



Body Cravings

Book One of the Seductive Pursuits series

Taige Crenshaw

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Published 2008

ISBN 978-1-59578-489-6

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Manufactured in the United States of America

Liquid Silver Books
<http://LSbooks.com>

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Chapter One

Amara Montgomery turned to face the gleaming building adjacent to hers on Caspian Avenue in the Trescott Cove sun as the day turned to dusk. From her corner office in Caspian Towers North, Number 4, Amara did not really register the beautiful view outside her window as the shadows lengthened. All her awareness was on the man coming to see her shortly.

From their first meeting Jacques Falcone's latent sexuality had made her feel things she hadn't in a long time. She wished now she had refused Sampson Garner-Jacques' regular attorney's request to handle the rest of the negotiations for the takeover of Tevron Corp. Sampson had been called out of town unexpectedly and Jacques had already been on his way from Milan.

If only I had known he would make me want to strip him bare and take him.

Frustrated with her thoughts, Amara turned away from the window and stared at the work spread out on her desk. It was unacceptable for her to act like a sex-starved woman. In her line of work she needed to keep her emotions under control. Showing weakness could make or break a deal or get you a guilty or not guilty verdict.

In the weeks we've been working on this deal I haven't shown I'm attracted to him and I won't now. I'm a professional, damn it, and will act like one.

The phone rang, disturbing the silence. "Amara Montgomery, may I help?"

"Hey! What's up?"

At the sound of her sister, Imani Montgomery, Amara smiled. Imani was one of her three partners in the law firm Montgomery, Gilmore, McCoy and Montgomery. They were known on the street as ethical, cutthroat and not to be screwed with. For a law firm run by women, they were pleased with the description and perceived it as a compliment.

"Nothing's up," Amara said into the receiver. "When are you getting back?"

Imani was in Sydney, Australia, finishing up a business deal.

"I'm on my way to the airport now. So did you get him naked yet?"

Amara laughed at her sister. She knew exactly the "him" Imani referred to—Jacques Falcone. She had made the mistake of confessing her attraction to him during a recent "girls night only" get together they'd had with Imani and their friends. Ever since, Imani kept asking the same thing. They had spoken last night so Imani knew this was the last night he would be in town. Amara's gut clenched at the thought of him leaving and her not seeing him again. Ignoring it, she changed the subject and asked Imani about the deal she was in Australia for. She hoped Imani wouldn't push. Surprisingly, Imani started to recap what had happened with the deal.

A prickling sensation made her know Jacques was near. She met his honey-colored gaze as he leaned against one side of the open doorway. Jacques smiled. Even without his olive skin, Amara would have known he was from an Italian heritage. It was in the way he carried himself with a debonair arrogance that drew you to him. His broad forehead, slightly crooked nose, chiseled cheeks, and firm chin enhanced his appeal. She motioned him in and gestured to the chair.

With a confident stride he came into the room and sat in the chair in front of her desk. Jacques placed his briefcase on the floor next to him, then steeped his long

masculine fingers under his chin and watched her unblinkingly. She stilled a shudder of lust.

Get a grip, Amara.

“Mara!”

She jumped at the loud exclamation in her ear and frowned at the phone she had forgotten she held. “Imani, I’ll talk to you when you get back. My meeting is here.”

“Oh. Does he have the yummy navy suit on?”

Checking him out discreetly again, she answered, “No. Hunter.”

She hung up on Imani’s sigh. Amara felt like sighing herself. It was a damn shame she didn’t have the courage to let him know what she wanted. This meeting was just the final signing of the papers for the negotiations. They should have been over quickly, but had dragged on for more than a month.

“Mr. Falcone, thanks for coming by.”

He laughed, a sensual, almost touchable sound. “I’ve told you many times to call me Jacques.”

Her nipples pebbled at the sound of his laugh and she had trouble speaking. “Okay, Jacques, and of course you can call me Amara.”

“Amara.” She loved the way he rolled her name off his tongue. “Thanks for accommodating me so late. I hope I’m not keeping you from anything.” His lightly accented voice rolled over her like decadent cream.

“Umm ... no plans.” She swore silently at how she sounded like an idiot. Clearing her throat, she continued. “This shouldn’t take too long.”

“Good.” He paused and stared at her intently. “It’s nice to see you again.” The cadence of his voice seemed especially sensual tonight.

“Umm ... nice to see you too.” Clearing her throat again, she got down to business.

Taking out the papers her assistant had prepared earlier, she placed them before him. Instead of reading the papers, he kept his attention focused on her. Amara shifted under the intensity of his gaze.

With a solemn expression on his face, Jacques said, “I really do appreciate you making time to see me at this late hour.”

Amara laughed silently. Jacques was always so formal. It was tantalizing to try and see what would break through his reserve. She could just imagine his shock if he knew the lustful thoughts she was having about him. Behave Amara. Focus on business. “No problem, I know you have an early flight tomorrow.”

“Yes, I must leave early. I need to get back to Milan. I’ve been away longer than I expected,” Jacques said absently.

He picked up the papers from the desk and started to review them. She watched his bent head. A stray lock of hair fell forward from its binding at the nape of his neck. Amara’s mouth dried up as she thought about how it would feel for his hair to run across her body. She had some major fantasies about his hair. Jacques had it so tightly braided and pinned, it made her want to know how long it really was. In her imaginings his hair cascaded from his shoulders to the small of his back. Her hands itched to undo his braid to see all his glorious hair spread around him.

It was a slow torture being near him and not being able to touch. Each time she was around him, she felt a deep need within that she never had before. A craving to have him in as many sexual positions she could think of no matter the cost to her emotionally or

physically. Amara did as she had done in this last month; she ignored it, refusing to give in to the basic want that burned in her to be taken by him. She just had to get through this last night. Once he signed the papers the deal was complete. He would go back to Milan, and any of his future needs for a lawyer would be handled by Sampson.

Jacques glanced up and caught her. Guiltily, she flushed and turned her attention to the door. She could see her assistant's empty desk and knew the rest of the employees had already left for the day. She made mental notes about what she had to do tomorrow, even though it was Saturday.

*

Shifting in his seat in front of Amara's desk, Jacques attempted to make space for his hardened cock in his confining pants. He tried to focus on the pages he held. A month ago, when he came back to Trescott Cove, the acquisition of Tevron Corp was his first priority. Yet, although he had succeeded after much stalling from the company officers, it wasn't Tevron Corp that had his thoughts captured. It was the woman sitting in front of him. From the first time he heard the prim, dulcet voice of Amara Montgomery, he was turned on. He had brushed it off as an anomaly, yet each time the need to make love to her grew stronger.

He wasn't used to this out-of-control feeling around any woman. Jacques sat back and studied her arresting face. A slight blush stained those high cheekbones, making her seem even more enticing. She bit absently on her lush lips as she glanced past him. He wanted her to look at him with those sexy chocolate-colored eyes that offset her honey-toned skin. Amara had an air of "do not touch", which drove him mad with a craving to explore her like an exotic flower. Thoroughly, slowly, and with great reverence. There was something deeply sexual about all her movements. She could just be sitting still as she was now and somehow it seemed as if she was doing more. It was like nothing he had ever experienced before. This hyper awareness of another was disconcerting yet pleasurable. As he had for over a month, he tried to understand what it was about Amara that drew him. As usual the answer eluded him.

He continued his perusal. Taking in her full breasts covered in her silk shirt, he wished he was the shirt. With his eyes he traced the open collar, noting the fluttering pulse in her neck. His tongue ached to lick down the side of the sweet valley of her neck. Kiss the center of her throat. Nibble on the flesh of her plush bosom. Clenching his fist, he bit back his growl of need.

I want to see her walk. Watch that graceful roll of her hips and imagine she is moving beneath me.

At each of their meetings he had enjoyed the view as she walked before him. Her walk had an innately sexy rhythm, as if a drum beat a primal dance as she moved. Her full curves could drive a man wild with a craving to lay her out and have her no matter where you were.

Studying her now, he saw a sadness in her that until now he had only sensed. He wanted to make her laugh. Smile with joy. The rare smiles Amara gave pulled at him seductively, hitting him in the gut with a ball of desire that took everything in him to control. Absently, he ran a finger over his lips. He could imagine how she would taste on his tongue. A darkly decadent sensual bouquet that was addictive.

Unconsciously, his hand reached down to his erect member. Jacques clenched his fist. Despite all those late night dreams he had of her spread across the bed in his hotel

room, waiting for him to give her everything she desired, when he woke he hadn't taken his pleasure into his own hands. He refused to give himself any relief unless he was buried in Amara Montgomery. So deep, she would scratch him with her nails while screaming his name and demanding he take her harder. Jacques shuddered and smiled fiercely.

Amara glanced at him quizzically. He shook his head and went back to reviewing the contracts.

Patience, Jacques, patience. Seducing this woman will take time. Time you don't have at this moment.

Amara made a sound, capturing his attention

"Amara, are you okay?" He sat forward at the look of anguish on her face.

An unreadable expression came over her face. She nodded and smiled. Watching her closely for a moment he accepted the false sentiment of her smile, for now. They had never spoken of anything but business. He could not ask her what made her so sad or even offer to be a shoulder for her to lean on. Jacques blinked. Is that what I want? To be there for her?

He had no idea, but Amara was under his skin and he wasn't a man to shy away from what he wanted. Jacques returned his attention to the papers he held.

*

Glancing at her desk, her gaze landed on the calendar. Gasping, Amara noted the date. She hadn't realized today was the day.

A shaft of sorrow filled her. Absently, she rubbed her hand over her heart as she wondered when the pain would fade. It had been over three years since those last hurtful words justifying his actions had been aimed at her by her fiancé Kevin.

"You're lousy in bed and that's why I had to get my needs filled elsewhere." She had thrown him out as his last insult was hurled. "No man wants to get frostbite in bed. Call me when you melt."

At that moment, with all her contempt, she had wished him dead. She had hated him with every fiber of her being.

"Amara, are you okay?" Jacques asked with concern in his voice.

Pushing back the memories, she nodded and glanced up at him, smiling. She didn't think it was very convincing but he watched her a moment before returning his attention back to the sheaf of papers.

Holding herself very still she tried to stop the memories, but they overwhelmed her. Hours after their last words, when the police came to tell her of his death, she hadn't wanted to believe. They said the crash had happened less than two miles from her house. Since he had no family and she was listed as his next of kin, she had gone to the morgue to identify him. The sight of his lifeless body made all the pain and self-doubt rush to consume her. She had pushed it aside to plan his burial.

At his funeral, which she paid for, she learned the truth of his duplicity. A woman approached her, spraying venomously that Amara had killed him with her selfishness. Amara had no idea what she meant. She had thought Kevin was happy, that they were in love. The woman pulled a little boy forward who was the exact image of Kevin, and proceeded to tell the child to study the woman who'd killed his and his unborn sister's daddy. A glance at the little boy, who appeared to be no more than three years old, and the sight of the woman's enlarged belly made Amara realized that Kevin had been

cheating a long time. Maybe Kevin had been right, she had driven him to cheat. She couldn't believe she hadn't known.

The whispers and titters around the room had increased as the woman's ranting escalated. Amara had been too numb to even think or move. Dominique Rule, her friend, led her away to a private room. Imani, her sister, joined them and tried to help console her. The room quickly filled with friends, old family friends and various Trescott Cove residents that she knew, who wanted to know if she was okay. Her other friends Sienna Zain and Hunter Willis quickly came and cleared the room of all the people who cared but at that point were too much to take. She didn't need their concern or pitying glances. The incident had killed whatever love she'd had for Kevin and the guilt she felt.

Coming back to the present, Amara watched Jacques engrossed in the contracts he was reading. Something had always held her back from real fulfillment or entanglements and she never realized what it was, at least until now. Silently she admitted she still hadn't fully gotten over what Kevin had said about her. She had tried one-night stands and they had only left her empty. It had been over a year since she had been with a man and hadn't had any serious connections since Kevin.

You should leave well enough alone. You're successful, have a great home and are happy with your life as it is, Amara thought.

Happy? Are you really happy? her inner voice asked.

Amara jumped when Jacques spoke.

"Thanks for all your work on this." Jacques signed the papers and stood.

Pushing aside the thoughts, she focused on business. Standing quickly, she put out her hand. Jacques accepted it in a firm grip. Goosebumps raised along her skin. Biting her lip, she cursed her attraction to him.

Jacques spoke again. "Sampson was correct about your discretion ... and tenacity."

Pleased with his compliment, Amara came around her desk to escort him out.

"Thank you. Congratulations on acquiring Tevron Corp. I'll forward the copies to you at Falcone International in Milan and give Sampson the original when he returns." At the door, she waited for him to step through and leave.

Jacques stopped and studied her, an unfathomable expression on his face. "Amara, I want to give you a gift for all of your hard work. What do you want?"

The words tumbled out before she could even think about them. "I want you naked on a chair and ready to do whatever I want."

The shock on Jacques' face mortified her. Amara turned and went quickly to the window. She prayed that he would just leave without saying anything. Misery ate at her. She laughed harshly. Who was she kidding? She wouldn't know what to do with him even if he agreed. Visions of her riding him filled her head. Her body clenched in reaction.

The sound of his shoes on the floor as he left the office deflated her. She dropped her head against the windowpane and hoped he wouldn't tell Sampson about the forward woman who'd propositioned him.

For a few moments she stared at busy Caspian Avenue. The people below hurried on their way for their Friday night plans. She vowed to forget ever laying eyes on Jacques Falcone. She turned and her breath stalled in her chest.

Chapter Two

Jacques sat in the chair in front of her desk, calm and naked except for the condom on his semi-erect member. With a glance at his feet, she saw he had removed his shoes. That's why she hadn't heard him approach. He had a look on his face daring her to come touch him.

She clenched her fist to resist temptation. "Why?"

A devilish smile flashed across his face. With a casual shrug, he stood, seemingly unconcerned with his nakedness. He walked toward her with a sleek grace that made her mouth water in anticipation. A glance at his penis made her mouth drop open. He was huge, slick and very aroused. He stopped just before her, raising his hand to her face. He stroked a finger down her cheek, making her shiver.

"I want you and if you want to be in charge, I have no problem with it." His voice deepened, going hoarse as he leaned closer and whispered "I would enjoy being at your mercy."

Closing the distance between them, he leaned in and kissed her. It was bold, without the tentative touch of a first kiss. Amara moved forward to meet him, and gasped as he groaned when their bodies touched. The contrast of her fully clothed body against his nakedness made her feel powerful yet vulnerable all at once.

Amara suckled his tongue with voracious hunger. With a lush sound she let his tongue go, then pushed hers into his mouth, hard and fast, mimicking the same movements she wanted done to her. He groaned and lifted her into his arms. Desperate, she struggled to pull her skirt up around her waist before wrapping her legs around him. At the feel of every inch of his erection against her soaked lace panties, Amara creamed even more.

He turned, his cock rubbing against her aching clit with each step. With quick movements he walked them to the desk, laying her down on the cool surface. When her back touched it, Amara returned to her senses. She pushed him away. Her breath caught at the intense desire on his face. His hands and body shook. Jacques was ready and didn't want to stop. Amara shook her head, knowing what she wanted.

"Sit back in the chair." The command was sharp, the tone she used causing his eyes to narrow.

Jaw clenched, he walked back to the chair. She got off the desk to watch him.

Amara commanded, "Not that one. Sit in the other chair."

He moved stiffly to a plush cream-colored chair without arms. A pleased smile curved her lips. He returned her regard with a promise he would have his turn in his gaze. She nodded in agreement. He relaxed and the devilish smile returned to his lips. Amara wondered what to do first as Jacques stared at her unblinkingly, waiting for her direction. Inspiration struck. "Take it down."

He watched her quizzically. Amara gestured at the one thing that had tempted her from the first time she'd met him. Understanding dawned in his gaze and his eyes became hooded. Instead of simply doing as she bid, he trailed his hand up his chest to his neck before it disappeared behind his head. With a shake of his head that would do any stripper proud, Jacques loosened his hair and it fell around him in a dark cloud. He

studied her from under lowered lashes. The length of his hair curled down his chest and rested on his lap, partially covering his erection.

Entranced, Amara went to him and stood behind him. She lifted some strands of his hair in her hands. With reverence, she raised it to her face and inhaled. The sweet scent of sandalwood mixed with pure male filled her senses. The silky feel made her ache to run it all over her body. Letting the softness fall from her hands, Amara leaned over and kissed him with all the hunger she felt. His soft gasp let her go in deeper. Plunging her tongue into the hot cavern of his mouth, she tasted him. Slowly, deeply, and thoroughly. With deliberate movements, she took and gave back to him. His muffled growl vibrated on her tongue. He held onto her head, kissing her back.

She pulled away, taking his hands from around her head and came to face him. She dropped to her knees before him, between the desk and the chair, and she saw him smile. Amara guided his hands to grip the legs of the chair, squeezing his hands, motioning for him not to let go. She stood, reached up and started to unbutton her blouse slowly. His hum of appreciation became an exclamation of surprise as she ripped off her blouse, making buttons fly around the room.

He chuckled softly. Quickly, she stripped off the rest of her clothes. Finished, she watched his eyes narrow as they viewed her body. He growled low in his throat as his gaze reached her naked mound. She leaned back against the desk, pushing papers out of her way, and sat, opening wide for him to see. Lifting her legs, she placed one, then the other, on either side of his hips. Jacques whistled, a long sound between pursed lips. He licked his lips, closed his eyes, and breathed deeply. When his eyes opened, his gaze had become deep amber.

Jacques' voice rumbled, "Mara." Her body tingled at the way he said her nickname. "You smell so sweet. I hope I can have a taste."

His purr almost made her come. Unable to speak, Amara shook her head, ignoring his disappointment. She ran her hands down over her neck to her breasts. Flicking nipples with her fingers, she gasped. Jacques echoed it. Pinching the hardened nubs, she let the pleasure of touching herself overcome her. The soft pads of her fingers abraded her pebbled nipples. With each tug, her clit throbbed and pussy creamed. She released her now aching nipples, sliding her hands down across the round flesh of her stomach to the top of her pelvis and down until she felt the top of her heated folds. He followed her movements with his eyes. His arms bulged as he gripped the chair.

Turned on and pleased with his response, Amara continued. She moved her hands back up to her torso and touched her breasts again. Stroking softly, she gasped again and he watched her as if mesmerized.

Quickly, she ran her hand down her body and plunged two fingers between the lips of her aching, plump vulva. The wetness soaked her hand, dripping down. She clenched her pussy with each plunge of her fingers. Jacques' wild murmurs in Italian and French drove her on. She imagined it was his body riding her hard and fast.

"Ahh ... so good." She murmured incoherent words as she used her thumb to flick along her clitoris. Her eyes slammed closed as she went with the sensation racing through her. She slid her finger along the sensitive nerve endings of her aching canal, becoming even more drenched. The sound of her harsh breath echoed in the room, along with the slick sound made as she pushed in and out of her pussy. It spurred her on. She could feel the pressure within build, and stroked faster. Arching her back, Amara moaned.

“Mara ... oh God ... please ... you’re killing me.”

The sound of Jacques’ voice shocked her eyes open. The hunger on his face as he watched her touch herself made her pump her hand even faster. The need to have his long, hard length in her made her cunt spasm. In a quick move she slid from the desk, swung her leg over him, straddling him and impaling herself on his bulging member. A pleasant stretching sensation filled her body as she felt him sinking deep inside, driving wild moans from her lips. Finally seated on his hard cock, she rocked, not fast or hard, but gently and slowly, heightening the pleasure. Jacques let out a lusty sound. The muscles in his neck stood out under the strain. She licked, then bit gently along the side of his neck. He shuddered while his penis pulsed within her.

Still riding him slowly, Amara said hoarsely, “Suck me, now.”

Jacques’ eyes were dazed as he lowered his head. Leaning back to give him access, she sank deeper onto his hard cock. Jacques dragged his tongue across her nipples, abrading them. He pulled her nipple into his mouth, sucked strongly and bit down softly. Amara moaned at the slight sting of pain. Her passage flooded with moisture. He continued to alternate between strong suction and soft bites. Her body contracted around him at each stroke of his tongue and teeth. Suddenly, he stopped and changed breasts, repeating what he’d done on the other one. Jacques switched back and forth between each breast and Amara drove onto him harder and faster. She rotated her hips, striving for the sweet release his body promised her.

It washed over her so suddenly it took her breath away. Her vagina contracted around his hard shaft in continuous pleasure. It went on and on, seemingly without any end. Spent, Amara dropped her head onto his chest. Her breath came in harsh spurts.

“May I touch you now?” Jacques asked.

Surprised, she realized he was still hard inside of her. Her mind raced with what he would do. Her pussy clenched in preparation for more of him. She nodded. He lifted her off him, stood quickly, turning her away from him to face the desk. Pushing against her back, he urged her down onto the desk. Amara used her hands to push herself up, bracing herself for his invasion.

Instead of his hard cock, a finger plunged into her pussy from behind, it was pulled out in a long stroke. “Hmm ... you’re so wet and delicious, Mara.”

She glanced back in time to see him lick his finger clean of her glistening juices. He plunged his finger into her again pulled it out, and offered it to her. Amara licked one side of his finger and, lowering his head, he did the same on the other side. His tongue lazily lapped over hers and his finger. The taste intoxicated her and Amara bit his tongue, pulling it into her mouth, sucking on it. Jacques lost control, pushing her roughly against the desk. He hiked her hips up and drove into her hard and firm, stroking deep and sure, again and again. Amara couldn’t contain her cries of pleasure.

“Yes ... please... I want ... more ... take me ... harder...”

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At her harsh cries, Jacques felt his cock lengthen even more. He plunged his fingers through her hair, scattering her hairpins. Tightening his grip, he jerked her head back and she mewled.

Jacques kissed the side of her face as he whispered, “Say my name, Mara.”

He swiveled his hips, increasing his pace, setting a hard rhythm.

“Jacquessssss.” It was as if her voice caressed his manhood.

“Look at me.”

Amara opened her eyes, her gaze unfocused. He tightened his fingers in her hair. He saw her wince and she moaned; a wild sound. He smiled darkly, knowing she would let him dominate her. Firmly, he pushed her head down. He shuddered at the sight of Amara bent over on top of the desk for his taking. Controlling himself, he used her hair to guide her back against his cock. She moaned. Her pussy creamed while she contracted around him. Using his hips, he continued to move fast, grinding against her. Her pussy sucked him into its welcoming warmth.

He had known she would be wild in bed. Amara arched her back, rolling her hips. An involuntary groan rippled from him. He stared at the light coating of sweat on her honey skin as she moved back to take him harder into her body. Jacques smiled, letting her go, he gripped her hips tightly. His cock hardened at the sounds she made deep in the back of her throat. They were sexy as hell. He bit her on the back of her neck. She bucked, almost unseating him. She released a wanton moan. He held her tighter, pumping his hips. Her short yelps drove him on. Deep, then shallow, he alternated his thrusts.

He heard her breath hitch and her pussy contracted around his penis as her orgasm roared through her. Jacques grabbed her hair and pulled her back against his body. She groaned and rose backward, tightening around him. He spread his knees, opening her legs wider. With a slow rotation of his hips, he went deeper inside her. He wrapped her hair around his hand and pulled her back firmly, showing her the rhythm he wanted.

Their movements became wild as they fought to attain release. Her hoarse screams of his name spurred Jacques on. He inhaled the scent of the silken strands. It smelled like cinnamon and vanilla. He growled into it and heard her whimper in reply. He moved her hair out of his way with his nose and bit her hard on the side of the neck. Amara's body stiffened. She screamed and came in a strong heated gush. Her climax triggered his own. Jacques roared, pumping his hips as his body released within her sweet cavern. Pushing her back down onto the desk, he gripped her leg and kept pumping into her.

*

His firm hands held her leg and raised it onto the desk until she had one knee on the smooth surface. The angle of his cock filling her changed. It went deeper. Amara screamed in pleasure and scrambled to find something to hold on to. Not able to find anything, she lay flat as he pumped into her harder and harder. His harsh breath fanned the back of her head. He growled incoherent phrases as he continued to ram into her.

Amara was being gloriously taken and loving it. His body moved to blanket hers as he pumped more urgently into her. He stiffened against her back as his cock pulsed again with a second release. Her orgasms continued, one on top of another. Her body bowed in pleasure as it continued on and on. He gripped her hair and pulled her back, making it even more potent.

“Say my name.”

“Jacques,” Amara whispered as aftershocks ripped through her.

He let go of her hair and Amara slumped against the desk as she tried to catch her breath. His weight pressed against her and then he moved away. Too weak to move, Amara didn't even try to get up. Gentle hands lifted her. She cuddled into Jacques, his shirt chafing her sensitized skin. He lowered her gently onto the couch. Glancing up at him, she saw he was fully dressed.

Jacques leaned down and kissed her softly on the lips, before he said, “It was my

pleasure to be at your mercy, Amara. We will meet again.” he went to the door, turned the lock and closed it behind him.

Amara grinned after him as he left, knowing that after this night she would never be the same.

* * * *

Amara strode behind the hostess on the way to her table. Her mind was on the upcoming negotiations she had taken on earlier that afternoon. Absently, she viewed the richly decorated room of Rissablu. Although she had never dined there, the restaurant was very popular in Trescott Cove. Usually she ordered in at work or grabbed something on the way home at the Blue Moon Café that was on the bottom floor of Caspain Towers, Number 4.

As she continued behind the hostess, Amara looked around at the dining area of Rissablu. The servers moved busily around. There seemed to be an intimate feel but the restaurant was actually medium-sized and hectic. She passed the tables spaced far enough away from each other to give you privacy. With a glance up she studied the various one of a kind low hung stained glass lamp-like looking lights that were over each of the tables. None of the light fixtures throughout the room were the same design, they were each unique. She could see why her friend Dominique Rule had raved about them so often. They were truly beautiful.

Dropping her gaze she noticed the design and variety of colors on the lampshades matched the tablecloths, plates and other decorative items on each table as Dominique had also mentioned.

No wonder this is Dominique’s favorite restaurant, Amara mused. She glanced up, smiled and skirted the tables in her way.

“Hey, Mara, you finally made it to Rissablu. Come join us.” Dominique Rule grinned, her brown eyes twinkling.

“I can’t believe I haven’t been here before. You’ve talked about it so much. I’d love to join you but I’m joining Sampson for dinner. Maybe next time.” Amara stepped closer to the table.

She studied Dominique. As usual, Dominique’s flawless, sienna, heart-shaped face with high sculpted cheekbones and full, lush lips and firm chin had very little makeup, yet she still was beautiful. Her dark brown gaze twinkled with happiness. Dominique pushed her long, curly hair back from her face to behind her shoulder. She turned to the man with her and leaned against his broad chest. Amara turned her attention to him. With his dark chocolate skin flowing over a broad forehead, high cheekbones and firm chin, he was a strong, handsome, thoroughly masculine man. His heavily lashed eyes, so dark grey that they were almost black, studied her briefly before he winked.

“Welcome to Rissablu, Mara. We thought we’d have to drag you here to try out the place,” Taggart Blade said.

Amara rolled her eyes. “Yeah, yeah. Niq threatened me with that last time I said I had to cancel on her. Then she sicced Darryl and Rissa onto me.” She glared at Dominique.

“Hey, who better than the owners of Rissablu to convince you to come by and give them a try?” Dominique blew her a kiss before continuing. “Besides, although the food at Blue Moon Café is delicious...” She glanced around to make sure no one else heard then

spoke again. "It is good to actually have a nice sit-down meal away from your desk sometimes or get away from your house. You'll see the food here is excellent. This will be one of your fav places to dine."

"You're a walking advertisement for Rissablu. Darryl and Rissa will be pleased," Taggart teased.

"Shut up, your sister and brother love me. I like my seat here in the family booth and will get them as much business as I can. Since you don't cook for me anymore, they keep me fed," Dominique grumped.

Taggart laughed and kissed Dominique. She smacked at his chest and laughed with him, sinking into his kiss. Amara leaned against the side of the booth. Dominique being so open and in love was nice to see. Although she and Taggart had been together for months it was still weird to get used to seeing Dominique as part of a couple. The love they had was a palpable thing.

How would it be to have true love? Abruptly, Amara straightened.

"Mara, are you okay?" Dominique gripped her arm and viewed her in concern.

Pushing aside the thoughts, Amara met her concerned gaze. "I'm okay." She patted Dominique's hand on her arm.

A throat cleared. Amara turned to the hostess who waited patiently to lead her to her table.

"Whoops, sorry." She smiled sheepishly at the couple. "Gotta go to my table. I'll call you next week, Niq, to make an appointment. We need to have some updates done to our computer systems."

Dominique was part owner of Cerberus Associates, the company which had installed their systems.

"Please, just come by the offices." Dominique waved her hand.

She nodded. Just like Amara and her partners, Dominique and her partners owned one of the four buildings that made up Caspain Towers North. Cerberus Associates was in Caspain Towers North, Number 2. There was a total of four Caspain Towers—East, West, North and South—with four buildings making up each set. They were located one on each end of the stretch of Caspain Avenue where they had their businesses. The four buildings in each cluster of Caspain Towers were connected by glass walkways you could use to get from building to building within that set.

"I'll walk over. See you next week. Taggart, nice to see you again," Amara said as she turned and left.

"Bye," Taggart and Dominique replied together.

Following the hostess once again, Amara's thoughts turned to her dinner with Sampson. She frowned, wondering why, all of a sudden, Sampson had demanded she meet him here for dinner. They had spoken earlier that week and he'd never mentioned a need to see her.

Maybe you can ask him about Jacques. Amara pushed her hair back over her shoulder, furious at herself for even thinking it.

She was acting like a fool. The brief, hot interlude with Jacques had happened weeks ago and would not be repeated. From her discreet prying, she knew from Sampson that Jacques was hard at work at Falcone International in Milan. She hadn't had the courage to ask directly if Jacques had asked about her. Sampson had looked suspicious enough from her discreet inquiry. Amara didn't want to have to deal with his questions if she

pushed for more about Jacques. Sampson tended to act like an overprotective brother, although they were not related. Impatiently, she pushed her hair back from her face again. She should have put it up as she usually did, but today, for some reason, she couldn't bear for it to be contained.

Amara's mind returned to the present as the hostess stopped. She murmured thanks as the woman walked away. With a step forward around the pillar to the table, Amara glanced up and stopped. Her breath caught as she looked into the eyes of Jacques Falcone.

Chapter Three

Shocked pleasure, followed by harsh need, filled Amara as she watched his heated amber gaze. Jacques stood in a fluid motion. Hungrily, Amara took in the dark brown silk shirt covering his wide shoulders and the matching slacks hugging his tapered hips. She stifled a moan. His potent masculine presence did all sorts of things to her equilibrium. He stepped around the table to her, taking her hand and raising it to his lips. He watched her as he lowered his mouth to her hand, laying a gentle kiss on the back. Amara shivered at the sensuous brush of his lips. Jacques let out a chuckle.

Still holding her hand, he studied her with an air of possession in his gaze that gave her a start. Her heart pounded and her pussy clenched. In his eyes, she saw all they had done and things he wanted to do. She wanted everything his eyes promised and more. A sinful smile on his lips, Jacques kissed her. His lips moved over hers with a carnal demand that made her whimper. He laid claim to her, leaving no doubt he thought she was his.

Amara moaned and he used it to his advantage, driving his tongue in between her lips. She felt his hands come around her. His masculine scent enveloped her, tantalizing her senses. Amara locked her hands around his waist, fisting her hands in his sides. Jacques murmured and ate her mouth, leaving nothing untouched. He shifted and pressed against her urgently, crowding her. At the feel of the hard pillar against her back, Amara snapped out of her stupor. Pushing at his chest, she heard him growl.

Instinctively, Amara pushed at him again. Jacques' arms tightened around her. His tongue dueled with hers aggressively. He hummed and pushed it in and out of her mouth. Amara gasped and he swallowed it, groaning. Jacques' kiss gentled and he pulled away. Amara swayed, overcome with need. Jacques held her, stroking her hair. His eyes were slumberous with desire. Amara swallowed, wondering if she pushed him back against the table and fucked him they would get arrested for indecent exposure.

You're a lawyer, you can get both of us off. Off in more ways than one.

Jacques' gaze dropped and she felt his gaze like a physical touch along her aching breast. Her nipples pebbled even more.

"I've missed you, Amara." Jacques softly accented voice was warm, like expensive brandy.

Amara couldn't speak past the craving binding her vocal cords. Jacques smiled again, his arms still around her, shifted, and he led her to the chair he had vacated. He seated her gently and his hand trailed along her shoulder. Shivers of heat raised goose bumps along her arms. Jacques sat close, crowding her. Amara took a breath to calm her heart, which was beating a rapid tattoo. She shifted and felt the lush wetness soaking her pussy and panties.

"Jacques, what are you doing here?" Amara tried to keep the desire out of her voice. His smile made her know she failed.

"I'm here for you, Amara."

Amara stilled the shiver that racked her at the hungriness in his tone. Although she felt stupid to even ask, she wanted to make sure. "What do you mean?"

Jacques chuckled, that almost touchable sound once again. "I want you, Amara."

Since I returned to Milan, I have not gotten the taste of you from my lips.” He leaned into her and kissed her mouth gently, before continuing. “Or the scent of your desire from my nose.” He put his face next to her neck and inhaled. “Nor the feel of your pussy clenching around my cock as I fucked you hard.” Jacques covered her hand with his, twining his fingers with hers.

Amara lowered her gaze and watched their entwined fingers and saw their differences. She returned her attention to Jacques and gently withdrew her fingers from his. “Jacques, have you ever been with someone like me?”

“I would think so.” Jacques eyes lit up with laughter.

“No. I mean someone like me.” Amara shook her head and watched him.

Realization dawned, and Jacques sat back narrowing his eyes and staring at her. Amara shifted uncomfortably.

“You Americans have this hang-up about color, Amara. I never expected you to play into that.” Jacques made a nasty sound in the back of his throat.

Amara narrowed her eyes and defended herself. “I don’t, Jacques, but you can’t brush over it as a non-issue.”

“I sure as hell can.” Jacques waved his hand.

There was underlying anger in his tone. Amara opened her mouth.

He cut her off. “No. You listen to me. I will only say this once, so you better believe it. You could be purple for all I care, Amara. Do you know what I see when I look at you?” Jacques’ voice was harsh. “A woman who is smart, savvy and all-out sexy, a woman who makes me wants to lay her down and fuck her blind in one moment, then take her out for dancing and dinner the next.” He leaned forward and laid his hand over her heart. “A woman who has such heart, soul and passion inside of her that I want to have her for my own. I want to be with you. A woman who has all these sides that make me keep guessing. Only you.”

Amara’s heart beat fast as she watched his face. There was no doubt in his eyes. The passion he spoke with humbled her. She placed her hand over his heart.

“I’ve been missing you, Jacques. Even though we had only a brief time together, I was thinking of you every moment of every day. You are passionate, caring and sexy as all hell.” She grinned as she said it. “You’re the man who made me scream for more and beg for mercy. I do want you, Jacques.”

Jacques eyes lit with heat. He leaned in, and Amara jumped as his hand touched her bare knee. His gaze locked with hers, he ran his hand up her leg below her skirt. His fingers stopped to play with the skin just above the top of her hose. Shivers racked her and she shuddered. His hand continued up as his fingers played briefly with the edge of the garter.

“Open your legs,” Jacques whispered against the side of her face.

Amara gulped and looked out from the alcove they were in to the filled dining room of Rissablu. She wanted his touch desperately, yet, although they were partially shielded, she feared she would scream if he touched her and that all the diners would know what he was doing to her.

Amara cleared her throat before she replied. “Someone will see.”

“Open your legs.” Jacques’ voice was harsh with his command.

Amara instinctively did as he said. His hand slid up inside her leg, leaving heat in its wake. Amara gulped, bracing herself. Jacques stopped just below her silk-clad mound.

“Look at me,” he ordered.

Amara turned her head to him. Their lips were a hair’s breadth apart. She licked her lips and saw Jacques’ head drop as he followed the movement. His lips curled in a darkly sensual twist. Wetness flooded her already soaked panties.

“Jacques, if you touch me, I’ll scream.” Amara heard the breathlessness in her tone.

“You won’t, or I’ll have to punish you,” Jacques replied.

He licked along her lips. Amara shivered and moaned. The tone he used did things to her, made her want to give in to all his desires. He leaned back again till their lips were barely a whisper apart.

“Welcome to Rissablu. I’m Jyle, your server. Are you ready to order?”

Amara jumped at the sound of the voice. She tried to pull back, but Jacques gripped her leg, keeping her in place. She stopped and gulped.

“Not yet. We’ll call you when we are,” Jacques replied without shifting his attention away from Amara.

While she listened to the woman’s footsteps move away, Amara watched Jacques’ heated amber gaze and tried to think clearly. It was impossible with his hand on the inside of her thigh.

“What have you been up to since we last were together, Amara?” Jacques’ voice was cool in contrast to his expression.

Confused, she stared at him.

“What has been going on at work?” Jacques repeated patiently.

Amara gulped again, trying to understand why he was asking her that when his hand was so close to where she was aching.

“Amara.”

“Umm ... we have a new client we’re working with.”

Slowly, she told him about what had been going on. Jacques nodded and asked questions. After a few moments she found herself relaxing as they talked. Jacques told her what he had been up to. Amara listened, surprised when he mentioned he was back to start the integration process of Tevron Corp into Falcone International. She heard the passion in his voice as he talked about his vision of what he had planned.

“Do you really enjoy what you do?” Amara asked.

“Yes. It’s like putting together a puzzle—taking a company that’s failing and rebuilding it to be better than it was.” Jacques laughed.

“I feel the same way wi—”

Amara gasped at the feel of his hand cupping her silk-clad pussy. He pulled her panties aside and impaled her with a finger. She rose slightly off the chair. She turned her head to stare sightlessly at the dining room. “Jacques.”

“Shh ... you will not scream, Amara,” he whispered against the side of her face.

Amara tried to control herself. Jacques moved his finger gently in and out of her. Amara felt her wetness soaking his hand. She bit her lip to stifle a gasp. Jacques continued his slow torture, moving in and out of her. Another finger joined the first and Amara gritted her teeth to hold the scream bubbling in the back of her throat. Her hands flew up and gripped the edge of the table.

Another finger plucked at her clit, setting off a sensation of fire. A gasp spilled past her lips as she raised more off the chair.

“Sit down, Amara.” Jacques’ voice was hard.

His eyes matched his tone. Slowly, she sat back on the chair, widening her stance. He made a darkly sensual sound in the back of his throat and leaned forward. His finger sank deeper. Amara gasped again, wrenching her eyes away from his heated gaze. She saw the other diners. They were busy eating and conversing among themselves. No one even glanced their way. She contemplated the pillar that partially hid them from view. It created an intimacy between them that was a major turn-on. The table blocked what Jacques was doing to her.

Jacques' fingers plunged harder into her, snapping her attention back to him. His eyes were liquid pools of heat. A feral smile curled his lips as he put his lips by the side of her face, pressing against her hair.

"Do you like the feel of my fingers inside of you, Amara?" His sensual voice washed over her.

"Yes."

"Hmmm ... good. Take it, Amara," Jacques demanded.

Instinct made her pump her hips against his fingers. Jacques growled low in his throat. A whimper came from her. She closed her eyes.

"Oh ... gog ... Ja..." Amara babbled.

"Don't come," Jacques snapped.

When she turned to view him, she saw the harsh lines of desire on his face. Amara shook her head, trying to hold off the pleasure that demanded its release. She continued to pump against his fingers while his hand countered the movement.

"Uueeeenn..." she gurgled as she sat further back, spreading her thighs wider.

Her skirt stopped her. She let go of the table and quickly rose a little, sliding the skirt over her hips for more room. With a sigh she sank back down. His fingers circled her slick folds then plucked at her clit. A harsh groan came from between her clenched teeth. She dropped her head back against the chair.

Jacques sat closer to her and said against her hair, "Sit up and look at me."

His tone had the same harsh order in it as before. Amara sat up. He nodded. He continued to finger her aching cunt. Wetness rained from her and she felt his fingers rub it inside of her. Amara pumped against his fingers, striving for release. With another harsh groan, she increased her pushes, feeling his fingers plunge harder and more insistently into her. Jacques growled into her hair and she felt his kiss on the side of her face.

"Come," Jacques ordered.

Amara felt the scream burst free as her release slammed over her. Jacques' lips closed over hers, swallowing the sound before it could escape. His fingers continued to plunge inside of her as the convulsions continued on and on. She whimpered, feeling her pussy clench against his fingers greedily. Jacques' fingers plunged hard and fast. Amara rotated her hips. She felt all of his fingers touching all of her soft, wet, lush canal. His touch gentled as her body calmed. Fine shivers of orgasm rippled through her. With a gasp, Amara pulled her lips away from his. Her head dropped against his shoulder and she tried to catch her breath. Jacques murmured softly in Italian against the top of her head.

After a moment, she was able to meet his gaze. "What did you say?" Amara's voice was hoarse.

"I want to taste you."

Amara shivered as her pussy flooded even more. She gasped as he pulled his fingers from her. He raised his hand, glistening with her wetness, and placed his fingers into his mouth, sucking them until they were clean.

Jacques lowered his hand and reached under the table again. "Stand a little."

Amara did as he ordered. He ran his hands down her hips and fixed her skirt. Amara sat and leaned forward. She kissed him gently, taking in the taste of herself from his lips. Jacques' arms banded around her as his growl vibrated in her mouth.

"Am I interrupting anything?" an accented masculine voice interrupted.

Amara stiffened and tried to pull away. Jacques held her and kissed her. He pulled back and met her gaze. Amara saw the desire and frustration in his eyes.

"Go away, Aidan," Jacques growled.

"Nope," the voice replied.

Amara turned and saw a man sit down at the table. She viewed his strongly masculine features. His eyes were a startling lavender with curling lashes. The man's full lips quirked in a smile as he returned her perusal. His skin was richly tanned and his full forehead, narrow nose, chiseled sculptured cheeks and firm chin signified his Italian heritage. His features made him vastly appealing. She noted the slight amusement in his eyes. Dropping her gaze, she took in the pale gray shirt covering his muscular body. The man raised a hand, smoothing back his rich auburn, almost brown, hair back in its braid. His hand lowered and he flicked the braid back over his shoulder.

"What are you doing here, Aidan?" Jacques asked in a disagreeable tone. Amara saw his attention was still on her. "Later," he whispered as he kissed her gently. Her heart rate increased at the dark promise in his voice. Jacques turned to the man he called Aidan. She glanced back at the man and saw a smile on his lips. Amara narrowed her eyes. She glanced back at Jacques then back at Aidan.

"Are you both related?" Amara asked.

Aidan threw back his head and let out a rolling laugh. Amara shuddered at the sound. It sounded like decadent sex. Aidan's eyes were twinkling. He threw a unreadable look at Jacques. "She is lovely and sweet." He focused back on her, his lavender eyes spearing her. He winked. "Although this big lug is like a brother to me, we are not, thank God, related by blood."

Jacques sighed. "Thank God indeed. What are you doing here, Aidan?"

Aidan made a scolding sound. "Now, Jacques. There's no reason to be rude. Introduce us."

Amara raised an eyebrow at the arrogance and demand in his tone.

"Aidan Galterio, this is Amara Montgomery."

Aidan put out his hand and Amara shook it. Aidan observed her as he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. His lips were hot and firm. Amara stifled a shiver at the heat in his gaze.

"Aidan," Jacques said, a warning in his voice.

Aidan laughed and released her hand. "Ah, Jacques. So you have fallen."

Amara regarded him, confused. She glanced at Jacques and saw a smile on his lips. He captured the same hand Aidan had kissed and raised it to his lips. He licked her hand then kissed it gently. Amara shuddered. There was heat in his gaze. Jacques smiled, a pleased grin. He placed her hand on the table and twined his fingers with hers. Amara glanced back at Aidan.

A slight smile still curved his lips. "It's nice to meet you, Amara. Jacques has told me so much about you."

Surprised Jacques had spoken about her, Amara gazed at him.

He winked at her before chuckling. "Don't give away all my secrets, Aidan."

Aidan laughed in return, drawing her attention. "I promise I won't."

Aidan winked at her. Amara stared at him, wondering why he was there and where he had come from.

As if reading her thoughts, Aidan answered. "I got bored at the hotel. I can't wait for the house to be ready."

Amara glanced at him and Jacques quizzically.

"Since integrating Tevron Corp into Falcone will take time, we thought it best to purchase a home here in Trescott Cove. We're waiting for our house on 2364 Calblis Lane to be ready for us to move in." Jacques answered her unspoken question.

She knew of the house he mentioned. It wasn't too far from her home on 2317 Calblis Lane. The house was huge and had been on the market for some time because it needed lots of work.

He nodded at Aidan before continuing. "Aidan is the vice president of Falcone and will be overseeing the integration of Tevron Corp."

Amara glanced back at Aidan, surprised. She knew from the negotiations she had handled for Jacques and the buzz in the business community that Falcone International was the foremost company in Milan. Falcone International's holdings covered shipping, real estate, media and a variety of other things. But research and development was the part of the business for which Falcone was most well known. They created some of the most cutting edge software and computer security in the world. In that there were few others who could compete with Falcone International.

She absently glanced at where Dominique sat. She knew, although she hadn't mentioned it, that by now Dominique and her partners would know that Falcone International had bought Tevron Corp. She had handled the negotiations for Falcone International as a onetime favor only for Sampson. Cerberus Associates was a competitor of Falcone International and one of her corporate clients. Since one of the divisions of Cerberus Associates dealt with computer security they would make it their business to know what was happening in the market. She had recently started working on a merger of Cerberus Associates and Eclipse—another company that worked in security—which would be another huge deal for the market. Cerberus Associates and Eclipse were two of the few companies who came close to what Falcone International did.

Falcone International had a few government contracts that were highly sensitive. Distantly, she remembered Jacques mentioning that the vice president of Falcone was the techno guru behind all the things they developed.

"Yes, I'm the techno geek," Aidan said, as if reading her thoughts.

He chuckled and winked. Amara laughed with him. No one seemed less like a geek than Aidan. The men started to converse about their plans for Tevron Corp. Amara listened, surprised that Jacques would talk about it around her. She would never mention it to anyone, of course. In her business, discretion was needed. Although what they were discussing wasn't, she knew a lot of Falcone International work was top secret. That he trusted her made a strange feeling fill her stomach. Amara drew her hand back. Jacques' fingers tightened on hers, not letting her go. He glanced at her, leaned over and kissed the

corner of her mouth. Amara watched his amber eyes and saw the promise in them. She shivered in reaction. Jacques' smile turned predatory, then he squeezed their intertwined fingers before turning his attention back to Aidan. They talked and Jacques asked her a question.

Before she realized it, Amara was drawn into the conversation. The waitress came again to take their order. Giving her order, Amara watched as Jacques and Aidan gave theirs. The two of them, sitting there together, were a devastating display of manhood. She could see the looks the server was giving the men. Their features were similar, yet even from the brief time in Aidan's company Amara could tell their personalities were different. Aidan was more laid back, with a calm friendliness, while intensity dripped from Jacques.

After the waitress left, Jacques and Aidan entertained her with stories of their childhood and work. Amara found herself laughing and telling them about her, and her sister's childhood mishaps as well as about the law firm. They both listened attentively. While they ate, they continued to talk. The server cleared away their plates and served the coffee and dessert. Amara viewed the decadent cheesecake she had ordered and dug her fork in while absently listening to Jacques and Aidan talking. She took a bite. A low moan burst from her as the rich cream and caramel hit her tongue. Closing her eyes, she savored the taste. The silence made her open her eyes. She saw a pair of lavender ones and the amused heat in them. Amara tried not to let her discomfort show. A chair scraped sharply against the floor as a strong hand gripped her arm, pulling her up. When she glanced up, she saw the fire in Jacques' gaze.

Chapter Four

“I’ll see you at Tevron tomorrow.” Jacques’ voice sounded strained.

He pulled her around the table. Amara grabbed her bag, waved at Aidan, and rushed to keep up with Jacques. He pulled her behind him through the tables. She saw Dominique’s speculative regard and smiled weakly at her. They reached the door and he pushed it open.

“Where is your car?” Jacques growled.

Amara jerked away and glared at him. “That was rude and embarrassing. I don’t appreciate being manhandled.”

Jacques’ eyes narrowed. He stepped forward. Instinctively, Amara stepped back from the expression on his face. He kept coming. She backed up. Amara gasped as her back hit the warm bricks of the building. Jacques crowded his body against hers, blocking out what little light there was. He leaned into her face close to her lips. He stopped, almost touching them.

“It was either get us out of there or throw you over the table and fuck you blind.”

Amara gasped. A shudder rippled through her as he pressed his body against her. Wetness flooded her already drenched pussy. She could feel his hardened shaft against her belly.

“You could have at least acted civilized and let me finish my cake. Hell, you could have let me say a proper goodbye to Aidan.” She pushed at him.

“I’ll give you something better than cake, and you’ll see Aidan again.”

Jacques closed his lips over hers in a firm demand. His tongue swept along her lips. She opened and he speared her with his tongue. He ate at her mouth, his tongue dueling with hers. Amara reached up and gripped the arms that had banded around her. Jacques withdrew. Amara swayed; then stiffened, trying to stay upright.

“Where is your car?” His voice rumbled against the side of her face.

Amara couldn’t find her voice. Desire coursed through her veins while her heart beat rapidly. She gestured weakly to the right. Jacques stepped back, gripped her hand and pulled her along behind him to the car. They reached her silver BMW and Amara reached into her bag with shaking hands and gave him the key. He unlocked the door and opened it. He put her inside the driver’s side, closed the door and went around the hood to the passenger side. He got in, adjusting the seat for his height. Amara drew a breath and started the engine. She backed out of the space and drove across the lot before merging with the traffic on Zaro Place. Jacques said nothing, making her nervous. She glanced at him and found he was still watching her.

Amara gulped at the hunger in his gaze. She returned her attention to the road, crossing Spenser Avenue; then onto Caspain Avenue. She continued on until she reached the turn for Calblis Lane. The silence in the car held a sense of expectation. She drove along Calblis Lane for a bit before pulling into her driveway. Shutting off the engine, she grabbed her bag without looking at him and got out. She walked quickly to her door, not sparing a glance at the lush gardens and rolling hills surrounding the house. Amara unlocked her door, pushed it open, and dropped her bag on the entryway table.

Hard arms grabbed her and turned her into his body. She heard the door slam. He

lifted her and she groaned as his lips slammed down on hers. He ravished her mouth, moving harshly on her lips. She felt his hands pulling her skirt up. She shivered at his touch and gasped as he ripped off her panties. He unbuckled his pants, pulled down his underwear, and impaled her. Amara locked her legs around him. She moaned at the feel of the heated silken slide of his cock sinking into her. Jacques pumped into her impatiently, growling incoherently.

Amara splayed her hands and gripped his shoulders. Jacques leaned deeper into her, pushing her into the door. Amara dug down and felt his skin give as he hissed.

“Ohgg ... Shh ... ittt...” Amara gasped.

Jacques grunted and continued to thrust in a hard motion. Amara locked her hands around his head in his hair. She met his feverish gaze as he pounded into her, his hips moving faster and faster. She lifted herself in countermotion to his movement. Jacques growled, a savage sound, in the back of his throat. Locking her legs tighter around him, Amara clenched her pussy on his cock. Jacques grunted. As heat filled the base of her belly, Amara countered her hips faster. The heat spilled over her, taking her in a clenched fist of pleasure. Jacques growled, then collapsed. Riding him down, Amara widened her legs. She straddled him, keeping his cock buried inside of her. She rode the orgasm as he shivered uncontrollably.

*

Jacques was blind with the need that surrounded his cock. Amara rose above him like a fierce warrior, taking his cock deeper into her clutching cunt. His arms banded around her, he heard her hiss at the fierceness of his grip. She sighed and undulated around him. He slid his hands up her back and gripped her hair to pull her head back. He laid his lips on hers, sucking her tongue into his mouth. His hips rolled as he rammed into her, wanting more of her. Amara gasped, tightening her arms around him, taking all he was and demanding more.

Arching his hips, Jacques felt her pussy walls tighten around his cock in a heated grip. He pulled her head back further and heard her gurgle in response as his cock speared her, almost unseating her. Jacques ran his lips down her chin, then along her neck. He bit the middle of her neck and Amara screamed. He pumped faster, feeling another climax take her. He placed his lips over the pulse beating rapidly in her throat. He bit down gently and felt her pussy clutch wildly on his cock. He groaned as he felt the pleasure rip through him, clawing at him with liquid fire. He felt her arms wrap around his neck as she bore down, grinding on his cock.

He pulsed until he was spent, holding her tight as he tried to catch his breath. Amara's heart pounded against his cheek. He licked along the top of her breast. She groaned and held his head. He raised his head to see her face, a darkly sensual smile curving her lips. Amara pumped her hips and Jacques felt himself quicken again in preparation. She laughed, a wicked sound that scraped along his nerve endings.

* * * *

Amara woke to the most heavenly smell. She shifted, and realized that the bed was empty. With a yawn she sat up and looked around her bedroom. The heavenly smell beckoned her. She swung her legs off the side of the bed, stood, reached for her robe and shrugged into it. She fluffed her hair as she walked across the room and out the door. Amara followed the scent down the stairs, across the living room and down the hall. She

paused to take a nervous breath before entering the kitchen.

The sight of Jacques sitting comfortably at the table in her breakfast nook made her heart thump. He seemed so right there. Jacques glanced up and smiled. She went to him as he held his hand out to her. He pulled her into his lap and kissed her. Amara moaned. His tongue swept inside her mouth to mate lazily with her own. He drew back. She tried not to squirm under the intense scrutiny of his gaze.

“Good morning.” His voice was soft and sexy.

“Morning. You’re dressed already.” She tried to keep the disappointment out of her voice.

Jacques replied, “I have to meet with Aidan at the hotel before we go to Tevron. I hadn’t realized until last night that you lived close to where the house is.”

Although she knew he had to go, she wanted him to stay. Amara bit her lip. She was acting like a wanton hussy. He had to go to work and so did she. She nodded.

Jacques’ eyes crinkled with laughter. “It’s okay for you to let me know you want me, Amara.” He leaned closer to her lips. “I want you too.” He took her lips in a sizzling kiss.

Amara felt it all the way to her clit. She gripped his shoulders. The feel of his body under his suit jacket made her ache with need. He withdrew and put his forehead against hers. His breathing was harsh. Amara tried to get control of hers.

After a few moments, Jacques chuckled ruefully. “God, I don’t want to go in today.” She felt the same but kept silent. “Come on, I made you breakfast.”

Startled, Amara realized that when she had seen Jacques, she had forgotten all about the heavenly scent that had drawn her downstairs. Jacques helped her stand, leading her over to the center island across the room. With a glance, Amara viewed the bounty before her. There were fluffy eggs, strips of bacon, a steaming pot of tea and fresh bread. She reached out and picked up a piece of the bread. Amara raised it to her lips and took a bite. The slightly sweet taste rolled over her tongue, causing her to moan. It was delicious and fresh.

“Where did you get the bread? It’s d—” Amara turned and trailed off at the hunger on Jacques’ face.

He gripped her hand and pulled her to him. Jacques kissed her with a possessiveness that left her breathless. His arms tightened around her briefly and he pulled back, his expression warm. “I baked it.”

“Huh?” Amara’s body was still vibrating from his kiss.

His eyes crinkled with laughter. Still tasting him on her lips, it took a minute for Amara to understand him. “Oh, the bread!” She studied the bread before returning her attention to him. “You baked the bread?”

“I hear the sound of disbelief in your tone. Yes, I baked it for you.” He leaned down and kissed her lips gently.

Amara leaned deeper into his body. His hands stroked her ass through her robe. Jacques drew back. Blearily, she saw the heat in his eyes.

“I wanted to do this for you. Did you enjoy what we did last night?”

“What?” Amara was confused by his question.

“At the restaurant. Did you enjoy what we did?”

Heat mixed with embarrassment flushed through her as her mind flashed to his touching her at the restaurant. Amara shifted as wetness flooded her slit. Jacques chuckled, a dark, sensual sound. She pinched him in retaliation.

He laughed and held her hand in one of his. He kissed her palm gently. "Walk me to the door." His hand rested around her waist as they walked to the front door. Jacques stopped before the door and turned to face her. "I enjoyed it too. Will you let me do it again?"

"Do what again?"

"Control your pleasure." Jacques' look was hooded and intense.

Amara's heart rate increased at the thought of being in his control. She nodded, her tongue too thick to respond.

"Good. You'll know I'm ready when I say the word caramel," Jacques whispered.

Amara's pussy clenched in reaction to his hooded gaze and the wicked grin curving his lips.

Jacques chuckled again, lowered his face until his lips hovered just over hers. "It's a reminder to us both of the sexy sound you made when you ate the caramel cheesecake and the effect it had on me. Remember, when I say caramel, you give control of your pleasure over to me. Control to let me do anything and everything to your delicious body."

He closed the distance between them and kissed her. Amara moaned. He speared his tongue inside her mouth, eating the sounds of need she made. After a few moments, he pulled his lips away and rested his forehead against hers. His breath was harsh. Amara tried to calm her own breathing. Jacques slowly released her, a sensual promise was in his eyes.

"Call me when you're finished at work for the day. I'll meet you at your office so we can go to dinner. Later." He kissed her again, released her, turned and went out the door.

Amara closed her eyes as she collapsed down against the door. She wrapped her arms over her breasts. With a shuddering breath, she stood. She bypassed the kitchen. She was hungry for Jacques and breakfast wouldn't fill her. Instead, she went back up the stairs to get ready for work. Thoughts of being under Jacques' control raced through her mind. Her knees went weak with lust. Blindly, she reached out and grabbed the railing of the stairs.

Oh God. I don't know if I can stand not knowing when he will say the word.

Not knowing only heightened the need she felt. It was out of her control; she would just have to wait and see what happened. She breathed deeply and continued up the stairs.

* * * *

"Do you want a piece of caramel?"

The files flew out of her hands. Amara swore softly and bent to pick them up. She stood and saw the amused gaze of Imani Montgomery, her sister.

"No, I don't want a piece."

"What has you so damn jumpy?"

"Nothing," Amara mumbled as she turned and put the files on her desk.

She closed her eyes. It had been almost two weeks since she and Jacques had started having sex. Almost two weeks since their conversation. They had spent every night together. She and Jacques had gone out to dinner, art shows and various other things around Trescott Cove. After each outing, they went to her house and had their way with each other. He was a sexual master in bed. Yet, he hadn't brought up his wanting to be in control of her pleasure again. She didn't want to ask. It was driving her to distraction that

he hadn't said anything. Thinking of when he would say the word made her hot and on edge despite him fulfilling her often in bed or any surface they were near.

"What is wrong with you?" Imani's husky voice brought Amara's attention back to her.

"Nothing. I'm just distracted."

Imani's expression clearly said she didn't believe that was the only thing wrong with her. Amara didn't say a word. She couldn't very well tell Imani that she was waiting for Jacques to take control of her passion. It wasn't something she could even say aloud to herself.

"What came from Jacques today?"

Amara was grateful that she didn't push. She glanced at the clock on her desk and noted it was after four.

"Nothing came today." Amara tried to keep the disappointment from her tone.

"Really?" Imani's tone was surprised.

Since he'd come back, and ever since their first day together, Jacques had sent Amara something every day. His surprise gifts included flowers, little funny cards, trinkets, or various foods. She had tried to not get used to it, but now admitted to herself that she looked forward to seeing what he would send her.

Don't be stupid, Amara. You knew the gifts would stop sooner or later.

"He probably got busy." She shrugged.

She walked around her desk, avoiding Imani's probing scrutiny. With a breath, she met her gaze.

Imani stepped forward. "Ama—"

A knock sounded on the door. Imani turned to the door. Amara glanced over. Her eyes widened at the sight of the huge orchid bouquet. From the burnt orange colored paper and peach ribbon it was tied in, she knew it was from On the Vine, one of her favorite florist shops in Trescott. For someone new to Trescott Cove Jacques had been getting around to some of the places known by the locals to get her gifts. He had sent things from some of her favorite places like Delicious Surrenders, Eden Garden, Moore Gallery and Jem's Collectibles, to name a few.

The deliveryman came in and set the flowers on her desk. Distantly, she heard Imani talking to him. She couldn't take her eyes away from the flowers. She stepped forward and touched one. The orchid was pale yellow with a deep purple center. She leaned down and inhaled deeply. It was cloyingly sweet. Laughing, she reached inside and picked up the card.

"I knew he wouldn't forget," Imani said firmly.

Amara glanced at her sister as she spoke. Imani had a smile on her face. She rolled her eyes. Imani liked to believe she knew everything.

"Who says it's from him?" Amara teased.

"Unless you haven't told me about some other man warming your bed each night, it had better be." Imani laughed, touched a flower and took a sniff.

"You don't know—" Amara trailed off.

Caramel. Amara was arrested by the one word on the card.

Chapter Five

Amara's heart beat a rapid tattoo. She read it again. Heat rushed through her body while her hand shook. She put the card face down on the desk.

"Jacques has some great taste." Imani sighed.

Amara brought her attention back to Imani and saw her straighten. Imani stroked a flower before picking up her files.

"I'll finish up the contracts and have a messenger take them over to Mr. Jacobs."

Imani looked at Amara, chuckling. "Just the thought of him has you flushed and speechless. Good for him. Tell Jacques I said hi." She waved and went out the door, closing it behind her.

Amara sat behind her desk. She picked up the card with two fingers and read it again. She blew out a breath and tried to still the shudder that racked her. She eyed all the work on her desk, then pushed away from the desk and stood. There was no way she could focus on work. She grabbed her purse and the flowers and headed for the door.

Forty-five minutes later, she closed her car door with her hip. Juggling her purse and the flowers, she walked around her car to her front door. She turned to put her flowers on the bench next to the door, but stopped when she saw a golden box sitting there. She saw the card on top. Her pussy dampened at the sight of Jacques' masculine scrawl. She put the flowers down as she glanced around. The massive area around the house seemed to be empty except for her. Quickly, she opened her front door and placed the flowers on the entryway table before going back for the box. Back inside, she closed the door and went down the hall carrying the box into the living room and sat on the couch. With a tired groan, she toed off her shoes.

She pulled the card off the box, opening it.

Seven o'clock.

Amara turned the card over and found nothing else. With a frown she put it down and opened the box. She gasped. Slowly, she touched the burnt orange fabric. It was soft and silky to the touch. Amara lifted it out and sighed at the loveliness of the dress. It was strapless with a princess cut. She stood and put it against her body. The dress was long and had a split on each side up to her knees. With a twirl, she laughed. Placing the dress over the arm of the couch, she reached back in the box and pulled out the matching high-heeled shoes and evening bag. She felt a slight bulge in the bag. Opening it, she pulled out the exquisite strapless burnt orange bra, matching thong underwear, a garter belt and sheer, thigh-high stockings. She recognized the tags from the store Unveiled on the lingerie.

With each item she withdrew, Amara was more impressed and turned on. Everything seemed to be her size. Jacques was seducing her without even being present. Excitement filled her. She couldn't wait to see what he had planned.

* * * *

Nervously, Amara glanced at the clock on the wall next to the door. It was five minutes to seven. She was dressed and ready. She viewed herself in the mirror and was

amazed at how sensual she looked. The burnt orange gown clung to her generous curves. The bodice hugged her breasts, plumping them up. The lacy bra, thong, garters and sexy high heels made her feel wanton. She had put her hair up, leaving a few curls loose to trail around her face and along her neck.

The doorbell rang. Amara's heart raced in expectation. She inhaled, then exhaled slowly, before going to the door. Opening it, she stifled a gasp. Jacques was sinfully delicious in a dark brown open necked shirt and matching slacks that draped his muscular body perfectly. He was casually sexy. She wanted to lick along his throat and below his shirt. She stepped back. Jacques came inside, closed the door behind him and leaned against it. His look was predatory. Amara gulped.

"You're beautiful, Amara." Jacques' voice was softly intense.

She cleared her throat before replying, "Thanks. You too."

Jacques stepped forward and removed something out of his pocket. Amara heard the clink before she saw it and knew he held some sort of jewelry between the palms of his hands.

"A few rules. If at any time you want me to stop, say so. Nothing I do should make you uncomfortable."

Amara nodded and he continued. "This is The Xena." He let the jewelry trail down one of his hands. He stepped forward and Amara jumped as he touched above her breasts. "Be still," he said.

Amara stilled. Jacques trailed a finger down the middle of her neck and between her breasts. She shivered in reaction. Jacques shot her a warning look. He raised his other hand and Amara got a good view of the jewelry. Her eyes widened as she realized it wasn't a necklace as she had assumed. Diamonds glittered in the light. The long lengths of chains were encrusted with them, while three clamps hung in various places. Two were close together and had a diamond on the head of each, while the other was made of some kind of material. Jacques kept his gaze on hers as he lowered the top of her dress. Amara bit her lip as he attached a clamp to each nipple. She let out a breath. It hadn't hurt as she had expected it to. She had never worn nipple clamps before. He put his hand inside her dress and she shivered as she felt the chains slide down her stomach. He pulled her bodice back up, fitting it over her breasts, then stepped back.

"Lift up your dress." Jacques' tone was cool.

It was disconcerting. She could see the heat in his eyes, but he was so controlled. It made her ache to break his control. With deliberate, slow movements, she lifted the bottom of her dress, sliding it up to bare her legs. Amara smiled as she saw his breathing speed up. The heat in his gaze went molten. She felt the cool air whisper along her heated core.

"Spread your legs."

She did as he said. Jacques lowered himself to the floor. Amara kept her gaze locked to his. He chuckled before reaching for the last clamp. He leaned forward then, in one motion, pulled her thong aside and licked along her aching slit. Amara gasped and bucked.

"Be still." His harsh voice rent the air.

Amara tried to control the shivers coursing through her. He stood. Amara realized that the chain led between her legs. Shifting, she could feel it clamped against her clit.

It does— Her thoughts cut off as she screamed, "Oh shit!"

Her clit felt as if it was being lightly petted. It was with the same soft firmness with which a lover's hand stroked her. Amara shivered and let go of her dress. As she moved the sensation increased. It was an overload to her senses. She could feel a climax building in the base of her belly.

"Don't come." Jacques' harsh order snapped her attention to him.

Amara's mouth opened, but she couldn't speak.

Jacques spoke again, his tone soft. "If you don't move, The Xena will not stroke you. You must be very still."

Amara went rigid. The sensation stopped. She gulped, wondering where he had gotten such an erotic toy. She had never heard of such a thing.

"A friend of mine works for the company that develops The Xena. He had this one specially made for me. If you move, it will stroke you, but if I do this..."

He reached over and tapped one of the nipple clamps. Amara felt the delicious tightening of the clit clamp, then a firm stroke, followed by a deep suction. Her knees buckled and her vision blinked out as an orgasm ripped through her. Strong arms wrapped around her, holding her up. Amara screamed as the clit clamp suction increased along with the strokes. Shivering, she rode the orgasm. Her pussy clenched wildly. Finally, after a while, she calmed. A peek at Jacques showed he was clenching his jaw. He kissed her. His tongue stroked inside her mouth in urgent demand. Amara locked her hands around his head, holding him close. He pulled back.

"You make me want to fuck you right here, Amara."

Her core gushed in agreement.

"But that will be later. I'll have to punish you for coming without my permission." Jacques kissed her hard, before releasing her.

Amara locked her knees together. When she was sure she wouldn't fall over, she stood straight. "Where are we going, Jacques?"

"You don't question me. Do you trust me with your pleasure, Amara?" He held out his hand.

Amara watched him. Jacques stood silently. She gulped and put her hand in his. Jacques clasped her hand and pulled her to him. Amara shivered as the stroking started against her clit. She felt another peak building. Jacques raised an eyebrow. Amara gritted her teeth and controlled it. He chuckled as he opened the door. She viewed the stretch limo waiting for them. He escorted her to it and sat her inside. Within moments, they were on their way. She glanced at the closed partition between them and the driver, then back at Jacques.

He leaned back returning her gaze. "How was your day?"

It took a few seconds for what he'd said to register. She breathed out and tried to think clearly. "Um ... we finished the contracts for Mr. Jacobs."

"Really? They finally decided to stop stalling?" Jacques chuckled.

Amara laughed and relaxed, filling him in. She enjoyed talking about her day with him. He actively listened and gave his thoughts. He also shared with her what was going on in his life. Before she realized it, she was deep in conversation with him. They laughed and chatted.

Jacques leaned over and kissed her gently. "Put this on."

Amara contemplated the wrap he had in his hand. It matched her dress. She realized that they had stopped moving. With a glimpse out the car window, she saw they were in

an underground garage. Jacques put the wrap over her shoulders ,then opened his door. He got out, helped her out of the limo then led her to the elevator. Amara controlled the shudder she felt as the clit clamp started to stroke her. The nipple clamps started to stroke also as she moved. When she had it under control, she walked beside him.

The doors to the elevator opened as they reached it. They were silent as the elevator went up. When the doors opened, his hand on the base of her spine led her out. He pulled back the curtain in front of them and led her forward. Amara's eyes adjusted to the darkness and she saw the orchestra. The music swelled as he seated her in the corner of the private balcony box. The curtain rose as the opening strains of music filled the Blu Note Theater. She had wanted to come see the performance being held in the theater this month but hadn't had the time. Amara glanced out, taking in the other various balconies. She couldn't see inside of them. It was too dark and curtains cloaked them. She returned her attention to the stage below.

The actor burst out on stage and performed his opening number. Her heart pounded as the beauty of the song touched her. She glanced at Jacques and found he was studying her. Amara shrugged out of the wrap before leaning against him and kissing him softly. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Jacques ran his hand down her arm and tangled his fingers with hers.

Amara held his hand tightly as she returned her attention to the stage. The story pulled her in. Jacques shifted. Amara moaned as she felt his finger stroke along her neck, then down to her breast. She caught his hand before he could touch the nipple clamp.

"You already earned a punishment. Do you want another?" She let go of his hand. He reclined back in his seat. "Undress."

His one word seemed to echo loudly in her ears. Amara glanced at the other boxes across the way.

"If you don't want to do this, all you have to do is say so."

Amara considered what he said. She thought about what she wanted. The idea of having sex when someone else might see had never even entered her mind before. In the restaurant it was so unexpected. Now, sitting here with Jacques, she found she was unbelievably aroused just at the thought of it. She stood, turned, and stepped in front of him. The stroking along her nipples and clit increased. She took a breath. With shaky fingers she reached for the side zipper of her dress. She lowered it as she watched his eyes. They never lowered from hers. The dress fell from her in a soft whoosh. She shivered at the feel of the air on her heated skin.

Jacques' gaze raked her. His eyes were like a physical touch. He raised long tapered fingers and Amara stepped forward and put her hand in his. Jacques moved fast. Before she knew it she was draped across his lap face down.

"Son of a b—"

A hard swat on her butt cut her off. Amara yelped at the sudden sting. To her shock, the tingling melded into a feeling that made her pussy gush. It felt good. He swatted her again. The pain was sharper and made her body jerk in reaction. The Xena stroked her clit and her nipples. She moaned at the feel of it. Jacques swatted her harder and harder. Amara grunted at each smack. The clamps worked her as he continued to spank her. She felt the heat low in her abdomen. The music swelled and the singing continued as he punished her. His hands were hot and hard as he hit her bare ass. Between each swat he

skimmed a finger down, tweaking the clit clamp. Amara gripped her cheeks together, clenching her pussy to hold off an orgasm. Her breasts swayed as he spanked her. Wetness flooded down her legs as she creamed. She could feel the pleasure just out of reach.

Effortlessly he turned her and put her on his lap facing him. Amara moaned as he spread his legs wider. Through frustrated tears she viewed him.

“Open my pants.”

Hands shaking, she reached for the zipper of his pants. She undid the button and pulled down the zipper. His cock pushed out from his pants, thick and long. Amara licked her lips, wanting to taste him.

“Take it,” Jacques purred in a sensual tone.

Standing slightly, Amara wrapped her hand around his cock. She gasped at the feel of it. It was rigid steel wrapped in heated silk. With a step forward she brought their bodies close together. Her breasts nestled against his muscular chest. Pleasure filled her at the sound of his soft groan. Slow and easy, she placed him against her folds. On a deep breath she enveloped him inside of her in one fierce downward stroke. She stilled when he was halfway in. Jacques gripped her hips and pulled her down hard. A wild moan ripped from her at the sensation of being pleasantly stretched. His harsh groan tickled her face.

He moved her hips forward then back, Amara’s pussy clenching around him wildly. She moved as his hands silently bid her. The liquid fire started low in her belly, demanding release.

“Don’t come,” Jacques said harshly.

Amara didn’t know if she could stop it. His lips enclosed her nipple, also engulfing the nipple clamp. He sucked on it strongly. The clit clamp tightened, then the same suction he was doing to her breast started on her clit. She bucked against him urgently and ground down. The clamp suction increased and pushed hard against her.

“Come,” Jacques whispered against her breast.

Amara screamed as the orgasm ripped through her in a hot flush of pleasure. Distantly, she heard the music and voices swell behind her. She rocked against him, shuddering, held in a vise of inexpressible pleasure. Jacques grunted and licked up her breast to her neck. He bit down. Hard. Her scream went soundless as pleasure unlike anything she had ever experienced filled her. It went on and on. She gripped his shoulders as shivers rocked her. She held him to her. With a rotation of her hips, she undulated around his cock. Jacques roared and she felt him pulse inside of her. She rocked harder, milking him as another peak hit her.

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Jacques felt the silken clutch of her pussy around him. He rocked his hips forward, pumping into her core, lengthening his own release. She came again. Her slit gripped him tighter. It was a pleasurable vise around his engorged flesh. He spread his legs wider. She sank down on him deeper. They both groaned. With a flick of his tongue, he licked up her neck, then to her chin. He kissed her. Amara whimpered into his mouth. He swallowed the sound. Jacques wrapped his hands around her hips and pulled her tighter against him. Amara undulated her hips and he grunted harshly as another release pumped from him. Amara’s hands sank into his hair.

Jacques was defenseless against the pleasure that racked him. He thrust up as she

came down on him. Her slick folds glided along his cock. The stimulation of it mixed with her kiss was intoxicating. Her grip tightened and he felt her nails through his shirt. His release continued to pulse as her fine final tremors stroked his cock. With a harsh exhalation, he fell back against the chair. Amara dropped against him. Her head nuzzled his chest while her hips continued to move lazily against him. Their harsh breaths filled the air. After some time, he calmed and glanced down. Her eyes were closed and a dreamy smile curved her lips.

As if she felt his gaze, Amara's eyes opened. "Ummm ... can we do that again?" Her eyes sparkled wickedly.

He ran his finger over her right breast. Her eyes dilated as she screamed. He closed his mouth over her lips, swallowing her cries. Jacques tightened his arms around her as her body bucked with the vibration that hit her. He felt it against his cock. He knew that the suction, stroking and vibration of The Xena would drive her into a frenzy fast. Her pussy clenched around him. With a wicked chuckle of his own he set out to drive her wilder.

* * * *

Jacques stared out the window of 2 Bridge Street in his offices in downtown Trescott Cove. Absently, he studied the various buildings forming a circle that made up the massive complex that housed Tevron Corp. He listened half-heartedly as Aidan gave him an update on the integration. His thoughts were filled with Amara. He had spent every night of the last three weeks at her house. They had explored her neighborhood, Calblis Lane, as well as the surrounding area. There were many nice quaint shops close to her house in the Lauioe Square area. It was fun to get to see where he would be living soon as well as spending time getting to know Amara. Each moment with her only made him even more captivated. She was funny and caring. The sexual chemistry between them was amazing.

He felt his cock harden at the thought of all the things they had done together. Amara was adventurous and demanding. She let him know what she wanted and didn't shy away when he did the same. He shifted, trying to get some relief from his burgeoning erection pressing against the confines of his pants. He tuned into the conversation and realized Aidan was silent. He saw the knowledge in his eyes.

With a sheepish grin, Jacques shrugged. "Sorry. I wasn't paying attention."

Aidan laughed and shook his head. "You think?" He stood and picked up his files from the long conference table. "Go and see her. You're useless to me this way. I'd like to see her before I leave. Let's have dinner together on Wednesday."

Since it was Monday and he didn't think Amara had anything planned, he agreed. "Sure. I'll let Amara know." Jacques nodded and stood.

Aidan was returning to Milan to take care of some projects he had left pending in the Falcone home office. Jacques came around the table and walked with Aidan to the door. He opened the door and waited for Aidan to pass through.

Aidan stopped and looked at him. "I like Amara. She makes you happier than I've seen in a long while."

"Yes, she does. I plan to be with her for a long time."

Aidan's eyebrows rose. "Marriage?"

Jacques thought of it and smiled. "Eventually, but for now we'll enjoy just being

together as a couple.”

Aidan nodded.

Jacques tapped him on the shoulder. “See you tomorrow for the 9:00 a.m. meeting.”

Aidan murmured his agreement and went down the hall. Jacques went in the opposite direction. He glanced at his watch as he punched the button of the elevator. It was a little after two o’clock. He stepped inside the elevator and pushed the button for the ground level.

I wonder if I can get Amara to play hooky with me for the rest of the day. Humming, he stepped out of the elevator and strode to his black SUV.

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“Mara, I might as well be talking to a wall for all the attention you’re paying me.” The disgruntlement in the husky voice snapped her out of her daydream.

Amara glanced over guiltily at her sister’s amused face. “Sorry. I wasn’t paying attention.” She laughed at herself.

Imani rolled her eyes. “I know that. What are you thinking about so hard?” Imani watched her carefully. Amara shifted and tried to look innocent. “You’ve got it bad.” Imani reached over and slapped her arm, chuckling. “Jacques has you turned inside out. You’re not focusing on work and I hardly see you anymore.”

Amara felt guilt eat at her. She reached over and gripped Imani’s hand. “I’m sorry, Imani. You want to hang out tonight?”

“No. You’re so easy. Have fun, Amara. You deserve it.” Imani patted her hand, laughing.

“You had me worried, you fool.” Amara swatted her in retaliation.

Imani sat back, her expression intense. “You really care about him.”

“Yes. He’s amazing, Imani. We can talk to each other and he actually listens to me. Heck, we’ve had some heated debates and the making-up is amazing.” Amara grinned.

“I’m jealous, you heifer.” Imani smacked her arm.

Amara chuckled before sobering. “You don’t think I am being foolish?”

Concern filled Imani’s gaze. “No, Mara. Don’t let him taint what you have.”

Amara closed her eyes, knowing what her sister had left unsaid. “I know, but it’s hard. Not since Kevin have I opened myself like this. I don’t even know how Jacques feels. The sex is amazing and we talk a lot, but neither of us has said it.”

Imani watched her. “Do you love him?”

“I don’t know.” Amara gulped.

Imani shook her head. “You have to think long and hard about it. I know you, Mara. You don’t do casual.” She squeezed her hand. “Whatever you decide, let your heart lead you.” Imani stood, picking up her files.

Amara walked around the desk and hugged her. “Thanks, sis.”

Imani hugged her back. “No problem.” Then she looked over her shoulder and an evil grin curled her lips. Imani winked and continued. “Don’t hurt yourself.”

Confused, Amara turned and her breath caught as her gaze met amber. Jacques stared at her, possession in his gaze. Imani chuckled, snapping Amara’s attention back to her. Laughing, Imani walked toward the door. She passed Jacques and said something to him that was too low for Amara to hear. Jacques seemed startled then regarded Imani. He laughed, leaned down and kissed Imani’s cheek. Imani laughed, patted his cheek and went

out the door.

Turning his attention to Amara, Jacques walked over to her. He cupped her face as he leaned in and kissed her. Amara felt it all the way to her toes.

Jacques pulled back and put his forehead against hers. "Want to play hooky?" He said it in a singsong voice.

"Let me get my bag," Amara replied in the same tone.

She got her bag and coat. Jacques helped her into it. He pulled her hair from below the collar, trailing his finger from the edge of her hairline down until the coat stopped him.

Moaning, Amara asked, "What did my sister say to you?" Amara groaned as he kissed the top of her head. She viewed him expectantly.

"She threatened to unman me if I hurt you." Jacques chuckled.

Amara glanced at the door, then back at him. "What's funny about that?"

Jacques made a rude noise. "The idea she could do such a thing."

Amara reached down and put her hand inside his jacket, stroking his cock through his slacks. Jacques' eyes heated. She leaned against him and kissed him thoroughly.

Pulling away, she raised an eyebrow. "I wouldn't underestimate my sister if I were you. But you don't have to worry about her." She released him and walked away.

"Why?"

Amara looked at him over her shoulder. "If you hurt me, the pleasure of unmanning you will be all mine."

Jacques' mouth fell open in shock before amusement filled his gaze. He walked over to her and put his hand around her waist. "You don't have to worry about that. I won't hurt you." He kissed her briefly before leading her out the door.

Fifteen minutes later, Amara stood in front of the store at 18 Lauioe Square and studied the display. She glared playfully at Jacques. "I can't believe I let you talk me into this. I've lived in this area, been in this area many times and never seen this place. How the heck did you find out about it?"

"A friend." Jacques pulled her toward the door.

Standing her ground, she asked. "What friend?" Amara winced as she heard the jealousy in her tone.

Jacques was amused. He kissed her on the nose. "No need to be jealous." He pulled her into him and kissed her thoroughly before drawing back to meet her gaze. "Although I like you being possessive, it was a male friend. He said they had some beautiful pieces."

Amara glanced past him at the window again. The female mannequin was draped in a see-through, short magenta camisole and tap pants. There was fine gold embroidery detailing on the outfit, making it shimmer and tantalize. It aptly went with Tantalize, the name of the store that was in discreet gold script. Usually she bought her lingerie from Unveiled—a bigger store that had some beautiful things as well—as it wasn't too far from where her offices were on Caspain Avenue. Unveiled had various in-house designers who made what they sold. You could get custom pieces or buy off the rack.

She focused back on him. "I've heard of them and always meant to check them out but never found the time. If I'd known they were so close to my house I would have been here sooner." Amara rubbed her hands together as she stared back at the window of Tantalize. "What are you waiting for? Let's go."

She laced fingers with his, pulling him into the store. Amara stopped inside the

doorway, taking in the plush chairs and wide array of lingerie. From what she had heard of Tantalize, they had an in-house designer who made everything. All the pieces were unique and the quality was superb. With brisk steps, she walked over to a floor-length peignoir. Amara touched the fine silk. She loved sexy things.

Jacques' voice came from behind her. "You would be sexy in that."

She smiled seductively. "So would you."

Jacques laughed. Amara picked it up in burnt orange and continued to look around. Jacques took it and, as she picked up more things, she handed them to him. He followed behind her patiently. When she asked him his opinion, he nodded or shook his head. Amara reached for another piece, turning to hand it to him. When she saw the pile of things in his hands, she grinned sheepishly. "Umm ... sorry."

Jacques laughed. "I love to see you shop. Don't you want anything else?"

Amara stared longingly at the two-piece pajama set across the room. She shook her head. "No. Let's check out and go." She put her hand around his waist, walking with him to the front of the store. "Thanks for being so patient."

Jacques gazed at her, his expression sizzling. "My pleasure."

Amara laughed. "Most men would have run screaming by now."

Jacques dumped the items on the counter. He put his hands around her waist. "I'm not most men."

He kissed her softly. Amara shifted and glanced at the man behind the counter. Reaching into her bag for her purse, she was stopped by Jacques' hand on her arm. She looked up at him. He was handing the man a credit card.

"Jacques—" she started to protest, but he put his finger over her lips.

"Shh... I'm paying. Now say, thank you, Jacques."

She glared at him. He leaned down and she snapped her teeth at him. He jerked back, laughing. His other arm came up to encircle her. "Now is that any way to say thank you?"

Amara chuckled. "I'll thank you later."

She returned her focus to the man rang up the last of her purchases. She winced when she saw the total. Jacques didn't even blink, just signed the charge slip. The man folded the items and started putting them in bags. Amara turned to Jacques and, looking past his shoulder, she locked eyes with emerald green.

Chapter Six

Amara's heart pounded as she watched the honey-colored face with rigid lines. Pain blossomed in her as she saw the woman stumble back. She was sure the same expression of horror on the woman's face was on her own. Although she had only seen her once, briefly, Amara knew who she was.

She jerked away from Jacques as she murmured, "I have to go."

Quickly, she walked away from the confusion on his face. When she reached the woman, she saw her recoil. The woman looked devastated, then her face went cool. Amara rushed out of the store. Once outside, she tried to take a breath and found she couldn't. Blindly, she walked to the curb and put up her hand. A cab pulled in front of her. Amara fumbled opening the door. Collapsing inside, she gave the cab driver her address and watched as he pulled off. She saw Jacques rush out of the store. He stood in the street watching her cab drive away. Amara closed her eyes, laying her head back on the car seat.

It's better this way. You were a fool to open yourself again anyway. Tears burned her eyes but she refused to let them fall. Dry-eyed, she raised her head and watched as the car drove her away from 18 Lauioe Square toward her own neighborhood.

* * * *

Jacques watched as the cab left with Amara in it. Eyes narrowed, he tried to figure out what had caused that stricken expression on her face. Not coming up with anything, he studied the store behind him. She had been fine while she shopped. It wasn't until they were checking out that she had turned away. She had jerked away. When he had turned to see what had her attention, he was arrested by the lovely woman standing there. Realization dawned. The woman's face had held the same stricken countenance as Amara's. Swiftly, he turned and went back into the store. He glanced around and saw no one but the man at the counter.

He strode up to the man and growled, "Where's the woman?" The man regarded him coolly. Jacques reached over and hauled him forward.

"Unless you want to lose your hands, let me go," the man said, looking down at his hands calmly and speaking in a deceptively mild Caribbean accented voice.

It wasn't the tone, but the look in his eyes, that made Jacques release him. Jacques dragged his hand through his hair, agitated. "Scusar me. Where is the woman?"

The man replied in a clipped tone. "She is gone."

"Where?"

"None of your business."

Jacques studied the man, measuring his face for his fist. The man smiled, a cold twist of lips, daring him to try. His fist clenched, Jacques asked through gritted teeth, "How does she know Amara?"

"None of your business." The man's face was closed.

Jacques felt fury lick up his veins and clenched both hands. The man leaned causally against the counter. He seemed relaxed. "What's your name?" Jacques asked, the demand

clear in his tone.

“Sumner James. And your name?”

“Jacques Falcone. I’ll be back, Sumner, if I don’t get the answers I need. And you will tell me where the woman is.” Jacques let the threat fill his voice and nodded abruptly.

Sumner bared his teeth fiercely. “You can keep on dreaming, Jacques. And if you come back, it will be my pleasure to rearrange your face.”

Jacques observed the bulging muscles in Sumner’s arms and raised his eyebrow. “We’ll see who will walk away.” Sumner flipped him the bird. Jacques growled, grabbed the bags and turned to walk across the room to the door. He returned his attention to Sumner. “Don’t underestimate me.”

Sumner looked him up and down. “Are you leaving or what?”

Sumner turned his back on him. Jacques opened the door and went to his SUV. He clicked the locks then threw the bags in the back seat. He went around the car and got in, driving out of the parking space and speeding down the street.

Fifteen minutes later, Jacques pounded on Amara’s door. He had raised his fist to pound again when she jerked open the door.

“What are you doing here, Jacques?” She blocked the doorway and crossed her arms under her breasts.

He stepped forward. Amara backed out of the way. Walking inside to the living area, Jacques dumped the bags on the chair and turned to her. Amara watched him silently from across the room.

“What’s going on, Amara?”

“Nothing.”

He sighed. “Come on, Amara. You were fine until you saw that woman. Who is she?”

She stiffened.

The bleakness in her gaze made his heart clench. “You want to know who she is? She’s the woman my ex-fiancé was having an affair with.” There were touches of hysteria and bitterness in her tone.

Jacques, following his instincts, went to her and grabbed her hands. She tried to jerk away, but he held firm. He led her stiff body to the couch. With a gentle push, he seated her, then sat next to her and took her hands again. He ignored her stiffening. “Tell me.”

Amara looked at him, misery in her gaze. “I didn’t tell you about him because it didn’t matter.”

He squeezed her hands. “It does matter. I love you, Amara, and I want to know.”

She stiffened and jerked away, wrapping her arms around herself. A fine shiver racked her. “You can’t love me. No one can. Kevin didn’t or he wouldn’t have cheated on me.”

Jacques pulled her into him. He felt her reluctance but persisted. “He wasn’t a man, Amara. No man would have cheated on you. Tell me.”

Amara looked at him and he let her see what he was feeling. She sighed and raised a shaky hand to his cheek. “I love you, Jacques.”

A fierce joy gripped him.

She continued. “I wanted to tell you that before I tell you about Kevin.” She lowered her hand over his heart. “I didn’t realize it, but you’ve been loving me from the

beginning.”

Jacques nodded. “Yes, Amara. From the moment I saw you, I knew what I wanted—you in my life forever.”

She seemed surprised and fearful. “You want to get married?”

He laughed and kissed her nose. “Eventually. We have a lot to find out about each other first. I’m going to enjoy those moments of getting to know each other.”

Amara relaxed. “I’ll enjoy that too.”

Jacques spoke from his soul. “When I went back to Milan, it was as if I had left a part of myself behind. I knew I needed to come back and see where this would lead. In these last few weeks, I have found what I want—a woman who turns me on, soul, mind and body.” He swiveled his hips against her.

Amara chuckled and swatted at him.

“What? I’m a man, miele. And I’ll be honest. Your body drives me wild.”

He kissed her lips fiercely. Amara moaned in response, her tongue dueling with his. He pulled back.

“But I also love the way you smile when you see children playing, the way you bite your lip when you’re concentrating, and the way you glare at me.” He laughed. “Yes, I know that’s weird but I love all of you; not just what’s out here.” He motioned to her body pressed against his and continued, “But what’s in here.” He touched his hand over her heart. He felt it quicken even more against his palm.

“This is why I love you. You know the right thing to say to make me feel better.” She looked up at him slyly from under lowered lashes. “And the sex isn’t half bad.”

Jacques grabbed her, tickling, and Amara laughed and conceded, “Okay, it’s stupendous.”

He relaxed. “That’s better. Now tell me.”

Amara twined her fingers with his. She started out slowly.

“Kevin and I were together for six years in total. At first, we were so in love but as my career and his took off we started to grow apart. When he proposed I was shocked and pleased. I thought we would survive. Then he started getting cold and secretive. I didn’t see it. We were trying to build the law firm. Sex had become a task. On that night he grabbed me and wanted to make love. I refused to sleep with him. Kevin lost it and tried to force me.”

Jacques tensed and she held his hand and shook her head. “No, he didn’t succeed. I told you not to underestimate me. I’m a fifth-degree Black Belt.”

Jacques was surprised. “So it wasn’t an idle threat you would kick my ass?”

Amara laughed. “No, and Imani is a tenth-degree Black Belt.”

Jacques was shocked and impressed. “Wow! You’re two fierce ladies.”

Amara chuckled. “Don’t you forget it!” She sobered. “Kevin forgot that I was and I made sure he wouldn’t try such a thing again. He stormed out, yelling at me that it was my fault his needs were being filled elsewhere, and that I was cold in bed. I didn’t know what he meant. Later that night, the cops came saying he was dead. I felt guilty. I had wished he were. It wasn’t until the funeral, when the woman I saw in the store today came forward screaming at me, that I realized what he meant. She had a three-year-old and looked to be eight months pregnant. She caused a scene and all the feelings of guilt I had over wishing Kevin dead, left me. I picked up and moved on. Each year around the time of his death, I remember. The night you and I were first together was the third

anniversary of his funeral.”

Jacques squeezed her hand, sorry for all the pain she had been through. “It’s not your fault, Amara. It’s his. Let it go.”

Amara nodded. “I did. That night with you showed me that I needed to go after what I craved, that there was more to me than Amara the businesswoman. Seeing that woman today threw me, and I reacted badly. Trescott Cove isn’t such a big place and I should have known it would happen eventually. I haven’t seen her since that day three years ago. I thought she had moved away. Yet she has a business close to where I live. I’m sorry, Jacques.”

Shaking his head, he squeezed her hand. “Don’t you dare apologize to me.”

Amara nodded amused. “You look so cute when you’re fierce.”

Jacques smiled in response. “I’m afraid of you now, knowing you can kick in my balls and do serious damage.”

Amara laughed at him.

She reached down and ran her hand against the cloth covering his penis. “I’m rather fond of this so treat us both right.”

Jacques groaned as she stroked down his slacks over his cock with her finger.

“For now, how about a reward?” Amara shifted to straddle him. She rubbed against him, making his shaft harden even more.

Jacques’ arms banded around her. A thought occurred to him. “Wait a minute.” Amara stopped her downward descent to kiss him. She glanced at him quizzically. Jacques lost his train of thought as she undulated her hips, but then he remembered. “I want you in bed. Of all the places we’ve been together, I love having you in bed. Especially the cuddling afterwards.”

Amara’s face went thoughtful. “You know, you’re right. I love you holding me.” She stood and held out her hand to him. “But I’m taking you to bed, Mr. Falcone.”

The hunger in her gaze as he put his hand in hers humbled him. This woman had let him into her heart and life. He stood, letting Amara lead him up the stairs to her bedroom. She stepped inside and walked him to the bed. She turned and undressed him slowly, running her hand under his suit jacket and pulling it off his shoulder. He shrugged and let it fall. She unbuttoned his shirt and removed that. Her hot hands made him shiver. Amara smiled, a dark sexy grin, and continued to undress him. He toed off his shoes while she unbuttoned his slacks. She put her hands inside by his hips then pushed down and let his slacks drop. She looked down. He followed her gaze. His cock tented his boxers. Amara smiled and her hands went into the waist of the boxers and stripped them off him. The feel of her hands on his hips made him gasp. Amara stepped back and shoved him back onto the bed. Jacques laughed and settled himself, waiting.

She stripped quickly, her hands impatient. His mouth watered as she removed her blouse and bra, freeing her bountiful breasts. She shimmied out of her slacks, taking off her underwear in the same movement. The sight of her clean mound made him swallow hard. Amara got on the bed, straddling him. She raised herself up and impaled herself on his erection. Jacques gasped at the feel of her enveloping his cock in her hot pussy. It clenched around him tightly. A sigh whooshed out as he reveled in the feel of her. No matter how many times or ways they made love, the excitement of it always drove him wild. Amara raised herself up and pushed down on his shaft, her eyes locked to his. Jacques’ back bowed at the feel of her riding him. Amara murmured and laid her body

down against his. Her breasts nestled against his chest, creating fine shivers of pleasure. She pulled his hands up over his head, twining her fingers with his. Jacques gripped her fingers.

“Amara,” Jacques whispered.

Amara moaned and undulated her hips. Groaning, Jacques felt the pressure fill his cock to overflowing. She rotated her hips again, setting off sparks of pleasure. Tightening his fingers on hers, he felt her firm grip. She put her head next to his face and kissed along his cheek then across to his lips. Amara licked his lips and, when he opened, she speared her tongue into his mouth. Jacques gasped and she swallowed it down. Amara rotated her hips and Jacques felt the pressure build. He rolled over, moving her beneath him. Amara wrapped her legs high over his back. He looked at her as she undulated against him. Jacques strove for control. Amara leaned up, lapped along his nipple and bit him. He lost control, pumping into her fiercely.

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Amara screamed as Jacques thrust into her in a deep push. She wrapped her legs tighter around his back and came in a long blast of pleasure.

“Jacques.”

He pumped harder and rolled his hips in a motion that created a devastating sensation. She felt the delicious tightening in the pit of her stomach. Amara moved her hips in a countermotion and felt his thrusts speed up. Her fingers tightened within his grasp as she ground down onto his cock, sucking him in. He groaned and she felt him pulse inside of her. He twisted his hips. Pleasure hit Amara, sending her over the edge.

She gasped and held him as he roared his release. Pleasure gushed from her, coating him in fire. Jacques’ hips pumped as his release filled her up and up. Amara tightened her legs around him as her pussy milked him and gave him her release. After a few moments, he collapsed on her, but held himself so as not to crush her. Jacques turned his head and kissed the side of her neck. She turned and met his lips, kissing him. Amara felt him quicken again inside of her and her body fired in reaction. Jacques chuckled against her lips. He drew back and she saw the love and care in his gaze.

“I can’t get enough of you, Amara. I love you.”

She kissed him, whispering, “I love you.”

He pumped his hips lazily and she rolled hers. Amara sank deeper into the kiss as she rotated in a countermotion, letting him sweep her away.

* * * *

Amara glanced in the mirror and fluffed her hair. She reapplied her lipstick, then put it in her bag and turned, going back to the door. She chuckled. She was starting to think of the Rissablu as “their place.” They were having dinner with Aidan before he left. Pulling open the door, she searched her bag for a mint. She closed her purse as she found it and walked forward. Bumping into someone, Amara chuckled.

“Sorry, I did—” Amara trailed off as her gaze met emerald green.

She waited for the feeling of loss to fill her. It didn’t. Not saying anything, Amara stepped around the woman but stopped and glanced down at the woman’s hand gripping her arm. She glanced back at the woman’s face, finding a look of contrition there.

“I didn’t know he was involved with you.” The woman’s voice was husky.

Amara stared at her in disbelief. The woman removed her hand.

"I didn't know. Not at first, and by the time I found out, it was too late. I was in love and stupid."

Amara nodded. She could understand that. After all, she had missed Kevin's cheating on her, although all the signs were there.

The woman stuck out her hand. "My name is Talia Michaels."

Amara was surprised to realize she hadn't even known the woman's name. She shook Talia's hand and released it. "Amara Montgomery."

Talia took a deep breath. "I should have done this a long time ago. I'm sorry, Ms. Montgomery, for all the pain I have caused you."

Amara was amused by her stiff delivery. "You're not accustomed to apologizing, are you?"

Talia gave a small smile. "No, but I can admit when I'm wrong. And I was, no matter what lies Kevin told us."

Amara heard the same bitterness that she used to feel. She grabbed Talia's hand again. "Don't let him turn you bitter." She looked behind her, seeing Jacques at the table beyond then returned her gaze to Talia. "Not all men are like him. There are good men out there."

Talia laughed, a bitter sound. "I've given up on men. They cause nothing but heartache."

Amara squeezed her hand. "You'll find someone."

Talia dropped her gaze then looked up again. "I wanted to blame you for Kevin not choosing me. I wanted to hate you, but in reality, I hated myself for being so stupid."

Talia smiled fiercely. "I got over that; then put the blame where it belongs, with that lying fuck Kevin."

There was fire in Talia's gaze. Amara laughed. Talia's lips twitched and Amara hugged her. Talia stiffened briefly and gripped Amara tightly. Amara drew back. "There's nothing to forgive. We were both his victims. You never know. We may end up friends because of this."

Talia seemed surprised, then pleased. "You're an amazingly forgiving woman, Ms. Montgomery."

Amara squeezed her shoulders. "Amara." She kissed her cheek and patted her shoulder again. "We'll have to do lunch. How are the kids?"

An expression of pain flashed across Talia's face. "I had an accident and lost the baby and my son."

Amara's heart clenched in pain and tears stung her eyes. She hugged her again, then let Talia go. "We'll talk. Call me." She reached into her purse and gave Talia a card. Talia did the same.

Amara read it, before focusing back on Talia. "You're the owner of Tantalize?" Talia nodded, and Amara could tell that despite her rich honey skin she was blushing. Amara chuckled. "Oh, we will definitely have to get together. Call me." Amara turned and hurried away.

*

"She's right, you know," Aidan said from behind Talia.

When he was returning from his trip to the restroom he had seen Amara talking with this woman and gotten curious. He had listened as they talked and was impressed with Amara's graciousness and Talia's spirit.

Talia stiffened and looked back at him. She raised her chin as he walked up to her. “She’s right, Talia.” She continued to regard him, but still said nothing. He watched her, waiting her out.

After a moment, she spoke, arrogance in every word. “I saw you with her and the man she was with a few days ago. You say my name with such familiarity as if you know me. Yet I don’t know who you are and don’t care to.”

Still he said nothing, waiting her out.

She raked him with expressive emerald eyes. “Right about what?” Her tone was snippy.

He stifled a chuckle, she was a spitfire. “About what you need.” She viewed him with a confused look on her face. He came closer to her as he said softly, “All you need is a good man.”

Her eyes widened, then narrowed, “Are you applying for the job?”

Aidan shook his head. “No.” She smirked at him and turned away. He grabbed her and whirled her to him. He caught her fist as it flew at him. He studied her. “I don’t apply.”

He brought his head down and covered her lips. Talia stiffened before relaxing into him. He shifted his grip. With a firm tug he pulled her into his body and pushed his tongue into her mouth. She murmured and kissed him wantonly. Aidan jerked back, hissing. Talia pulled away, glared and walked away rapidly. He raised his hand to his mouth, touching his tongue where she had bitten him. He watched her. She looked back, glaring, before joining a man across the room. Talia touched the man’s hand. Jealousy roared through Aidan and he took a step towards them, but stopped. He shook his head. Aidan rolled his tongue around his mouth, tasting her on his lips. His eyes narrowed as he walked back into the dining room. With a last peek at her, he went back to the table to join Amara and Jacques. He listened absently to them.

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“I’m going to miss Aidan,” Amara said, staring after the limo as she stood with Jacques outside the Rissablu.

“I should be jealous, but I’m not. He’ll be back in a few weeks.”

Jacques rested a hand on her waist and led her to the car. Amara laughed and put her arm around his waist. They reached the car and she raised her gaze to meet his. Jacques looked at her.

She watched his eyes as she said, “I love you, Jacques Falcone.”

His eyes crinkled with care and need. “I love you, Amara Montgomery.”

He leaned in and kissed her. Amara wrapped her arms around him and let his kiss sweep her away, marveling at how going after what she craved had led to the man of her dreams.

The End

About the Author:

Taige Crenshaw has been enthralled with the written word from the time she picked up her first book. It wasn’t long before she started to make up her own tales of romance.

With novels set in today's world, in alternate dimensions or in the future, she writes with adventure, fun sassy heroines and sexy heroes.

Always hard at work creating new and exciting places, Taige can be found curled up with a hot novel with exciting characters when she is not creating her own. Join her in the fun, frolic, interesting people and far reaches of the world in her novels.

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