, her curiosity getting the better of her. She just couldn't see him doing anything that bad.

Ben gave a weary sigh before he answered. "I persuaded a few guys that it would be better to leave their wives and kids alone instead of using them for punching bags. Saw to it that certain women received their support from their scumbag exes one way or another. I just did a few favors and made a little money on the side when things couldn't be handled in a clearly legal way."

"That's not so bad, Ben," Katie spoke softly.

"The law is there for a reason, Katie, and as a police officer I can't condone doing the things I did. Even if the results were good the means doesn't always justify the end. Vigilantism isn't a good thing.

"When I first moved to Legacy I lived over on Station."

Katie thought of the apartment buildings over there. They were as close to a project as Legacy had. The buildings were old and never kept up to code but they always seemed to be overcrowded with people. Looking at where Ben lived now, it was hard to imagine him ever living in a place like that.

"Hard to believe, isn't it?" Ben seemed to read her thoughts. "My grandfather came to see me when I first moved there. I was embarrassed as hell for him to see how I was living but I had enough pride not to show it. I remember the way he ignored the cockroaches and torn and dirty furniture. He wanted me to make peace with my dad. Wanted me to be a man and forgive and forget and all that."

"Did your mom send him?"

"I doubt it. Mom is very happy being the pampered wife that she is. She had kids because my dad expected it, not because she wanted to be a mother. She stayed as far away from us as she could."

"That's her loss then, Ben." Then Katie had a thought and added, "I just want you to know that I do want this baby." She placed her hands on her stomach. "I'm looking forward to being a mom, scared to death, but excited."

Ben placed one of his hands over hers and patted. "I have no doubts that you'll be a great mom, sugar. There's so much love and affection in your family that I couldn't see you any other way."

Katie understood now why Ben had always seemed to enjoy the chaos they had brought with them when she and Catherine and Griff had visited Gil. Her dad and Doug had always been working but the three of them had visited often. Ben had always hung around with them and now she knew why. It made her sad and mad. No, not mad. That was too tame a word for how she felt. She was furious.

Ben read her so well that he moved his hand up and cupped her chin. "No need to be angry, sugar. It's all water under the bridge now. I refused to give in and sent my grandfather on his way. A week later I received paperwork that I now had access to money that he had set up for me. He placed it all in trust so that he would know what I was using it for and be able to keep tabs on me that way. But I never touched a dime. Still haven't."

"I'm sure that he didn't mean to hurt your pride, Ben."

Ben laughed. "You're right. He didn't. He was just worried about me and wanted to make sure that I would be okay. He knew that I wouldn't accept help if he offered so he tried to make it so that I knew the offer was there whenever I needed it."

"So how long did you live on Station?"

"I stayed there for five years, saving up money, and then I bought the house and spent the last five years slowly fixing it up."

"You did a great job. I must say that I'm very impressed. However, you still haven't told me how you chose the name Ben Marcum. Did you have your name legally changed?"

"Yes, that was the first thing that I did. I spent the last of the money I had at the time, a hundred dollars, having my name legally changed. It was well worth it."

"So did you choose the name at random or what?"

"My mother's maiden name is Marcum."

"Oh. So where does the Ben come in? What exactly did you change your name to? Is it Benjamin?"

"No my legal name is Ben Thomas Marcum."

"So you kept the Thomas."

"Yes. I kept the name Thomas," Ben said as he turned off the highway and headed down a long winding dirt road.

"Where are you going?" Katie asked. "Are you looking to get lucky again?"

Ben grinned and nodded his head to the big sprawling ranch house that was now looming in front of them. "No, we're almost there."

He pulled up and stopped in front of the two-story house. There were no fences around this yard, just trees, flowers and bushes. Three dogs that looked like German shepherds raced to the Durango, barking and jumping around with excitement. Ben smiled at Katie. "We're here. So what do you think?"

Katie took in the house, the dogs and then noticed the old man walking down the front steps and heading across the yard to them. He was tall and lean. His face was weathered and worn but his blue eyes were smiling. He came right up to the SUV and opened Katie's door.

"You going to sit here all day or you gonna bring this pretty lady in and introduce me?" he grumbled at Ben.

Ben just grinned. "Katie, I'd like you to meet my grandfather Thomas Marcum. Grandfather, this is the girl I was telling you about, Katie Daniels."

Ahhh, Katie thought. Now she knew why he had kept the name Thomas.

Katie let Ben's grandfather help her out of the big SUV, being careful to keep her skirt down since she still didn't have any panties on, while Ben walked around to join them. The house was really lovely with a wraparound porch complete with several rocking chairs and a porch swing. There was a woman standing in the doorway who had to be in her sixties. She was as round as Ben's grandfather was lean but just as wrinkled and weathered.

"Come on in, come on in," she invited. "I've put on a fresh pot of coffee and there's a fresh baked cake just waiting on you."

"She hasn't let me touch a slice since she made it first thing this morning," Thomas Marcum confirmed with a little-boy grumble to his voice.

Ben greeted the woman with a body-squeezing hug that lifted her clear off her feet. The woman just laughed and grumbled good-naturedly until he set her back on her feet again. "It's good to see that some things never change, Bertha. You made an honest man out of the old man yet?" Ben asked and Katie took note of the blush that stained the older woman's cheeks.

"Not yet," Mr. Marcum replied. "Foolish woman claims we're too old to get married and we should just leave well enough alone."

Ben shook his head in mock sympathy for his grandfather. "You're losing your touch, old man. I thought for sure you'd have her convinced by now."

Bertha swatted at both the men before taking Katie by the hand and leading her to the stairs. "You two just mind your manners while I show the young lady to a room." She turned to Katie. "You'll probably want to freshen up just a bit."

"Bertha," Ben hollered up the stairs at them. "She'll be sleeping with me while we're here," he said in such a way that lit a flame in Katie's cheeks. Okay so she wasn't naïve and neither was anyone else in the room. They all knew that she and Ben were sleeping together or at least imagined they were. But he had just taken any doubt from his grandfather's and Bertha's minds with his statement. Lord, she was going to kill him. She tucked her head and tried to hurry up the stairs but she wasn't quick enough to keep from hearing Thomas Marcum state matter-of-factly, "You might as well head on up too, boy. She might need those panties you've got spilling out of your pocket."

Chapter Thirteen

Katie was pacing and fuming when Ben joined her in the room Bertha had shown her to. Ben shut the door and leaned back against it, crossing his arms over his chest as he watched her pace.

"You're wearing a hole in the floor there, sugar. You want to tell me what's wrong?" Ben asked.

Katie stopped pacing and turned to face him, her jaw dropping in disbelief. "You mean other than the fact that your grandfather saw my underwear sticking out of your pocket? How about the fact that you pretty much told them that we're sleeping together?"

Ben shook his head and moved away from the door toward her. "Well, let's see. One, we're engaged. Two, you're pregnant. And three, we are sleeping together, so I don't see the problem here."

"Does your grandfather know that I'm pregnant?" Katie asked waiting until Ben shook his head no before she continued. "I'm just a little embarrassed that you made a point of telling them that we'd be sharing a room."

Ben tried to smother a laugh but knew that he wasn't all that successful when Katie glared at him. "Sugar, your entire family knows that we're sleeping together. Hell, they even heard us loud and clear in the act." Katie blushed bright red at that reminder. *The dirty snake would remind me of that.*

"I'm not exactly happy about that either. Besides, that's your fault too. If you had told me they were coming, that you had invited them over for a cookout, then..."

"Then what? You wouldn't have come so loudly?" Ben pulled her to him and kissed her, taking full advantage of her mouth opened to retort. His tongue stroked and licked her lips, her teeth and her tongue, whatever he could reach, and before she knew it she was leaning into the kiss, returning it with all she had. When Ben pulled away Katie was dazed and dreamy. "Besides, I like it when you come so loudly. There's nothing better than hearing you scream my name while we're making love."

Katie knew that she would never get him to see her reasoning so she went with a subject change instead. "So what is the deal with your grandfather and Bertha?"

"They've been together for at least twenty years. He's been asking her to marry him for at least the last fifteen that I'm aware of."

"So why won't she marry him?"

"Bertha was married to a real control freak before. Her husband controlled the money and every little detail of their life. She finally left him and somehow met my

grandfather. He persuaded her to come here as his housekeeper/cook. That's about all I know."

"What happened to your grandmother?"

"Grandma Marcum died before I was born. I think it was cancer, breast maybe, but I'm not really sure. My mom never talked about her and I've never asked my grandfather."

"So where did the Ben come from in your name? You never answered me earlier."

Ben shrugged. "I swear to God, Katie, if you tell anybody this I'll make you regret it. I've never told anybody this. When I was a kid I really loved the show *Bonanza*."

Katie giggled. "Oh my God, you named yourself after Ben Cartwright, didn't you?"

When Ben just glared at her she giggled harder. So her detective had wanted to be a cowboy. She could handle that. She shrieked when Ben tumbled her to the bed and climbed on top of her. She looked up into his smoky eyes, smiled and started humming the theme song to *Bonanza*. Ben's hands landed on her ribs and he started tickling her, making her wiggle and squeal, hiking her skirt up higher and higher until all her goodies were on display. With a groan Ben leaned down and gave her the most intimate French kiss of her life, tonguing her pussy before licking up her suddenly drenched folds and nipping and sucking at her clit.

Katie moaned deep in her throat, biting down on her lower lip to try to silence herself. Ben was going at her like she was the last meal and he was on death row. He licked and sucked and used his hands to take her even higher. Katie was thrusting her hips up at him, giving him everything, but it still wasn't enough.

"Turn around," she said, pulling at him to get him to do what she wanted.

Ben groaned and lifted his head, his face glazed with her pussy juice. He turned to his back and helped her get into position over the top of him. Her knees were just above his shoulders, spread wide around his head, placing that sweet little cunt right where he wanted it. He left her to do what she wanted while he dove back in, using his elbows to spread her legs wider, bringing her pussy closer to his face.

Katie nuzzled against his straining cock even as she made short work of his button and zipper. She finally had his magnificent cock out and wasted no time wrapping her lips around the bulbous head, licking and sucking him like a giant lollipop. She could feel him groaning against her folds and sucked harder at him, taking him as far into the back of her throat as she could. He tasted so good. She loved the musky smell of his cock and she could still vaguely taste herself on him from their earlier bout at the rest stop. She felt his finger push against her anus and pushed back against it. They were working each other into a frenzy. He was using his whole mouth, teeth, lips and tongue, as well as his fingers, stroking in and out of both her pussy and ass. She used one hand to massage his balls while she used the other in tandem with her mouth to stoke faster and faster up and down his hard staff.

Ben gave a deep moan, thrusting his hips up off the bed, shoving his cock deep into her throat, and came, filling her sucking mouth with jets of his hot, salty liquid. He

latched onto her clit and sucked it hard bringing her right along with him. She came hard, slamming her pussy down against his face and grinding it. She hoped he could breathe but honestly didn't care at the moment as long as he kept sucking just a little bit longer, a little bit stronger. Katie drank every drop he spewed and lapped his cock for more, hunting for any drop that may have spilled from her mouth back onto his flesh. Ben finally released her clit and lifted her hips back up enough so that he could continue to lap gently at her pussy.

By the time they both quieted they were hot and sticky with cum. He gently nudged her until she lay on her side beside him, her feet by his head, hers even with his knees.

"Damn, woman, I don't know if I can make it to the shower much less downstairs for coffee and cake."

Katie giggled again and replied, "Thanks for the ride, cowboy." Then she burst into giggles again.

There was a knock at the door and a discreet clearing of a throat before Ben's grandfather spoke. "If you two youngsters have got that out of the way, Bertha and I would like you to join us downstairs when you can."

Katie listened to his footsteps echo down the hall, her face in flames. She hadn't even known he was there. She glared at Ben. "Did you know that he was out there?"

Ben was laughing hard. "You were pretty loud, sugar. Not to mention it was kind of hard to hear with your knees hugging my ears to my head."

Katie bounced up and smacked him with a pillow in the head. "What do you find so funny?" she demanded.

"You." He struggled to get out through his laughter. "For someone who doesn't want anyone to know we're having sex you certainly throw caution to the wind when you're yelling with pleasure."

Katie flamed hotter and smacked him again before bouncing out of the bed and heading to the connecting bathroom. He was still lying on the bed laughing so she made a big production of shutting the door and turning the lock. He could just wait 'til she was done or find somewhere else to clean up.

He had found somewhere else to clean up. He sat on the bed waiting for her when she came out of the bathroom. Thank God he had managed to get their luggage out of the Durango and her cases were sitting beside the bed. She tightened the towel around her breasts and headed over to lift one and get dressed. Lord knew they had already kept his grandfather and Bertha waiting long enough. She refused to speak to him while she searched through her suitcase until she found the clothes she wanted. She picked out a pale yellow lacy bra and panty set, a pair of cream-colored capris and a light blue button-down shirt with pale yellow roses on it. She dressed quickly, slipped her feet into her heeled sandals, pulled a comb through her hair and still had time to

use her pale peaches-and-cream eye-shadow, black mascara and tinted lip gloss. She had showered and dressed in twenty minutes. She looked pretty good in her opinion.

Ben was still sitting reclined back on the bed, watching her. He had on a pair of brown chinos and a cream-colored button-down shirt. He moved to sit up on the side of the bed and slid his big feet into a pair of brown deck shoes. He looked good.

Katie headed to the door but Ben stopped her by wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling her back against his chest. He nuzzled her neck and licked her earlobe, bringing goose bumps to her arms and making her nipples pebble.

"I love you, Katie Daniels." He rubbed his hands gently on her stomach. "Both of you."

Just like that Katie softened. She couldn't remember exactly why she was upset with him anyway. Actually it was kind of funny how everyone kept hearing them have sex. Okay, so it wasn't but she could try to pretend. She tumbled into his deep kiss and knew that no matter what happened she loved Ben Marcum. She let him take her hand in his and lead her to the door and downstairs to where his grandfather and Bertha were waiting for them.

* * * * *

They spent a nice relaxing week with Grandpa Tom, as he insisted Katie call him, and Bertha. Katie learned a lot about Ben that week, about his family and his childhood. Grandpa Tom had scrapbooks that Ben hadn't known about. He had them for both Ben and his older brother who Katie had learned was named after their father, Preston Michael St. John. Of course his brother was officially "the second" but still. The more Katie heard about his family the more she understood his need to get away, to break free.

Ben spent a lot of time out with Grandpa Tom. Ben had even taken to calling him that. It seemed that he had called him grandfather because that's what his parents always told him to call him. Grandpa Tom had spent most of his life as a rancher. He raised horses, or had before he retired years ago. He still kept horses though and Katie had enjoyed having Ben teach her to ride. Mostly she had enjoyed riding double with him, snug and secure in his arms.

Katie spent time with Bertha as well. She really liked the older woman. Bertha was a fount of wisdom. She had told Katie many stories of summers Ben had spent with his grandfather. She also talked to Katie about how it had broken Tom's heart when Ben walked away from the family. Ben was just about the only family that Tom had. The St. John family didn't call or speak to Tom unless they needed something. When Katie told Bertha that Ben had kept the name Thomas not because of who he once was but because it was also his grandfather's name, Bertha had cried. They hadn't known that.

Bertha spent the entire day Thursday cooking. Katie volunteered to help but Bertha shooed her away. Bertha said they were having a celebration on Friday and Katie

should rest and relax. Katie went to find Ben. She found him out in the barn with his grandfather.

"Hey, sugar," Ben pulled her to him for a quick kiss. "What are you doing?"

"Looking for you actually," she smiled at Grandpa Tom. "Bertha says that there is a celebration tomorrow. I'm hoping that you'll give me some kind of clue so I know what to expect."

Grandpa Tom seemed to choke as he looked at Ben and demanded, "She doesn't know."

Ben glowered back. "It's supposed to be a surprise."

Katie didn't like the sound of that. "What's supposed to be a surprise? What's going on, Ben?"

"Just trust me, sugar." Ben pulled her close and nuzzled her neck. "You do trust me, don't you?"

Katie almost lost track of the conversation with him doing what he was to her neck. "I trust you. Will you tell me anything? Give me a hint! How many people will be here? What do I wear?"

"Just a few of Grandpa's neighbors will be coming over. They'll be here mid-morning around ten. Bertha will help you figure out what to wear and stuff." He kissed her on the lips before skimming his mouth back down to her chin and nibbling. "Just trust me. You'll love tomorrow." He was backing her toward an empty stall that was filled with fresh hay. "But about right now, have you ever made love in a barn?"

Katie's head snapped up and she looked quickly around. At some point Grandpa Tom had left them alone, shutting the door behind him. The lights were still on and Ben kept maneuvering her back into the stall. He caught an old blanket tossed carelessly over a chair and let go of her long enough to spread it over the hay. Then he pulled her down beside him. Ben was dressed in well-worn jeans and a plaid flannel shirt. Katie was wearing a short-sleeve summer dress in soft red that fell just below her knees. She had paired it with a deep black cardigan sweater and her only pair of black cowboy boots. Ben had insisted she bring the boots and she had. She had dressed this way a lot in college when she and her girlfriends had been into country line dancing.

Ben was busy working his hands up her legs and under her dress.

"There's something about you in a short dress and cowboy boots that really makes me horny," Ben murmured.

Katie giggled. "I can't think of anything I've worn lately that hasn't made you horny."

Ben grinned down at her as he began tugging her panties down her legs. "What can I say? Just looking at you makes me horny, sugar."

He slid her panties down over her boots and brought them up to his nose, inhaling deeply. Katie blushed as she watched him hold them to his nose for a few seconds longer before stuffing them in his pocket.

"Your smell drives me insane."

Katie was mortified. "My smell?" she squeaked.

Ben smiled as he eased her skirt up out of his way before bending her knees and spreading her wide. He lay down between her thighs and dipped his head until he was right over her wet pussy then he inhaled deeply again. "You smell so sweet. It's musky, hot and sexy as hell. I smell that and I'm starving for a taste of you. I could eat this sweet pussy forever."

With that he bent the rest of the way down and began lapping at her glistening folds. He placed his big hands on her knees, spreading her even wider for his seeking mouth. He licked and sucked at her clit before nibbling his way back down to slide his tongue deep into her sopping pussy. Back and forth he went, tormenting her, driving her higher, making her wild with need. Katie was bucking and thrusting against Ben's mouth, begging for more without words. She was determined to be as quiet as possible this time. But Ben wasn't cooperating. He'd suck her clit 'til she was close then work his way slowly along her folds 'til he could thrust his tongue in and out of her. But before she could find her pleasure that way he would start the slow trip back up to her straining clit.

Katie moaned in frustration.

Ben licked and nibbled. "What do you want, sugar? Tell me what you want."

Katie forgot her vow of silence and told him exactly what she wanted in stark, vivid detail at the top of her voice. She wasn't yelling yet, but she was loud. Ben complied with a grin, latching his sucking mouth around her clit and thrusting two fingers deep into her pussy. He held her clit between his teeth and slid his tongue back and forth over it and pressed his thumb against her anus. Katie broke with a scream of pleasure, yelling his name with each hard contraction of her orgasm. Before she could come down Ben was sliding his huge cock deep inside her. Her knees were still high and wide and he penetrated farther with every hard thrust. Katie keened and moaned as she pressed her hips up to meet his every thrust. It was hard, fast and so good she could easily die a happy woman. Within minutes Ben was filling her pussy with his hot cream, his head thrown back and his own moan of pleasure filling the air around them.

He collapsed on top of her for only a few seconds before easing to her side. "God, you are incredible, Katie."

"I yelled again," Katie replied. "I was trying not to do that."

Ben eased up on an elbow and smiled down at her, his eyes shining with love and satisfaction. "I love that you yell like that. It makes me feel really good that you can't control yourself when we're making love."

"It doesn't embarrass you that people may hear us?" Katie asked.

"God no," he laughed. "I'm a man. I'm delighted that people know how well I satisfy my woman."

Katie laughed with him. There was just no hiding the fact that she was a screamer. And even though they were engaged to be married Katie still took delight in Ben referring to her as his woman. That is just what she wanted to be for the rest of her life.

Friday turned out to be the best day of Katie's life. It was beautiful and perfect and Ben had been right about her loving it. It lasted forever. It ended too soon. But the memories of that day would stay with them both for the rest of their lives.

Chapter Fourteen

They headed back to Legacy on Saturday morning after getting Grandpa Tom and Bertha's promise to come to Ben's for Christmas. Katie wanted her family to meet them both. Plus with Ben taking his mother's maiden name of Marcum no one should be aware that he had ever changed it. Ben didn't want anyone else to know he was a St. John and Katie was okay with that. After some of the things Ben had shared with her and stories she had heard from Bertha she was pretty sure that they would all be happier without ever seeing the St. Johns.

Ben pulled into the parking lot of the condominiums where her mother lived. Katie could see her mother's car parked in its normal spot so she was pretty sure that her mother was home. Ben pulled into an empty space and put the car into park. He squeezed Katie's ice-cold hand in his.

"Are you sure that you don't want me to go in with you?"

Katie smiled at this man that she loved. "Yes, I'm sure. I love you, Ben, but this is something that I have to do by myself. I have to tell her and explain why and pray that I don't hurt her too much."

"If she's hurt it's only because she loves you so much. Besides, I think your mom is going to understand exactly how you feel." He released her hand and got out of his side of the Durango and walked around to open her door and help her out. "If you change your mind at any time you just call me on my cell and I'll be there as soon as I can."

Katie hugged him tight against her and laughed when she felt his cock twitch against his zipper. "Down, boy," she laughed. "You just take care of inviting everyone else over to the house tomorrow for lunch. Mom will bring me home later."

"Remember I love you, sugar," Ben said before taking her mouth in a kiss so carnal Katie felt singed by it. "Also remember that I'll be eagerly awaiting your arrival." He wiggled his eyebrows at her and Katie giggled.

"I'll try to remember," she murmured. "Maybe you should kiss me again to help me."

"Sugar, if I kiss you again you'll never make it to your mom's and we just might end up arrested for public indecency." He gave her a quick kiss on the lips anyway and followed it with a swat to the ass. "Now quit dawdling and go."

He stood beside the SUV and watched until Katie entered the front door of the condominiums that had only been built a few years ago in Legacy. When she turned and waved he headed around to the driver's door and got back in. He put the big machine in gear and backed out. He had a list of things that he had to take care of before Katie got home and he planned to have every one of them out of the way.

Tonight was just for the two of them and he knew exactly what he wanted to make it memorable.

Katie took a deep breath and knocked on her mother's apartment door. She was still not prepared when her mother opened it a few moments later.

"Katie, you're back! How are you doing? How was the trip? Where did you end up going?"

Katie laughed and hugged her mother close, breathing in the familiar scent of her perfume. "Let's sit down first. I have so much to tell you."

Katie let her mother lead her through the open living room into the kitchen where Katie set down while her mother went about starting a pot of coffee and slicing into a cake that stood on Catherine's counter. This had always been the routine in their house. Catherine started every conversation with her kids with coffee and cake—well, when they were little it had been milk and cake, but nonetheless there was always a homemade cake involved.

When Catherine finally set down at the table Katie began. "Ben took me to meet his Grandfather Marcum. He lives on a ranch about five hours from here. He used to raise horses but he retired a few years ago."

"Wow. You used to have a thing for country western music and dances."

Katie laughed. God help her but her mother knew just about everything about her. "Yeah, I did. We spent the week at the ranch visiting and relaxing. I learned to ride a horse and Ben's Grandfather Tom and his girlfriend Bertha agreed to come for Christmas. I can't wait for you to meet them, Mama."

Catherine smiled and absently patted Katie's right hand that lay on the table. "Somehow I don't think this is what you really came here to discuss. Just talk to me, Katie girl."

Katie took a deep breath and finally brought her left hand to her mother's attention, her left hand that now held a diamond engagement ring and a matching diamond wedding band. Catherine looked at Katie's hand and gasped before raising her bewildered eyes to Katie's face.

"You got married? Without your family? Without your mother?" Catherine's voice broke then and she stood up and busied herself pouring them each a cup of the freshly brewed coffee. She was hurt by Katie's actions and she didn't know how to hide it. She felt Katie's hand on her shoulder.

"Ben surprised me with a wedding at his grandfather's house on Friday. It was beautiful. I wore my white summer dress with the green vines embroidered around the edges. We took plenty of pictures and Grandpa Tom even videoed it for us. That's where Ben is now, inviting everyone over tomorrow for lunch so that we can tell them and show you all the video."

Katie hugged her mother from behind. "Please don't be mad at me, Mama. It was the most wonderful day of my life. I would have liked you and the family to be there but I didn't even know about it until the day arrived. Ben had gone to all the trouble to set it all up, taking care of every little detail all by himself right down to a bouquet for me, that I just couldn't not go through with it. He even made sure that there were wedding pictures and a video. He makes me so happy, Mama. So happy that it scares me sometimes. But I never wanted to hurt you or exclude you from my wedding day. I love you too."

Catherine finally turned around and Katie felt her heart stop briefly at the tears in her mother's eyes, the tears on Catherine's cheeks. She had made her mother cry. Katie felt her own eyes water and spill over.

"I'm not mad at you, Katie. I'm just a little hurt." Catherine tried and failed to smile. "You're my baby, Katie, my only girl. I always thought you'd wear my wedding dress when you married and that I would be there with you every step of the way." Catherine finally managed a watery smile. "That was my dream though." She took a deep breath and used her fingers to wipe the tears from Katie's cheeks. "Tell me all about your special day."

Katie laid her head on her mother's shoulder and cried instead. She had always dreamed of her wedding day and wearing the same dress that her mother had worn when she married, almost like by doing so she would be blessed with as much happiness as her parents. She had hoped with Catherine helping Moira plan her wedding to Gil that Catherine would not be as hurt by she and Ben getting married elsewhere. But she had been so wrong and in hindsight she understood so much more. It wasn't about the day itself or any of the little details. It was about being there with your only daughter and holding her hand while she made the most important walk of her life, the walk down the aisle to the man she would be spending the rest of her life with.

"We can do it all over again, Mama," Katie whispered in a teary voice. "No law says that we can't have another wedding, one with all of you present," she looked at her mother's face one set of teary eyes locked on another. "I would do it all over just to have you with me."

"Are you happy, baby? Are you happy with the wedding you had?" Catherine asked her daughter tenderly.

"Yes," Katie smiled. "Ben made sure it was everything it could be. I only wish that he had thought to invite all of you."

"Shhh... He can't think of everything. The important thing is that it was a perfect moment for the both of you," Catherine smiled softly.

"I'm so sorry, Mama. Ben's not close to his family so he didn't think about it. With you so busy with Gil and Moira's wedding and now planning a nursery for the baby, we just didn't really stop and think about how you would feel about not being

included. And I should have," Katie looked so sad that Catherine hugged her tight again.

"Did you not want a wedding, Katie?" Catherine asked, thinking of the dress designs and floral arrangements she had already pored over in thinking of her daughter's wedding.

Katie shook her head. "No. Not with Daddy gone. No, I didn't want a big wedding. It just wouldn't be the same."

"Oh baby." Understanding dawned in Catherine's eyes. Katie had always been Daddy's little girl. She had shared such a strong bond with her father that of course it would be devastating to get married without him. Catherine kissed Katie on the cheek and led her back to the table before turning to get the coffee mugs and place them on the table and sitting across from her. "I understand, baby. The wedding must have been hard for you. I would have liked to be there with you, but I do understand."

"I was selfish, Mama, so selfish that I didn't stop to think about anything beyond the moment. I'm so sorry."

"If there is one time in her life that a woman is allowed to be selfish then it is with her wedding. As long as it was everything you wanted then that is all that matters, Katie." Catherine squeezed Katie's hand before lifting it up to take a closer look at the diamond wedding band that matched the engagement ring. "The rings are lovely."

Katie's smile was radiant. "They were Ben's grandfather's and grandmother's rings. Grandpa Tom gave them to Ben a few years ago. It just seemed appropriate to Ben that we get married in the exact same place that his grandparents did all those years ago, sort of a thank you to Grandpa Tom."

"That makes perfect sense to me. I can't wait to see the video. Have you turned the film in yet for pictures? You did say that you took pictures, right?"

"Yes, Bertha took pictures while Grandpa Tom manned the camcorder. I have about ten rolls of film in my purse to drop off and have developed. I have no idea what all she took pictures of to warrant that many rolls of film but that is how many I have."

Catherine jumped up and grabbed their mugs of coffee and dumped them in the sink before flipping the switch to turn the coffee pot off. "Well, what are we waiting for? There is time to drop the film off at the one-hour place. By the time they have all of it developed we will have been able to find some nice photo albums to put together for you." Catherine removed the untouched cake plates and moved the pieces back to the cake plate before covering it and placing it back in the fridge. "While we're there we might as well go ahead and look at baby books and stuff. We'll wait to buy until we know for sure if you're having a boy or girl, but we can at least get an idea of what you like. Then we can go to that baby store at the mall and take a look at the different furniture styles. Did you know that they make round cribs now? They're the weirdest-looking things but I'm dying to see one up close." Catherine turned to see Katie still sitting at the table, watching her with a smile. "Well, what are you waiting for? Let's get going. When did you say Ben was expecting you?"

Katie was so happy she felt like she was going to burst. "He knows that I'm with you. He won't worry and besides, I'll give him a call on my cell when we drop the film off to let him know what all you have planned." She hugged her mother tight. "Have I told you lately how much I love you, Mama? How I am truly blessed to have the best mother in the world?"

"Words a mother can never hear enough," Catherine replied. "Now come on. I want to see those pictures."

Katie laughed and joined arms with her mother as they grabbed purses and headed out the door. Katie felt like she was the luckiest woman in the world.

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Ben picked the phone up, hoping that it was Katie saying that she was on her way home. Home, at last Ben had a home. But the voice on the other end of the phone left him cold, sucking every ounce of joy from him.

"Hello, Thomas. I understand that there has been a new addition to the family." It was the voice of the woman he longed to forget but never would. It was the voice of the woman who should have loved and cherished him but never did. "I'm flying in to this little town you've hidden in tonight to see you and this woman you've taken it upon yourself to marry."

"You're not welcome here, Mother," Ben croaked out of a suddenly dry, tight throat.

"I'm your mother," the voice sharply replied. "And no matter what name you choose to go by you are a St. John. Now I will be there soon."

The connection was broken and even when the dial tone greeted his ear Ben couldn't hang up the phone. He had just married the woman of his dreams and found the happiness that he had been looking for. He slammed the phone down and gritted his teeth. He would not let the bitch who gave birth to him take anything more from him.

* * * * *

By the time Katie and her mother walked in the door later that evening Ben had everything prepared just the way that he wanted in their bedroom. They wouldn't be able to take a honeymoon yet since he had just used a week's vacation to take Katie to meet his grandfather and surprise her with a wedding. His grandfather and Bertha had handled all of the planning and it had gone beautifully. Katie had been beautiful. Katie. Mrs. Ben Marcum. That sounded like music to his ears. His wife. His. Forever.

He met Katie and Catherine in the yard and after giving Catherine a kiss on the cheek swept his wife up into his arms. Katie giggled and juggled the bags she was carrying.

"Ben," she exclaimed. "What are you doing?"

"Carrying my blushing bride over the threshold of her new home," he replied with a wink at a laughing Catherine. He made a big production of carrying her through the back door, through the kitchen and into the living room before letting her slide down his body to her feet. He held her in front of him, strategically hiding the erection now straining the zipper of his jeans. "So what have you ladies been up to this afternoon?"

Katie snuggled against him, rubbing back against his erection. His fingers tightened on her hips in warning and Katie giggled again. There wasn't much he could do with her mother in the room with them but she settled down anyway, remembering quite vividly what her mother had overheard the last time she was in this house.

"We had the film from the wedding developed," Katie told him.

Ben took in all the bags now on the couch and coffee table. "All of this is pictures?" he asked incredulously.

Katie laughed again. "No. While we were waiting on the pictures we went to get albums and then to look at baby stuff."

"This looks like more than looking at baby stuff to me," he pointedly looked at what must have been ten bags of stuff. "I thought that you were going to wait to buy anything until we knew for sure if the baby is a boy or a girl?"

"I am," Katie emphasized the "I". "Mom on the other hand went ahead and bought a few things."

Catherine smiled and shook her head. "I just couldn't help it. It was all so wonderful. Plus I only bought crib sheets and blankets and a few other things that would work for either a boy or a girl. Plus I picked up some design books so we can decide how you both want the nursery. You know, furniture, layout and wall and floor coverings, that sort of thing."

Ben's eyes seemed to glaze over as Catherine went over the things that would need to be decided and taken care of before the baby was even born. He had no idea.

"I'll leave those decisions up to you and Katie." He smiled at Katie, his wife, the soon-to-be mother of his child. "Whatever she wants is fine by me."

Katie leaned her head back against his shoulder and looked up at him. Ben leaned down and gave her a chaste kiss before easing her away from him. His dick was down to half mast so he figured he should be somewhat safe in moving her away. Lord only knew that it wouldn't take much from her to get it rock-hard again. He tugged Katie's hand and they both sat down on the couch.

"So let's look at these pictures."

Catherine joined them on the couch and both laughed and cried a little as they went through the ten rolls of developed film. There were three hundred and sixty wedding pictures. By the time they were done a couple of hours had passed. Catherine gathered up the albums she had bought and all the pictures, planning to take them home and have them ready for everyone tomorrow. Ben had called Doug and Gil and invited everyone to a cookout for lunch tomorrow. He was curious to see how it all played out

tomorrow. What would the rest of the family say when they found out about the wedding?

Ben helped Catherine carry at least half of the bags back out to her car when she left. When he and Katie were locked safely back in the house he left her in the kitchen cleaning up the few dishes they had dirtied while her mother was there and headed on up to the bedroom.

When Katie entered the first thing she noticed was the soft glow of candlelight that lit the room. Ben had replaced the sheets on the bed with white satin and sprinkled rose petals on them. There were two vases of roses, one on the dresser and one on the chest of drawers. They were beautiful, each vase holding at least two dozen red roses. There was soft music playing, something sultry and slow. Ben greeted her with a slow deep kiss, his tongue seeking and exploring every inch of her mouth. He had stripped out of his earlier jeans and pull-over tee and now stood in front of her in only his black cotton boxer briefs, which were tenting out, showing his impressive cloth-covered erection.

Katie laughed. "What is all this?"

"This is the wedding night that we didn't get to have at my grandfather's house. First I'm going to strip you. Then I'm going to wash every luscious inch of you. Then I'm going to spend the rest of the night with you lying on that big bed and take turns between hand feeding you from that fruit and cheese tray," he indicated a tray that sat on the bedside table that Katie hadn't noticed earlier. It held an array of different cheese wedges and grapes and different types of berries. "And making love to my wife," he finished, giving her another deep kiss.

Katie let Ben slowly remove her clothes, reveling in the way he took the time to worship each inch of her freshly bared skin with his mouth. By the time she was naked she was shaking with need for him, aching for a release only he could bring her. But Ben tugged her into the adjoining bathroom where he helped her into the shower before stripping off his briefs and joining her. The water was warm when he moved them both under the spray. He took his time soaping up every inch of her and using the spray handle to rinse her clean. His fingers were torture on her swollen folds and engorged nipples. Her skin felt hot and tingly from his constant stroking and caressing. She was hot, burning with desire, desperate for him to do something, anything, to douse the flames. He managed to keep her from touching his cock but she could feel it rubbing against her back and stomach as he rinsed her, walking around her in the enormous shower. Now she knew exactly why he had made it so big, why there were handholds all along the inside wall.

"Please, Ben," Katie moaned. "I need you. Please, I need you so badly. I'm burning for you." She finally managed to wrap her fingers around the turgid length of his cock and pumped her hand up and down.

Ben hissed a breath out from between suddenly clenched teeth and turned the water off. She released him when he reached for two towels. He hurriedly dried himself and wrapped the towel around his waist before taking the other towel and thoroughly drying every inch of her sensitive skin. Katie was moaning and begging by the time he

laid her across the bed. But Ben wasn't done with his torture, which explained why he felt the need to keep the towel around his waist.

Ben grabbed a bottle of lotion from the bed and squirted some into his hands, rubbing them together to warm the lotion before he placed it on her skin. The scent of vanilla spice was unmistakable as it was what Katie always used. Ben took his time, starting at her feet and massaging the lotion into them before working his way slowly, oh so slowly, up her calves, the backs of her knees and finally to her thighs. Just when she thought he was going to put his fingers right where she was aching for them to be he took his hands away to squirt more lotion. When he came back he skipped over where he had left off and started on her stomach and hips. He moved up to her chest and massaged lotion all around her breasts but ignored her straining nipples, moving instead to her shoulders and down her arms. Katie's body was screaming with need. She was one cool breeze away from exploding. But Ben turned her over and started all over again, working his way up from bottom to top.

"Please, Ben, are you trying to kill me?" Katie asked before pushing her way up to her hands and knees. She looked over her shoulder to where Ben now stood straight up behind her. His cock was bobbing against the towel he somehow was still wearing. Katie backed up until her knees were on the edge of the bed, her legs opened wide around where he stood. She arched her back and thrust her ass back at him, giving him a perfect picture of the glistening pink folds of her pussy. "Fuck me, Mr. Marcum. Fuck me like you can't get enough of me."

Ben groaned and ripped the towel off, taking his cock in his hand and pushing it against the small pink hole she offered. He thrust deep, making them both cry out with ecstasy. "I will never get enough of you, Mrs. Marcum," he panted out between strokes. "Not ever. I'll always want more." He used one hand to push down on her lower back, pushing her ass and pussy just where he wanted them angling her for deeper penetration with every stroke. He used his other hand to smack her ass, making sure each cheek was given the same treatment, turning them a delightful shade of pink. And the entire time he kept up a steady rhythm in and out of her slippery flesh. Each stroke was hard and deep, taking her breath away, carrying her closer and closer to the brink. Each sharp smack on her ass sent her soaring higher, bringing that sharp bite of erotic pain to their lovemaking.

"Yes," Katie screamed, "oh God yes," as Ben slid a finger deep into her burning ass. She broke in waves, each one crashing against the other, pulling her under, flinging her higher until she had no concept of time or place. There was just her and Ben and pleasure so intense that it was brutal, so all consuming that she felt splintered in pieces that could never be put back together. She heard as if from a distance Ben's cry of completion and vaguely felt the hot splash of his seed in her pussy and then she heard nothing, felt nothing as she drifted on waves of euphoria too intense for any woman to handle. It was a long time before she could move and then it was only with Ben's help as he eased her onto her back and moved her up the bed so that her head was now on a pillow and he was lying beside her. Then the foolish man started all over again.

"Ben, what is it?" Katie asked softly, looking into the eyes of the man she loved.

"I love you, Katie," Ben rasped. "You know that, don't you? You and this baby mean everything to me."

"I know that, Ben," Katie assured him. "Surely you understand that by now?"

"I don't want to lose you, Katie. I can't lose you," his eyes seemed tortured when she gazed at him.

"Ben, you're scaring me," Katie murmured. "What is going on with you? Did something happen while I was with my mother?"

Ben heaved a sigh and lay beside her, pulling Katie snugly against him so that her head rested on his chest. "I received a phone call while you were gone."

Katie absorbed that and finally spoke up when he didn't immediately continue. "Okay, from whom?"

"From Virginia Margarette St. John," was Ben's terse reply. Katie could feel the tension pouring through his body.

"St. John?" Katie questioned softly.

"My mother," Ben finally replied. "My mother is coming here to Legacy to meet you."

Katie took a deep breath and squeezed closer to Ben. Why in the world did his mother want to meet her when she ignored her own son? And just how was she, Katie, to deal with the woman who had hurt Ben so deeply?

Chapter Fifteen

Catherine was the first to arrive the next day. Everyone was expected at one o'clock but she was there by eleven thirty. Ben helped her unload her car. By the looks of all she brought with her the woman must have been up all night. First there was the food she had brought. There was of course her potato salad, which was a staple at any family cookout. Then she had homemade macaroni and cheese and a big container of some type of cookies. Then there was the cake. It was a beautiful three-tier cake with green ivy that matched the embroidery that had been on Katie's dress when they were married. She had made them a wedding cake.

Catherine carefully reconstructed the cake on the dining room table. She rummaged around in the bags that she had carried in herself and reverently took out a bride and groom topper and placed it on the top of the cake. Then, smiling, she started removing albums and placing them on the table with the cake. There were four albums of wedding pictures and Catherine still wasn't done. She must have either scanned and copied the pictures herself or taken them somewhere after she left because next she took out some framed pictures. The picture itself was one that had been snapped after the preacher had pronounced them man and wife and they had turned to face the few people who were there. Katie had such a beautiful smile on her face in that shot like she had just been given the best gift of her life and Ben was grinning pretty much the same way. It was a shot that clearly showed the love they felt for each other.

Catherine stood the eight by ten up on the table and placed three five by sevens out as well. The five by sevens were joined by smaller picture albums that held copies of some of the pictures in the photo album. Then she placed a disc sheathed in plastic with all four pictures. When she looked up Ben and Katie were looking at her and Katie had tears streaming down her face.

"You did all this for us?" Katie asked with awe.

Catherine smiled and used a hand to wipe away Katie's tears. "I just put together a few albums for you and Ben and one for each of your brothers and me as well. Then I made the eight by ten for you and one for me as well and the five by sevens for your brothers. The disc is a little picture video I put together with what I had at my disposal. I didn't get a chance to see the video last night so I didn't know if there was any music or not. I just picked a few classics and put some of the pictures with it." She shrugged her shoulders with dismissal of what had to have taken her all night. "Just my contribution to your wedding."

It was then that Ben realized just what he had taken away from these two women by planning his and Katie's wedding without telling anyone. He wasn't close to his own family but he had been around the Daniels family long enough to know how close they

were. A wedding was a special event for mothers and daughters and he had taken that away from them. He didn't regret marrying Katie but he did regret not letting her family know so that they could have been there also. He pulled Catherine into his arms and hugged her tight.

"I'm sorry that I didn't tell you, Mrs. Daniels. I didn't think. Hell, that's just it, I didn't think. But I would have never done anything to hurt you intentionally. I swear."

Catherine smiled up at him and patted his cheek before stepping out of his arms. "Just take good care of my baby. That's all I can ask of you." She stepped back toward the kitchen door but stopped and turned back before entering. "You know, Ben, you're my son too now just as Moira will soon be my daughter. There is no in-law with this family. So feel free to call me Mom if you want or Catherine if it's easier. But no more Mrs. Daniels." With that she turned and entered the kitchen, leaving Ben and Katie looking at the table laden with the labor of a long night's work.

Ben pulled Katie into his arms and kissed the remains of the tears on her cheeks. "Do you know how lucky you are?" he asked.

"I'm the luckiest girl in the world," Katie replied, laying her head on his chest. "I'm the luckiest girl in the world."

The grill was fired up and ready to go by the time Gil and Moira and Doug and Damon arrived. Everyone was in good spirits and they all took it surprisingly well when Katie and Ben told them they had gotten married while they were away.

Moira stated mournfully, "I wanted to elope and all that but Gil wanted a wedding."

Gil grunted but didn't reply. His look though promised that Moira would pay later for that remark. They all enjoyed the albums Catherine had put together for them. Moira talked to her about doing something similar with the photos that would be taken at Moira and Gil's wedding. Moira kept trying to cut things out of her wedding, wanting it to be as simple as it could be. With her mother gone it just wasn't the same. But she had a great relationship with her dad now thanks in part to Gil and she knew that he wanted the wedding for her. Gil was pretty amazing that way. He was always thinking of her.

The guys headed out back to grill while Katie, Catherine and Moira stayed inside, discussing wedding stuff and baby stuff.

"You're one lucky bastard," Gil grumbled around a bottle of beer. "How in the hell did you talk Katie into getting married so quickly?"

"I had my grandfather handle all the details. I took care of the blood tests with the doctor when Katie was in the hospital. Then I just surprised her."

"I can't believe she was okay with it all. I would have thought that Katie would want a big wedding. She always talked about that when she was little," Doug stated.

"That was before your dad died," Damon replied and everyone nodded once that sank in.

"So that's why," Gil said but it didn't sound like he was talking about Ben and Katie.

"That's why what?" Ben asked

"That's why Moira isn't obsessed with planning our wedding, why she doesn't mind my mom planning most of it. It's because her mom is gone," Gil answered, shaking his head. "I am such an inconsiderate ass for not thinking of that before."

"You're right about that, brother mine," Doug said and had everyone glaring at him. "What! I think as his younger and smarter brother that I am more than qualified to agree that he is an ass." He shrugged his shoulders. "Not about this, more in the general sense."

"Wise ass," Gil grinned at his brother, which is what Doug had meant him to do. "Your turn will come. It seems like the Danielses are dropping like flies."

"Not me," Doug said. "I can't see me finding Ms. Right."

"That's because you and Damon are too busy sharing Ms. Right-Now," Katie said as she and Moira joined the group of men. Katie's words had them all choking on their beer, Ben and Gil with laughter, Doug and Damon with pure surprise.

Katie and Moira both laughed. "Oh please, like you think you could keep something like that a secret. I bet even Mom knows." They heard loud humming from the kitchen as said mom tried to drown them out before she turned on the stereo.

Doug raised his eyes at Moira as she passed him on her way to where Gil was standing. "Don't look at me," she tossed off. "I thought you were both gay before Gil explained it to me."

This comment had beer spewing everywhere as Ben and Gil doubled over with laughter.

"Do we look gay to you?" Damon asked incredulously.

"Well, how exactly does gay look nowadays?" Moira fired right back without missing a beat.

"Jesus Christ. You actually thought we were gay?" Doug asked.

Now at Gil's side, Moira turned back and smiled at Doug. She was still a little leery of this middle Daniels son. He and Gil were both six foot three with dark hair and blue eyes but where Gil's muscles were more lean and long-looking Doug's were thick and bulky. He and Damon, who was six foot two with blond hair and blue eyes, were like opposites sides of a coin. Except for their hair color they could be twins. It was uncanny how much they resembled each other. They were both tough alpha males as well and Moira shuddered, thinking of all that testosterone in the bedroom. They would make some woman very happy.

"I have to admit that Gil's explanation was much more interesting than what I thought."

It was Doug and Damon's turn to laugh this time while Gil threw a giggling Moira over his shoulder and smacked her ass. "I'll show you interesting, baby. I've got all the interesting you'll ever need." With that he carried her down the unfinished patio steps and off into the garden.

"Remember that we're all close by please and try not to be loud," Katie hollered.

"It won't be anything you haven't heard before," was Gil's reply from a distance.

"Or probably anything you haven't hollered as well," Doug tacked on for his brother, reminding everyone what they had heard out of Katie the last time they were here. Katie flushed bright red and hid her chest against a laughing Ben. It was a fact. The Daniels family was way too close.

They had just finished with lunch and Katie and Moira were in the kitchen cleaning up while the guys cleaned up outside and Catherine got the video ready for everyone to see. That was when Griff Daniels showed up, walking around the backyard, following the laughter and ribald comments to the unfinished patio. Gil was the first to see him. Griff was hard to miss at six feet six inches. He was long and lanky like Gil with the same black hair and blue eyes as all the Daniels siblings. Griff had owned his own dojo and had been in the process of scouting out a location to open one in Legacy when he had just driven away. Driven away on the day that Moira was attacked by her stalker, the day that Katie shot and killed a man.

"Well, well, well. Looky what the cat dragged in," Gil commented. "If it isn't baby brother in the flesh."

"Damn good to see you, Griff," Ben stated as Griff stepped up onto the patio and joined his brothers and their friends.

"Where the hell have you been?" Doug demanded. "Mom's been worried sick about you. Not to mention Katie. Do you have any idea what she's been through?"

Griff gave his trademark grin and shrugged. "Of course Mom's been worried about me. I am the favorite. But rest assured that I have called in faithfully to check in with her. And for Katie," he glanced over at Ben, "I hear that she's knocked up and engaged." He wiggled his brows at Ben. "Anything else I should know?" He grabbed a beer from the cooler by the grill and popped the top and took a long pull. The cold beer felt good after spending the last fourteen hours on the road.

"Katie is married now. We tied the knot on Friday," Ben supplied. "And just so you know she is still pissed as hell at you so I'd watch out if I were you."

"What on earth would Katie have to be pissed at me for?" Griff asked with amusement.

"You son of a bitch," Katie said as she stepped out on the deck and took in the sight of her brother, her best friend.

"Now that is no way to talk about our mother, Katie Danielle," Griff said. She sure looked pissed about something. "Aren't you happy to see me?"

"Happy to see you," Katie sputtered as Moira and Catherine filled the doorway behind her. It didn't bode well for Griff when his mother stayed where she was instead of greeting him. "Happy to see you after you took off and left when I needed you the most? Why would you do that to me, Griff? Why would you take off when you knew that I would need you? How could you do that to me?"

"Now that's not fair, Katie," Griff said, dropping the comedy act for the first time since Moira had known him. This was a suddenly serious Griff. "As far as I could tell everyone was just fine without me. Gil and Moira had each other and you had Ben."

"I had Ben for all of about five minutes, Griff."

"Five minutes! You married him," Griff fired back.

"Yes, eventually, when he got over the whole Gil's baby sister thing. But that was long weeks later. Long weeks of me wanting, needing you to talk to, to confide in. And you were just gone. Nobody knew where or even how long you'd be gone." Tears were streaming down Katie's face but Ben knew that this was something she needed to settle between her and Griff so he held himself rigid in his struggle not to go to her and take her in his arms. It hurt him to see her hurting so much. It looked like it hurt Griff as well.

"Katie," Griff went to her, letting her hit her fists against his chest in her anger. Finally she stopped and he pulled her to him and let her cry on him. At only five foot one inch to Griff's six foot six, Katie's head came to about his diaphragm. "I'm so sorry," he soothed her. "I'm so sorry, Katie. I would have been here if I had only known. I didn't think you needed me."

Katie wiped her eyes and glared up at him before pulling away and smacking him again with her fist. "I always need you, Griff. You're my best friend. I love you. Don't ever do that to me again. I deserve better than that."

Griff grinned down at her. "Well, looking at the sad lot of male flesh here," he let his glance flicker to Ben, "I'd have to agree that you deserve a lot better."

"Hey," Ben protested as Katie giggled. It was a beautiful sound to both Ben's and Griff's ears.

"That's not what I meant and you know it," Katie said. "I missed you." She tugged Griff into the house to the living room with everyone else following behind. "After you look at my wedding video you can tell us where you've been and what you've been up to. Then we can talk about childbirth classes."

Griff looked around frantically. "Childbirth classes?" he asked.

"Well, sure," Katie replied. "I expect you to be my backup coach in case Ben can't make it in time."

"God save me!" Griff exclaimed. "Why not Mom or Moira for that matter?"

"Because I want you," Katie pouted her lip out and blinked up at Griff. "Please, Griff, for me?"

Gil leaned over to whisper in a surprised Ben's ear, "Get used to it. That's how she always manages to get her way with all of us. How could you say no to that face?"

Ben just grinned as Griff grudgingly gave in. Katie didn't use that face on him. She had much more interesting ways of getting her way with him. Ways that he definitely didn't need to be thinking about right now with all of her family here.

"So what else has been going on since I've been gone?" Griff asked from his seat on the couch.

"Doug's not gay," Moira threw out, making Doug and Damon growl, Gil and Ben laugh, Katie giggle and Catherine shake her head and mutter what sounded like, "Why me?"

"Good to know," Griff replied. "I always wondered that myself."

"What!" Doug and Damon said as one.

"Well, you two are awfully close." Griff grinned. "Of course I know better though."

"We all know better," Katie said with a calculating look on her face.

"What are you up to, sugar?" Ben asked.

"Nothing," she replied. "Just wondering what kind of woman it will take to bring one of these guys to the altar."

"One of them?" Moira asked. "I thought they shared everything?"

"Jesus," Doug said. "Could we talk about something else? This is getting damn uncomfortable."

"Yes, I agree." Catherine finally stepped in. "Just remember when you have family over and don't have sex while we're there please. There are things that I really don't want to know about the rest of you kids."

"Now I thought it was very educational listening to Moira and Gil," Griff said with a big grin, making Moira flush red and Gil chuckle.

"Glad to be of service, little brother," Gil said, making Moira smack him. He pulled her close and whispered just loud enough for her to hear. "Settle down unless you want to take the chance of giving an educational lesson again." Moira snorted and buried her face in his chest.

"Oh that's right. You missed the Ben and Katie lesson," said Gil.

Griff looked startled. "Ben and Katie? That's just not right."

Katie was embarrassed but had to know, "Why? What's wrong with me and Ben?"

"You're my sister," Griff responded. "It's just not the same. Besides, I think that I would probably faint if I ever saw him naked."

This brought back memories of them all seeing Moira naked at one time or the other. Hell the first time Griff had met her she had been running down the hall stark naked. It was a view no man could forget even if he wanted to. The only ones in the room who hadn't yet seen her naked were Ben and Damon.

"Let's not bring up my woman's affinity for parading around in the nude," Gil muttered. Moira lifted her head to blast him but he cut her off with a deep kiss that left her breathless and silent.

"Everyone just sit down and we'll start the wedding video that Ben's grandfather made. I've been patient long enough. I want to see this video and you will all sit down and behave so that I can," Catherine told the room at large.

This was followed with a chorus of "Yes, Mama" and "Yes, ma'am". Finally they all got settled around the TV. Ben and Katie were sharing his big recliner. Gil, Griff and Doug sat on the sofa. Moira sat with Catherine on the loveseat and Damon lounged on the floor. By the time the video was done all the women were crying and the men were shaking their heads. What was it about women that they cried at weddings even when they were only watching them on video?

After everyone had left Katie and Ben went to bed, both of them tense and uneasy. So far there had been no more word from Ben's mother, no calls and no visits. The waiting was torture and the tension was starting to affect their relationship. For the first time in a long while Katie and Ben went to sleep without making love.

Chapter Sixteen

Katie went back to Knowledge Is Power on Monday morning. She had only led group for one week before the attack and her impromptu vacation but it seemed so much longer than that. She was anxious to see everyone. She wanted to thank Tory for stepping in during the week she was gone and make sure there would be no hard feelings now that Katie was back. Moira had thought that Katie might decide to stay home after the baby was born but Katie planned to stay on as long as Moira wanted her. She couldn't think of a better suited place to bring a child to work with her. Knowledge Is Power didn't currently offer child care for members or staff but it might be something to think about.

Most of all Katie was really hoping that Jessica would show up. She wanted to talk to Jessica and let her know that she wasn't to blame for Butch attacking Katie. Katie was glad that Jessica had run to Sandy and Tory for help. Katie just wanted to hug Jessica close and let her know that it was all going to be okay. Well, Katie hoped so anyway.

Just then the door opened and Michelle eased into the room. Katie still couldn't believe that the beautiful Asian woman was thirty-nine. It dawned on her that although Michelle came to group she hadn't shared anything about herself yet, at least not as far as Katie knew. Of course this was only the third week so Katie wasn't that worried. Before she had a chance to talk to Michelle, Sandy and Pilar walked into the room, smiling and laughing over something.

Pilar looked like a new woman. She was actually standing tall and straight for a change. Her dark hair was pulled back into a ponytail instead of hanging in her face and she just sort of glowed. It was amazing what a little love and acceptance could do for a person.

Tory entered next, pulling Jessica by the hand behind her. When the young girl saw Katie her eyes went wide and filled with tears. Katie immediately went to her and wrapped her arms around her. Jessica sobbed against her shoulder, repeating over and over, "I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry."

"Shush now, sweetie. There is nothing for you to be sorry about," Katie whispered to her. "I'm just glad that you got away from him." She pushed away and looked Jessica dead in the eye. "You can't control the actions of others, only how you react to them. Remember that."

Jessica gave a shaky smile. "That's just what Tory said."

"And Mama Tory is always right," Tory replied from where she was still standing next to them. "It would be best if everyone would just remember that." Sandy laughed but Tory ignored her. "Now come here and give me my hug, girl," she told Katie before

crushing her to her chest and almost smothering Katie in her big boobs. "We're so glad you're back. Me especially since now that means I can get back to my normal routine."

Sandy snorted this time. "What normal routine? You never do the same thing from one day to the next much less from week to week."

Tory shook her finger at Sandy. "You wouldn't have me any other way and you know it."

Sandy smiled softly at her. "You're right, I wouldn't."

Tory looked smug at that. "I just got through reminding everyone that I'm always right."

Katie couldn't help it—she burst out laughing. Soon everyone else was laughing with her. It was good to be back with these women who were fast becoming friends. After everyone was seated the questions came tumbling out. They all wanted to know about her wedding and get a good look at her rings. Tory wanted to know if she was really pregnant. Then they talked for a little bit about the attack and how Butch was still in jail since he hadn't been able to raise bail. Jessica was going back to school in January since she was only short one semester on her transcripts. Tory was planning to take her and help her finish up school.

Sandy was working on getting arrangements made for Jessica so that the girl never had to worry about her parents showing up, making demands out of the blue. Jessica didn't think that would ever be a problem anyway but Sandy would do all she could to make sure of it. It sounded like just maybe things might be looking up for the young girl. Pilar was excited as well. Sandy was letting her job shadow at the Forrester Foundation. Pilar seemed to have a knack for numbers and accounting and Sandy was working on convincing Pilar to let Sandy pay for her to go to college. Since the only thing that Michael had ever given his daughter was his last name and Sandy still wasn't convinced that he had known about that little fact, Sandy said that it was only fair for Michael's money to pay for Pilar's education. Besides, Sandy was determined that Pilar would eventually take over the foundation.

It was only after everyone had finally dispersed that Katie realized that once again Michelle had sat and listened but offered nothing about herself to the conversation. Katie was determined to find out what the woman's story was. She wouldn't push Michelle but she would try to draw her out more during group. Michelle had to be coming here for a reason. Katie would call Tory later in the day and talk to her privately about how Michelle had been during the week that Tory was in charge of group. Maybe together she and Tory could encourage Michelle to share with the other ladies in group.

Katie straightened up the room and headed upstairs to Moira's office. Since it was Monday Moira had not joined them in group. She taught a class on Monday during group and it should be over in another five minutes. Katie figured they could chat some more about the wedding. September was almost on them and Moira's wedding was now less than six weeks away.

Katie ran into her brother Griff on the way to Moira's office. He was talking with Shep, who worked for Moira's father Jack Madigan at Midnight Inc. Shep gave the appearance of a Viking warrior from history. He was about Ben's height of six foot three with shaggy blond hair and big blue eyes. Katie remembered Moira telling her that her father and her three honorary uncles, Shep, Hawk and Roman, had all served in the military and gone on to other exploits together. Moira thought that they had been mercenaries at one time but they never talked about it and as far as Katie knew Moira had never asked. If she remembered properly Moira had also said that Shep was the only Army Ranger among Marines. Katie had spoken with Shep a few times before when she had run into him at Moira's or the gym. He liked to rile her and continued to refer to her as "Shortcake".

Griff and Shep both saw Katie at the same time. They watched her continue down the hall toward them.

Griff, of course being Griff, was the first to say something to her. "Hey there, little sis, feeling okay this morning?" He turned to Shep. "We were all over at her and Ben's yesterday welcoming the newlyweds and all that. Good times were had by all."

"Yeah, I heard that Shortcake tied the knot," Shep replied.

Katie stomped her foot. "I told you to quit calling me that. I am not shortcake."

"I can vouch for that," Griff stated. "Katie may be short but she is far from being sweet."

"What the hell do you mean by that?" she asked her brother.

Griff gave a stage whisper aside to Shep. "It's the pregnancy hormones. I hear that they can make some women really violent."

Katie laughed and hit her brother. "Oh shut up, you idiot. What would you know about pregnancy hormones anyway?"

For just a brief instant Griff got a strange look on his face but it was gone too quickly for Katie to know for sure if she had really seen it or not. "My mind is a quagmire of useful information. I am the all-knowing guru of this family." He placed his palms together in front of his chest and bowed to her, making Katie giggle again.

Shep's eyes sparkled suddenly with devilment. He pulled Katie into his chest and leaned his head close. "I believe that it is tradition to kiss the bride," he said before he laid one on her. It wasn't until she heard the clearly pissed off voice of Ben behind her that she understood why Shep was kissing her.

"What the hell do you think that you're doing?" Ben demanded while Gil laughed beside him.

Shep finally lifted his head, looked straight at Ben and licked his lips. Ben felt his blood pressure spike higher and higher.

"I'm just kissing the bride," Shep shrugged as he eased Katie out of his arms. It didn't help matters that Katie's lips were plush and damp or that her cheeks were flushed.

Ben pulled her roughly against him and stated loud enough for everyone to hear, "There will be no more kissing the bride unless it's by her husband."

Shep looked down at Katie and sighed good-naturedly. "Did you know he was this possessive when you married him?"

Katie giggled. She knew exactly what Shep was doing, as he had done the same thing to Gil as well. He was pressing Ben's buttons and delighting in the fallout. Since Gil tended to ignore him now it seemed like he had decided to make Ben his new target.

Shep's phone rang before anything else could be said. "Shep," he answered. He stood listening for a few minutes before saying, "Be right there, Hawk." He glanced at Griff and Griff nodded. "I'll be bringing company. You'll see when we get there."

Gil stepped forward then. "What are you up to, Griff?"

"Nothing for you to worry about, big bro," Griff replied. "Just doing a little job search is all."

"I thought you were going to check into opening up a dojo here," Katie said.

"Thinking about it," Griff stated, "but checking into other options as well."

Gil turned to Shep and glared. "I don't want him working with you guys."

Shep just shrugged. "Guess that would be between him and Jack."

Griff gritted his teeth in frustration. "I'm twenty-six, Gil, not twelve. Back off."

Shep shook his head. "We don't have a problem here, do we, gentlemen?"

Griff looked at Gil. "Not unless we have a problem."

Gil didn't blink. "Not unless we have a problem," he fired right back at his baby brother.

"Good then," Shep turned and headed back toward the front doors. "Let's go then."

Griff looked at Gil for a moment before following Shep.

Gil growled in frustration. "Well, shit. I don't like the look of that."

Katie just shrugged her shoulders. "What's so wrong with him working with Moira's dad? I thought you liked Jack."

"I just don't think it's such a good idea for Griff to be spending so much time with them, that's all."

"You think my dad is going to be a bad influence on Griff?" came the incredulous reply from Moira who must have walked up without them knowing it. Gil looked like he would like to bite his tongue.

"That's not what I said, baby." He went to her but Moira stepped away from him. Gil's eyes flashed fire. "Let's take this into your office, Moira."

Moira stood for a moment glaring at him but she knew that he wouldn't care if they were in a room full of people or not. No way would he let her get away with brushing him off. Gil had this thing about anger in their relationship. Moira could be as mad at him as she wanted to but it would not interfere with their more intimate relationship. She looked down at his zipper and snorted before stomping toward her office. Just as he

always did when she was mad the damn man had a hard-on. But the sad, sad truth was that Moira wanted that hard-on more than she wanted to stay mad. One look at Gil's face and she knew that he knew it as well.

Ben held Katie close to his chest, giving his friend a few moments alone with Moira. They could only stay a few minutes anyway. They were on their way back to the station and it looked like it was going to be a long day for them so they had decided to take a brief detour and let Moira and Katie know that as well. Ben lifted Katie up against his chest and kissed her breathless. Katie's head was reeling when he let her up for air. "I don't like seeing another man kissing you. Don't let it happen again."

Katie looked up at him and blinked. "He did it on purpose, Ben, to rile you up. You played right into his hands."

"Doesn't matter," Ben muttered. "What matters is that you seemed to enjoy it a little too much." He bent down to whisper for her ears only. "Maybe I should give you a spanking when I get home."

Katie's eyes flared with desire. "If that's the case maybe I should kiss other men more often."

Ben growled and grabbed her hand pulling her along the hall.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"Somewhere a hell of a lot more private than where we are," he flung over his shoulder. He finally stopped and opened a door at random. It was a rather large storage closet. There were un-inflated exercise balls, medicine balls, jump ropes and a stack of steps. The door had a lock though and no one was inside so Ben tugged Katie in after him.

Ben shut the door, flipped the lock and pinned Katie against it. "Maybe I should give you a little reminder of just how taken you are, Mrs. Marcum."

"Ummm..." Katie moaned as he nipped and sucked along her jaw and neck. "A reminder sounds really good, Mr. Marcum."

Ben growled and took her mouth in a hard, searing kiss. She felt his hands up under her skirt, pushing it higher until he could reach her soaking wet panties. He hooked his fingers in the lace and knelt in front of her to work them down her legs and pull them off over her heels. He put them close to his nose and inhaled deeply of the musky scent of her pussy that clung to them. He groaned and shoved them in his pocket. He grabbed her skirt and shoved it up to her stomach in front, demanding of Katie to "Hold this" before burying his face and licking and sucking at her dripping pussy. He lifted one of her legs and draped her knee over his shoulder, opening her wide for him. He used his mouth and hands to work her into a frenzy, work her so close to the sharp edge of orgasm that she was bucking and crying out.

Ben dropped her knee and stood up, unfastening his belt and pants with quick hands, palming his huge erection and using his thumb to spread the drops of pre-come around the bulbous head. Katie licked her lips and cried out again. Ben lifted her and

turned to place her back against the wall beside them. He planned to fuck her good and hard and didn't trust the door to withstand it.

"Wrap your legs around my waist," he ordered, already fitting his cock to her slick opening. He grasped her hip with one hand and placed his other over her mouth to muffle her cries as best he could. It was hard and fast and as deep as he could get. He could feel the sweet muscles of Katie's cunt tightening around his plunging cock and bit down on his own lips to stifle his cries of pleasure. He felt Katie's orgasm burst and kept up his fast pace, forcing her higher in his search for his own release. When he finally felt the tingle at the base of his spine Katie had climaxed twice more and was hanging like a limp doll in his arms, making sexy whimpers under his palm. Ben exploded, his cock spurting several hot jets of seed into Katie's tight channel. He held her close while he struggled to catch his breath. He kissed her sweetly, tenderly on her parted lips.

"No more kissing other men," he told her.

Katie looked confused. "What other men?" she asked, the episode with Shep earlier long forgotten in her pleasure high.

Ben grinned and kissed her again. "Good answer, sugar, good answer."

* * * * *

Katie spent the afternoon taking care of little things like changing her name on her driver's license and ordering her new social security card and credit cards and a hundred other things that women had to do when they married and took on their husband's last name. She was supposed to meet her mom and Moira for a girl's dinner since Ben and Gil were going to be burning the midnight oil it seemed. Katie was early arriving at the diner and swore she saw her mother sitting in a car across the street with a man. She couldn't tell who he was since his back was to her and since they were in a car all she could see was the back of his head but he did look vaguely familiar.

She was thinking about getting out of her car and going over to say hi when she saw the man grab her mother and kiss her. It wasn't a chaste kiss either. They were really going at it. Katie could see her mother's hands fisting in his hair and Catherine gave as good as she was getting. Katie was in complete shock. Her mother was kissing another man. Okay, her dad had been gone for two years now but still. Katie had wondered if her mom was seeing someone when they had gone shopping together at the lingerie store. Come on, a woman didn't normally buy the sexy little numbers that her mother had picked up if she was all alone. Katie had asked her mother but Catherine had just laughed it off. Hell, Katie had even mentioned to her brother Griff that it would be a good idea for her mother to start dating. Griff had been appalled at the idea. Still it was one thing to think it and another entirely to see it right in front of you.

Just then the man released Catherine. He said something to her and Catherine shook her head. Katie couldn't see them that clearly but that nod had been a negative.

She watched as her mother opened the door and stepped out onto the sidewalk. The man said something else to Catherine and Catherine had glanced at him in surprise. Finally she took a step back and shut the door. The car sat there for a minute and then pulled onto the road and drove away. Catherine started across the road and Katie exited her car and met her mother on the sidewalk in front of the diner. Catherine looked up with big startled eyes that were filled with tears.

Katie smiled at her mother and asked gently, "Want to talk about it?"

Catherine shuddered out a breath before asking, "You saw?"

Katie shook her head yes and waited for her mom to continue.

But Catherine shook her head no. "I'm not ready to talk about it yet," she answered and Katie would swear she heard her mother mutter under her breath, "That's the problem."

Katie let the subject drop for now and led her mother inside to grab a table and wait for Moira. Her curiosity was killing her and she had to bite her tongue to keep from pestering Catherine about what she, Katie, had seen. They found a table and had just ordered something to drink when a very flustered Moira entered.

Catherine immediately fell into mother mode. "What's wrong, Moira?"

Moira sat down and blew out a breath. "I just hung up with Cass. Her mother died this morning. The funeral is on Wednesday and I need to try to be there."

"Oh I'm so sorry, sweetie," Catherine reached out and squeezed one of Moira's hands. "I've talked to Cass on the phone a lot lately about the wedding and even about her mom. I can only imagine how hard this must be for her."

Katie didn't know what to say. Her father's death had been unexpected. Cass' mom had died slowly from cancer. She didn't think either was easy for people to deal with.

Moira shrugged her shoulders and spoke as if she had read Katie's thoughts. "I know that it was expected and everything, I mean that's why Cass is there. You know, to be there for her mom and her dad. But still it's hard to believe she's gone now."

"Death is never an easy thing for those who are left behind," Catherine told them. "The important thing to remember is that there is no more pain, no more tubes or machines, no more disease. Cass' mom is finally at peace."

Moira had tears streaming down her face. She looked at Catherine and asked in a small voice, "Would you go with me? I've never really been to a funeral before."

"Not even your mother's?" Katie asked without thinking and could have bitten her own tongue off when she saw the deep sadness in Moira's eyes.

"No, there was no funeral for Mom. She didn't even have a real tombstone until Jack bought it when he found out about me and what had happened to Mom." Moira spoke softly lost in memory.

Catherine squeezed her hand gently, bringing her back to the here and now. "I'd be honored to go with you, Moira. If you like we can leave first thing in the morning. I can drive."

Katie thought her mom was probably going as much for her own reasons as for Moira. Oh she didn't doubt that Moira was a priority for her mother but she thought it might be to put some time and distance between Catherine and the man Katie had seen in the car with her. Katie would just have to wait and see. One thing was for sure—things were never dull in the Daniels family.

* * * * *

Katie could hear the phone ringing when she entered the house. Rushing into the kitchen, she picked it up and gasped out hello.

"Is Thomas there?" an imperious-sounding voice spoke from the other end of the phone.

"There is no Thomas here," Katie stated, confused. "I'm afraid that you have the wrong number."

"I know very well that I have the right number, young woman," the woman snapped. "Are you the murdering gold digger who married my son?"

"What?" Katie gasped at the snide nastiness exuding through the phone line. "Who is this?"

"This is Virginia Margarette St. John," came the terse response. "I saw the pictures and the report from the investigator today. I want you to know that I will personally see to it that you don't get a cent from us. Thomas isn't even a St. John legally anymore. So whatever you're up to you won't see a dime of St. John money."

"Whatever I'm up to?" Katie spoke softly, her voice laced with her growing rage as she pieced together the ugliness this woman, Ben's mother, was spewing. "I'm up to loving your son, to having his baby."

"Is it even his?" The hateful comment whipped through Katie and she was glad that the woman wasn't in front of her. Katie was pretty sure that she would punch the woman in her pompous mouth or her uppity nose if given the chance.

"If you hired an investigator then I'm sure that you already know that it is," Katie's voice was dead calm.

"I know that I saw pictures of you in the arms of another man, kissing him quite passionately."

Katie scrambled for a moment until she remembered the scene with Shep at the gym. She heard a noise behind her and turned quickly to watch Ben walk in and shut and lock the door behind him. She placed her finger to her lips to keep him from saying anything and then pointed to the phone.

"So you saw me kissing another man, Mrs. St. John," Katie replied sweetly and Ben's eyes flared at her words before he caught on to who she was talking to. Then he growled in anger and headed toward her with fire in his eyes. Katie held her hand out to keep him back while she continued her conversation. "Wow, your detective kept a lot from you. He must have missed the shot of Ben joining us."

"What?" Even Ben could hear the shock in the voice shrieking through the phone.

Katie sighed. "It seems that there is so much that you don't know about your son, Mrs. St. John." She lowered her voice to a stage whisper and continued, her eyes focused on Ben and filled with mischief. "He really likes to share, everything. He can be so giving."

"Why I never!" Ben could hear his mother's prissy voice loud and clear over the phone and almost laughed at the picture Katie had painted for her.

"Really," Katie replied, all innocence. "Ben said that you were really uptight. Maybe if you tried it you would loosen up more. There's nothing quite like having two..."

Ben jerked the phone out of Katie's hand and placed the receiver to his own ear just in time to hear his mother's words loud and clear.

"Listen to me, you little whore —"

Ben cut her off. "I don't ever want to hear you refer to my wife that way again. Katie is the best thing that has ever happened to me."

"She killed a man, Thomas," Virginia told him. "She shot and killed a man and lost her job."

"Yes, she did," Ben agreed, looking at Katie and realizing the strength and courage that came wrapped in her tiny body.

"She was seen making out in public with another man," Virginia continued.

Ben saw Katie mouth Shep's name and realized that she could still hear everything that his mother was saying. "She explained that to you."

Katie giggled at the sharp drawn breath that echoed over the phone. Ben smiled at the woman he loved and realized for the first time just how much she loved him. It didn't matter what his mother said or did. He would never have to worry about his family coming between him and Katie, taking Katie away from him. His wife loved him and would stand beside him no matter what. Katie was his, body and heart and soul. Just as he was hers in the same way. No amount of nastiness that the St. John family could dish out would ever change that.

He could vaguely hear his mother's voice in his ear but it was like the faint buzzing of an insect. All he could see was his wife, the woman he loved with all his heart and had possibly hurt with his insecurities and doubt. He would never make that mistake again.

"Don't call again, Mrs. St. John," Ben spoke into the phone. "This is the Marcum residence. You don't know anyone who lives here." There was only silence on the other end when he hung up but Ben didn't care.

He turned to Katie and didn't know what to say, how to make up for his doubts and fears. "I love you, Katie."

Katie smiled softly and walked to him. "Is that why you've been so worried? You were afraid that your mother would say something nasty to scare me off?"

"Yes," Ben choked out. "I was a fool, Katie, and I'm sorry."

"Yes, you were a big fool," Katie agreed and then laughed. "But I love you." Katie wrapped her arms around her husband and squeezed him to her, resting her head against his solid chest. "But life isn't easy, Ben. Marriage and family aren't easy. We're going to have our share of problems and disagreements." She raised her head and looked him in the eyes. "I have to know that no matter what you won't give up on us and walk away if things get rough. I need to know that you're strong enough to weather whatever storms may come."

"I'll never doubt your love again, sugar," Ben promised. "No matter what comes our way I'll hold tight to the security of your love and promise you that between us there will never be any more secrets or lies."

"I can live with that," Katie smiled and a tear dripped from her eye. Ben bent and kissed it away and Katie turned to take his mouth in a fiery kiss. They were both panting for air when it ended. "Make love to me, Ben," Katie begged. "It's been too long and I need to feel you inside me."

Ben lifted her into his arms and carried his wife upstairs to their bedroom. They undressed each other slowly, taking time and treating each new layer of revealed skin to soft kisses and slow caresses. Ben caught his breath when they were both naked. He lay Katie gently back on the bed and looked his fill. She was gorgeous. The tousled hair, her smoky blue eyes, flushed skin and pouty nipples. Her stomach was still flat but that would change every day as she filled out with the child she was carrying—his child. The curls on her mound were dewy and soft with her arousal and he could smell her unique scent fill the room.

He went to his knees beside the bed and pulled her down so that her sweet pussy was right at his mouth. Slowly he ran his tongue along her slit, tasting all of her juice and wanting more. Katie moaned and arched her hips up into him. "I love the way you taste, sugar," Ben murmured as he continued to lap her cream. "So sweet and hot." He latched onto her clit and sucked greedily at it, making Katie buck and scream. He thrust two big fingers into her tight channel and fucked her with them until she came for him, feeding his hunger with her creamy release. Twice more he took her with his mouth, bringing her to orgasm with his fingers, teeth and tongue until she lay motionless on the bed, too spent to move.

Ben stood up then and lined his swollen cock up with her dripping pussy and eased his long thick erection inside. Slowly he pumped, reveling in the tight clasp of her still pulsing channel and the soft, incoherent noises she made. This was his woman, his wife, the very beat of his heart and nothing would ever change that.

Chapter Seventeen

It was a long, lonely week for Katie. Ben and Gil were putting in a lot of overtime on a new case. A man had snapped and killed his wife and three kids and then just disappeared after calling nine one one himself. They were still trying to piece everything together as well as checking out leads in finding the man. Moira and Catherine were gone to Cass' mom's funeral and were not coming back until the weekend. Cass would be returning before the wedding but wasn't sure exactly when yet. There was a lot of legal stuff to go through with her mother's death and she didn't want to leave her father to deal with it alone.

Plus Griff was spending most of his time with Shep. He was staying in Gil's apartment for now but had mentioned that he might take a flat in one of the buildings owned by Midnight, Inc. Griff hadn't said anything yet, but Katie was pretty sure that he was working for Jack Madigan now. She had no idea what he was doing but she did know that Gil wasn't happy about it. Everyone was aware of some of the dangerous jobs that Midnight Inc. took on, and there had been several shootings and even a bomb when they had provided protection for one senator's daughter. No one wanted to see Griff caught in the crossfire of something like that.

Doug and Damon were busy finishing up at several sites Daniels Construction was working on before bad weather set in. She hadn't heard anything else about anyone trying to break in to their house so she hoped the woman had given up and gone away. They were both still a little upset that Moira had thought they were gay and of course being Danielses the rest of the siblings took particular delight in teasing them about it.

It seemed like everyone had other things to do except Katie so she was startled when the door bell rang on Thursday evening. She was even more surprised to open it and find Michelle standing there. She didn't know what to say, had no idea why Michelle was on her doorstep.

Finally Michelle asked hesitantly, "May I come in?"

Katie shook herself and opened the door wider. "Of course. I'm sorry, I'm just surprised to see you."

"I know. I'm not that talkative," Michelle replied. Katie thought that was an understatement but she didn't say anything as she shut the door and led the way to the living room.

"Have a seat," Katie indicated the sofa. "Can I get you anything to drink?"

"No, thank you," Michelle replied, taking the offered seat and looking around.

Katie sat down on the other end of the sofa and waited for Michelle to tell her why she was here. They sat in silence for a few moments before Michelle finally did.

"I've been going to the club for about six months," Michelle stated. "I knew who Moira was and I wanted to get to know her."

Katie sat up straight. This didn't sound good.

Michelle smiled and shook her head. "I'm not a stalker or anything, I swear." She took a deep breath and continued. "Several years ago I was able to find out who my biological father was. I was born in the Philippines and only moved to the United States when my mother died. I was sixteen. My mother had a friend who moved to California, San Diego. I call her Tia...uhmm...Aunt Evelyn. I constantly nagged her about my mother and who my father was but she wouldn't tell me."

Katie didn't know what to say so she settled for what she thought. "That must have been pretty hard for you, moving to a new country and everything."

"It wasn't so bad. I've been here twenty-three years now. I love it." Michelle was silent for a moment, perhaps lost in some memory or other. "Aunt Evelyn died two years ago. She left me a letter telling me things that she couldn't while she was alive. I came here looking for the Madigans. I found Moira."

Katie gasped with surprise. "Are you saying that your father is a Madigan? Are you saying that you're Moira's sister?"

Michelle laughed. "I really am thirty-nine, Katie. Moira's father would have to have sired me at the ripe age of seven if my records are right. I'm pretty sure they are, which makes him forty-six and way too young to be my father."

"So what are you saying?" Katie asked her.

"I'm saying that I'm Moira's aunt. Jack's father was also my father. If what my Tia told me is correct."

Katie was surprised to say the least. "Why are you telling me this? Why not talk to Moira? Or for that matter Mr. Madigan?"

"You don't know how long I have wanted to talk to them. But every time I get close to one of them I just freeze inside. I can't speak." She looked at Katie with big eyes. "I'm terrified of how they'll react."

Katie softened immediately. "I can understand that but that still doesn't tell me why you decided to confide in me."

"I trust you," Michelle stated simply. "I thought that if anyone could help me with this fear it would be you. You are so strong."

Katie was touched at her vote of confidence. "Thank you, Michelle. What would you like me to do? Do you want me to be with you when you talk to Moira?"

Michelle took a deep breath and shrugged. "I don't know. I guess I just wanted someone to know what I'm dealing with. I don't feel comfortable sharing in group with Moira there. I just needed to tell someone and you always say that what is said between us stays between us."

Katie smiled and took Michelle's hands in hers. "I want you to be comfortable in group but I understand now why you don't share with us. I want you to think about

something though. Why don't you share a little bit of your story with everyone when Moira is there?" Michelle's eyes widened and Katie squeezed her fingers reassuringly. "Just what you are comfortable with, Michelle. That will give Moira the chance to get to know you and then when you're ready and you think that she is ready you can tell her."

"I don't know if I can," Michelle answered.

"I know you can," Katie stated. "We will all be there for you. Besides, how much longer do you think you have before Tory starts in on you?"

Michelle laughed as Katie had wanted her to. "Not much longer I'm sure. Mama Tory is definitely an appropriate title for her."

"Tory is the best," Katie agreed. "Just take it one day at a time and before you know it you'll be ready to tell them. Stay around after group though. You disappear so quickly. Give her a chance to get to know you as a friend first."

Michelle smiled and nodded. "I'm sure that you're right. I knew that I would feel better after talking to you, Katie."

Katie stood as Michelle rose from her seat on the couch. "I should probably let you go now. You must have tons of things to do that I am keeping you from."

Katie laughed. "Actually I was just feeling sorry for myself because I couldn't think of anything. It seems like everyone else in the family is busy but me."

"But you're a newlywed with a baby on the way. How can you not be busy?" Michelle asked politely.

"How indeed," Katie murmured under her breath as she walked Michelle to the front door and watched 'til she got in her car and drove away. Michelle was right though. Katie had plenty to plan with a baby on the way. After consulting her calendar Katie was pretty sure the baby would be due sometime in May of next year. She would find out for sure when she went to her doctor next month. She dug out the design books and magazines that her mother had bought and sat down to look through them and get some ideas of what she would like to do with the nursery or at least with the room that would be the nursery. She was still sitting there a few hours later when Ben got home.

"Hey, sugar," Ben called out when he spotted her on the sofa. "What are you still doing up?"

Katie glanced up and looked at the clock on the wall. It was after ten. "I was just looking at some of these books Mom left." Katie held up the one she had been looking at. Ben glanced over the sofa and his eyes softened when he saw the nursery displayed on the page she was holding. It was a fairy tale theme with one side of the page showing a room for a girl and the other side showing one for a boy. The walls were painted with murals from storybooks.

Ben came around and sat down beside her, taking the book from her hands to look at it more closely. "Is this what you want to do upstairs?"

"What do you think of it?" Katie asked without answering.

Ben smiled. "I love it."

Katie grinned. "I love it too."

Ben placed the book on the coffee table and stood up, swooping Katie up in his arms and heading up the stairs to their bedroom. Katie wrapped her hands around his neck and placed kisses along his neck and jaw. When they reached the bedroom he placed her gently across the bed and began stripping her out of her clothes. Katie sighed and moaned as he took the time to nip and lick her flesh as each item of clothing was removed. Her panties were the last to go and she still felt embarrassed when he took them to his nose and inhaled deeply. She wondered if she would ever get used to his fetish for smelling her panties. Then he dropped to his knees beside the bed and buried his nose in her pussy and she quit thinking period.

Ben licked and sucked her wet flesh, using his teeth and tongue on her slick folds, her hard clit and her tight pussy. He held her hands flat on the bed next to her hips as he ate and ate her sweet pussy, bringing her to orgasm twice before he let her go. He stepped back and quickly shed his own clothes before rolling her over and pulling her to her knees on the bed in front of him. He placed his hand on her lower back and she arched like she knew he wanted. She felt his cock pushing into her and groaned with pleasure. He took his time, pushing in deeply before slowly pulling back out and pushing in deeply again.

Katie heard the naughty drawer open and felt the cool gel on her anus just before Ben worked his lubricated finger in. He stroked his cock in and out of her pussy and kept working on her ass until he was stretching her wide with two fingers. He pulled his fingers away and Katie cried out at the loss. Ben was back quickly though and she felt the firm pressure of something bigger being pressed against her. She thought it must be one of the anal plugs that he had in that drawer that they had not used yet. He worked it deeper and deeper into her ass, fucking her with it while he continued his slow, deep penetration of her pussy with his cock.

She gasped when she felt it lodge fully in her ass. Ben felt even larger in her pussy with her ass filled by the plug. She cried out when she felt the first firm smack to her ass. She tightened around the plug and clenched around his cock, which made them both cry out with pleasure. Ben kept smacking her ass, going from one cheek to the other until Katie felt on fire. She was pressing back into the smacks and crying out her pleasure as he started fucking her harder, faster. Finally Ben grabbed her hips in his hand and held her fast while he fucked her faster and faster, slamming his cock in and out of a pussy made even tighter by the plug in her ass. Katie screamed and pleaded, demanded and begged, took everything he gave her and asked for more. When they came it was together on a wave of pleasure so all-consuming that everything else ceased to exist. It was just Ben and Katie locked together in the timeless way of lovers.

It was a long time later when they were both finally showered and cleaned up, toys washed and put away, that Katie snuggled up to Ben and asked him what she feared most. "Will you still want me when I'm big and fat with our baby?"

Ben pulled her tighter against him and kissed her brow. "I'll always want you, sugar. Don't ever doubt that." He bent to kiss her sweetly on the mouth. "Besides, it's our baby. I have to tell you that there is just something highly erotic about knowing that it's my baby in here," he stroked a big hand across her flat stomach. "I love you, Katie. For always."

"I love you too, Ben," Katie murmured. "For always."

* * * * *

Two days before Moira and Gil's wedding

The girls were all gathered at Doug and Damon's house for Moira's bachelorette party. The guys had staked out Ben's house so Catherine had commandeered her middle son's home. It was now one in the morning and things had quieted down a lot. The strippers were long gone as were most of the guests. Gil had hired a limo for the night so that none of the women would drive under the influence. Of course Katie wasn't drinking but no one had wanted her carting everyone home in the middle of the night.

Now it was just Catherine, Katie, Moira and Cass who had just arrived back in Legacy this afternoon.

"I should have checked into a hotel before I came out here," Cass groaned from her reclined position on the futon couch.

"I told you that you could stay in the apartment with us," Moira said from her sprawled spot on the floor.

"I am so not staying with you and Gil. I've heard what goes on in that apartment." Cass laughed as Moira groaned and buried her head in her hands.

Katie spoke up from the doorway. "You're more than welcome to stay with Ben and me."

Cass and Moira shared a look and both started laughing. "I don't think that's a good idea either," Cass said.

Katie wasn't so sure about that look. "Did you and Ben date or something?" she asked point blank.

Cass smiled and shook her head. "I had only just met Ben and Gil before I left to go stay with my mother." Cass still remembered the veiled looks and words between her and Ben though and didn't feel comfortable enough to stay with him and his new wife, Katie, Moira's soon to be sister-in-law.

Catherine spoke up then. "Do you have a place to stay at all, Cass?"

"No, I hadn't thought about it actually. I'm so used to living with Moira that I just didn't think about how her getting married would change all that."

"I said..." Moira started to say but Cass cut her off.

"Thanks but no thanks. I really don't want to listen to you having sex when I'm not having any." She looked up with wide eyes when she realized she'd said that in front of Gil's mom. Cass had drunk way too much.

But Catherine just looked at her and started laughing. Then Katie was giggling. Next thing they were all sprawled out over the enormous living room talking and chatting.

"So what did you study in college, Cass?" Catherine asked.

"Health and physiology," Cass replied.

"Cass went to school on a full scholarship," Moira volunteered.

"Wow. That's impressive," Katie replied. "Was it athletic?" Katie knew that Cass worked at the gym with Moira as an instructor. Plus the woman had an incredible body. Cass stood about five foot three in her bare feet but from what Moira said unless she was at the gym Cass was usually in three-inch heels. She had golden brown hair that fell in waves to her waist and big brown eyes with flecks of gold in them. She had a lush figure with full breasts and hips. She was every man's fantasy and every woman's wish for "what I want to look like when I grow up". Even better was that she was a genuinely nice person. She was sweet, sincere and had a great sense of humor. Katie liked her.

"It was a cheerleading scholarship," Moira said. "And she studied gymnastics as well."

"I took gymnastics while I was in school," Katie volunteered. "I stayed in all the way through high school."

"Cool," Cass replied.

"Why are you reserved about letting people know you went to school on a cheerleading scholarship?" Catherine asked, having seen Cass' eyes when Moira had told them.

Cass heaved a sigh. "I guess I just get tired of people looking at me like I'm an airhead when they know. Cheerleading is a tough sport. It's not easy being the top of a human pyramid or tossed through the air."

"I bet," Catherine answered.

They sat in silence for a moment before Katie asked, "So can you walk on your hands?"

Cass laughed. "Piece of cake."

Katie shook her head. "I never could do that. I could do all the flips and tumblers you wanted but I could not stay on my head."

Cass bounced up. "It's all about hand placement and body control. Wait, I'll show you." She stood up and looked down at the short red dress she was wearing. "Well, not in this." She pulled the dress over her head and threw it on the futon behind her. She was gorgeous in a silk and lace red bra and panty set with red high heels. She moved to the roomy hall that led from the front door to the living room.

Cass bent over and braced her hands on the floor. When she found her balance she eased her body over and up until she was in a handstand position. Slowly she made her way down the hall toward the front door with Moira, Katie and Catherine crowded into the living room doorway behind her, watching with avid eyes. Cass heard Moira mutter "Shit!" before she realized the front door had opened and closed. The next thing she knew two hands wrapped around each of her legs and when she looked up her now braced body she saw two men standing over her.

They were each holding one of her legs against their far shoulders, forcing her legs into a wide "v" shape. Cass caught her breath as she felt a hard sexual pull deep in her belly as she looked up at them and from the way they were looking down at her, the way their fingers were caressing her calves, they were feeling something similar. She wanted them both—could see them all entwined on a big bed naked as the day they were born, flesh to flesh to flesh. It was the most erotic fantasy she had ever had and she might have just acted on it if Catherine Daniels hadn't stepped into the hall just then and shattered the sexual spell.

"Doug, Damon, perhaps you should let go now so Cass can get dressed before anyone else comes in and joins us."

The two men helped her flip back over and gain her feet, their hands running over her thighs and ass as they "helped". Cass tried to step away but the dark-haired one who looked a little like Gil and must be the middle brother Doug held her arm and kept her beside him.

"The others are right behind us. I'll show you to someplace you can use to catch your breath and redress while Damon grabs your clothes."

Moira threw Cass' dress at the blond who must be Damon and he caught it in one hand while Doug pulled her down the hallway, past the living room where the women all stood and watched and opened another door. He pulled her inside with him and Damon stepped through after them and shut the door. Cass was immediately caught between the two men's bodies so tightly that she could feel their large erections against her. She tilted her head back on Damon's shoulder, allowing Doug better access to her throat, which he was nipping and sucking at. Damon leaned down and took her mouth with a kiss so carnal she felt singed by it. Cass had often fantasized about two men at once and she would definitely like to be the filling in this sandwich. But there were people in the other room and no matter how drunk she was she didn't sleep with men she didn't know.

Finding strength she didn't know she had, she pushed away and walked farther into the room away from where they both stood watching her.

"I'm sorry. I can't do this."

"But you want to."

Cass looked up and was snagged by the two sets of blue eyes that met hers. "Yes, I do."

"Then what's stopping you?" Doug demanded.

"I don't know you," Cass whispered.

"Then when everyone leaves we'll remedy that," Damon stated before picking up her dress from where he had dropped it on the floor and tossing it to her. "Go ahead and get dressed for now."

"We'll wait for you out in the living room," Doug told her, reaching behind him and tugging the door open. "Don't take too long."

With that the two men left her alone and Cass took a deep breath, holding her dress tight against her chest. What in the world had she got herself into?

Doug and Damon walked past the empty living room and straight to the open front door of their home where Catherine waited on the porch.

"Everyone went on home," Catherine stated. "Cass doesn't have anyplace to stay tonight. I hope that you'll make sure she finds a place and gets there safely. She's a very nice girl." She looked pointedly at her son and his best friend. "I'd hate to see her hurt."

"She'll be fine, Mom," Doug stated before leaning down to kiss his mother's cheek.

"We'll see to that," Damon added.

"All right, I'm going to take the limo home and send the driver on his way then. I'll see you both at the wedding," she looked down at her watch that now said two a.m., "tomorrow."

Catherine stepped into the back of the limo and let out a big laugh. She had seen the look in Doug's and Damon's eyes before. She had seen it in Gil's and Ben's and in her own husband's every time they looked at the woman they loved.

"Well, well, well," Catherine whispered in the empty limo, "looks like another Daniels is about to take a fall."

About the Author

Lacey Thorn spends her days in small-town Indiana, the proud mother of three. When she is not busy with one of them she can be found typing away on her computer keyboard or burying her nose in a good book. Like every woman, she knows just how chaotic life can be and how appealing that great escape can look. So toss aside the stress and tension of the never ending “to do” list. For now sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride with Lacey as she helps you to unlace and unleash the woman inside.

Lacey welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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