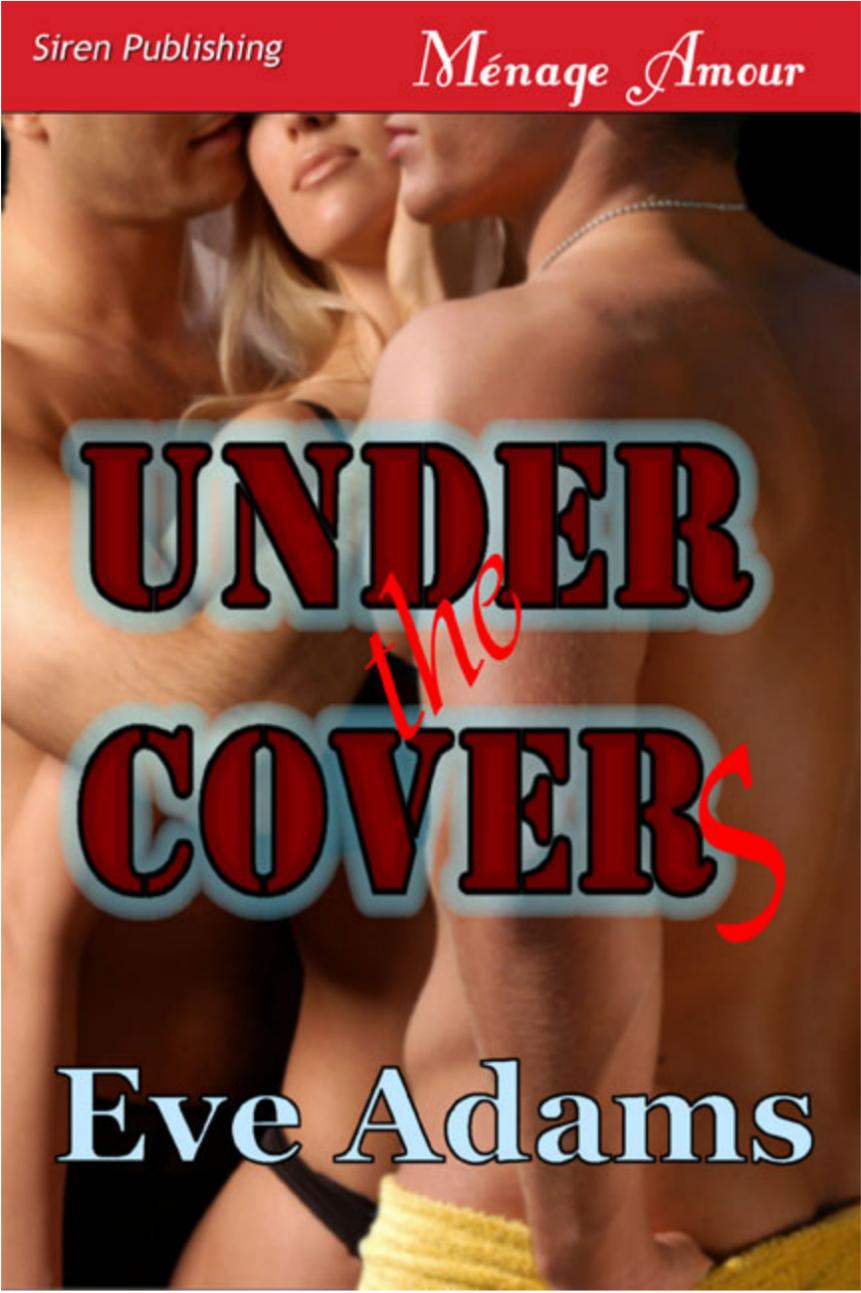


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UNDER
the
COVERS

Eve Adams

UNDER THE COVERS

Covert Lovers 1

Eve Adams

MENAGE AMOUR



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DEDICATION

For Cindy Waldon, who has always been such a tremendous supporter of the authors at SirenBookstrand. I hope this dedication shows you how much I truly appreciate your support and friendship.

UNDER THE COVERS

Covert Lovers 1

EVE ADAMS

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Chapter 1

"You're on, sweet ass."

Sweet ass? That's a first.

Before Mia Andrews could so much as squeak a protest, the curtain opened and lights flooded her vision. She stayed on the "X" as instructed, completely paralyzed in fear. *Just breathe. In. Out. In. Out.* She squinted at the brightness, grateful it blinded her from just how many men were out there. She brought her hand up to shield her eyes.

She'd never been so scared in her life. What if men didn't start bidding on her? Scratch that. What if they *did*? She told herself to calm down, but standing on a stage about to be auctioned off to the highest bidder had her a bit frazzled.

A bit? *That* was a severe understatement. Terrified out of her mind would be more accurate. How else could she explain why she thought posing as a courtesan at a gentlemen's club in Seattle would help her find her missing sister? Did Aimee stand on the stage like this, on this very spot? Did she have a hard time breathing in the get ups they made her wear? Was she terrified, barely able to breathe just like Mia?

The first bid came in and she took a deep breath, holding it in until it burned in protest to be let out. Darting her gaze away from the crowd, she spotted a striking man leaning up against the wall next to the emergency exit. It was too dark to really get a good look at him, but even with all the

shadows she saw how rough-cut and intriguing his looks were.

Hmm. Would he make a bid on her? If other men out there looked like they could double as a male underwear model, she wouldn't mind sharing a drink with him. A shiver washed through her as she thought about what else they'd share. A kiss? The chance to explore each other's bodies?

A bed?

His hands in his pockets, he seemed interested in everyone in the room. Everyone except her. Was he even bidding? Not once did he glance up at the stage. Instead, he kept scanning the room, carefully, slowly. Why would he be here if he didn't have any interest in the latest woman up for bid? Maybe she wasn't his type? For some unexplainable reason, that bothered her.

"One thousand." Mia squinted to see another man sitting in the shadows, sipping at the contents of his drink. He offered her a grin and a raise of his glass when their eyes met. Not eyes. *Eye*. He had a patch over the other and, with the puffy white shirt he looked just like a pirate. Ah jeez. He'd probably have her swab his deck before having her walk his plank. She really hoped this time "X" did not mark the spot.

"One thousand, five hundred." Her gaze darted over to yet another man who couldn't quite bring his gaze above her breasts. Great. So far she had a pirate and a boob-gazer. He even licked his lips as he gawked up on the stage at her, which sent an uncomfortable shudder ripping through her.

"Two thousand." Back to the pirate.

"Four thousand." The boob-gazer challenged the pirate.

The man against the wall flicked his gaze up at her before bringing his attention back to the men bidding on her. He shifted feet before standing and taking a step toward the stage.

"Five," the mystery man finally spoke in a rich baritone that hummed through her system. With a single word he challenged both the pirate and boob-gazer and had them uncomfortably fidgeting in their seats. He kept his attention on the crowd and not her. Again the display wounded her.

"Six. Six thousand dollars for a night with this voluptuous goddess in black leather." Some guy with a fake Latino accent spouted out. His false moustache barely hung to his lip. *Not much of a disguise, buddy*. He had more gold wrapped around his neck than Mr. T in his early years. Mia closed her eyes and prayed someone, *anyone*, would bid higher.

She wanted to desperately cover herself with her hands, but fought the

urge and instead coiled her fingers into fists at her side. The black leather corset she had strapped on constricted her breathing, and the tiny excuse of black panties barely covered the curls of her mound, let alone anything else.

"Sixty-five hundred." Her eyes still closed, she had no idea if the pirate or the boob-gazer made the bid. Either way, she was screwed.

Literally.

"Seven." She knew the mysterious man made the bid. His voice held an edge of authority that couldn't be denied.

"Eight thousand." Mia blinked her eyes open to see the pirate stand. His angry eyes—*eye*—on the mystery man, he added, "I will pay eight thousand dollars for the rights to this wench."

Wench? Didn't people stop using that term in, like, the eighteenth century? Besides, The Emerald Club used the term courtesan to label their *wenches*. Apparently whore was just too racy a term for the hot underground Seattle club.

The mystery man casually turned toward the boob-gazer. The man shook his head slightly and, finally, lowered his eyes. Taking another step toward the stage, the mystery man lifted himself and partially sat on the stage, still keeping his back to Mia and his attention on the crowd.

"Ten thousand," he said curtly, directing the words toward the pirate. Wow, really? He was willing to fork out ten thousand dollars for one night with her? No doubt he'd want her to perform whatever little sexual perversions he had in mind. Still, spending even one hour with this handsome stranger far outweighed an entire night with the pirate.

She looked out over the wave of men all drooling as they stared at her standing on the stage. She felt completely exposed in the tight-as-hell corset. The thigh-high stockings were a nice touch, and coupled with the four-inch stilettos, she had to be a sight. The shoes hurt like hell and her toes had already gone numb. But, as the other girls informed her, beauty was painful and she'd just have to deal with it.

The mystery man bidding on her stood and squared his shoulders in an obvious dare for someone to make another bid. His voice rang with command when he asked, "Anyone else?"

The boob-gazer had already called it quits, and the Latino guy didn't make another bid, so she assumed he'd withdrawn as well. The pirate glared at him, but gave him a slight shake of his head.

Mia felt a warm glow flow through her, and tried to ignore it. She refused to enjoy the way he just stepped in and saved her from God only knew what. She didn't know this man. What he had in store may be far worse than whatever the others wanted to do. But she couldn't stop herself from watching with smug delight as the others slunk back into their corners.

He turned to her then, robbing her of breath and completely captivating her senses. Steely eyes as gray as the heavy smoke above an angry fire bore down on her. He had hair the color of midnight, and well-toned arms with ripped biceps. *Oh mama*. She parted her lips and tried to suck in a breath. The way the corset constricted her airways made that quite a challenge.

She couldn't help but let out a breath in a smile as he captured her gaze with his. Grateful. That was the only word she knew to explain the feeling stirring deep inside her. Well, there were a few others floating around in her brain. Hunger. Lust. Fear.

Silence fell on the room. The owner of those hard eyes also possessed one hell of a set of shoulders. He wore a black leather sleeveless top, and well-fitted jeans. The cowboy boots added a mouthwatering look to the outfit. As he continued to stare up at her, he ran his fingers through his short, dark hair and offered her a slow, almost reluctant grin.

For some reason, the gesture had her nipples taut, straining against the leather binding them. A tightness started in her womb and with jolts of erotic lightning spread down to the folds of her pussy, drenching them.

After several seconds, she heard the gavel slam down. The sound broke her of her trance and she glanced over to see the announcer offer her out to the very man she'd been ogling.

Maybe this whole courtesan act she had going wouldn't be such a bad thing after all. Reaching out to her benefactor, she almost touched him when the fight broke out.

"I wanted her," the pirate slurred, pushing Steely Eyes. Her mystery man finally broke their contact and turned toward the belligerent pirate.

"Guess you should have brought your other wallet," he retorted in that rich baritone that kept her body vibrating with delicious tension. He turned then, and when he doubled up his fists, Mia tensed.

"You son-of-a-bitch!" Pirate threw a punch. Steely Eyes blocked and threw one of his own. It connected with Pirate's one good eye and down he went.

Mia took a step back, awestruck two men were fighting over her. Men, she reminded herself, that paid well for the right to have sex with her. That thought broke her of her lust-induced interest in the mystery man. He wanted sex. They all wanted sex.

Sex.

Sex.

Sex.

Nothing else. Mia chanted it over and over, knowing what she had to do, and not liking it. Still, if she wanted to earn her place here at Seattle's hottest underground club, she needed to blend in. It was the only way to stay on Aimee's trail.

Shaking out his hand, Steely Eyes ignored the man writhing around at his feet and instead swung that hefty gaze back up to her, painfully stopping her heart a beat.

"Shall we?" He reached to her. The corners of his lips curled up ever so slightly and, just like that, the rest of the world disappeared once again.

A flicker of apprehension coursed through her. This man, this gorgeous human with bottomless gray eyes, wanted her. Her! Although she may look the part, she definitely didn't have the sexual experience he no doubt expected. Would he ask for a refund? Could he even do that?

Glancing down at his offering, she placed her shaky hand in his. His grin faded as he furrowed his handsome brow. Oh no. He already knew. The lump stirring in her stomach shot straight to her throat.

"Come on," he said easily and, keeping his body between hers and everyone else's, led her over to the stairs on the side of the stage. She barely stayed upright in the stilettos and as she took the first step down, lost her balance and fell forward.

She twisted her ankle and flipped around, falling back first. He caught her in his strong arms and simply held her there. One hand on her back and the other on her breast, when he realized where his hand landed he immediately moved it down to her waist.

His other hand remained on the small of her back and the gesture made her feel warm and safe. She immediately shook that thought. This man had just purchased her for a night of sex. Nothing more. And, she thought with a shudder, nothing less.

"You okay?" That sweet baritone voice reverberated through his chest.

With her arms on his hard chest, she slowly looked up into his eyes. Her breath hitched when he looked down at her, their lips a tormenting inch apart. Straightening, she stood eye level with him, thanks to the heels.

"Yes," she lied and swallowed hard. No, she wasn't all right. She was about to have sex with a perfect stranger. And he *was* perfect.

Stepping back, he gave her a slow and sexy once over, raking his gaze across her entire body and drawing a quiver from her. Her body betrayed her. She shouldn't feel the least bit excited by his touch. And yet, she did. Her already hard nipples pushed against the leather corset. Wetness in her nether lips expanded her already stimulated clit.

Wrapping his fingers around hers, he pulled her in front of him and placed his large hand back onto the small of her back as he led her over to his table. When he didn't slow as they passed his table, she did. He pushed her to keep going and when she tried to roll out of his hold, he gently grasped her hips and kept her moving.

"Where are we going?"

He turned to her and gave her another lazy grin. "I have a room reserved upstairs."

A room? They weren't going to stay out here and maybe have a drink? Or two? God knew she needed something to take the edge off. Posing as an overpaid whore had her tense, to say the least. And these shoes were killing her.

Why would he reserve a room unless he'd expected to buy one of the courtesans for the night? The thought that she wasn't anything more than a woman to share his bed for the night had her feeling oddly bruised.

She'd read the contract before she signed it and knew she had no choice but to follow him out of the darkness of the club and into the elevator. He pushed the button for the second floor.

This had better work. She'd already done everything else she could think of. After filing the missing persons report, she fully expected the entire team from *CSI* to show up on her doorstep and work their magic. She expected every detective in Seattle to take a personal interest in her case, to make it his priority. They'd find Aimee and return her home all safe and sound.

But she didn't get any of that.

What she did get was a phone call by one of the desk cops at the Seattle Police Department asking her the same questions she'd already answered on

the missing persons report. It took all of fifteen minutes and a, "We'll let you know if anything comes up" answer. That was almost three weeks ago.

So she started her own investigation. After paying a private investigator her entire life's savings only for him to tell her Aimee's trail stopped at a club in Seattle's underground nightlife, Mia decided to take matters into her own hands. She'd pick the trail up where the PI left off and find her sister.

She had to. Aimee was her only family left.

And now here she stood, rigid, her nerves dancing with anxiety at what this man would want her to do. Would he tie her up? Blindfold her? Both? An alarming thought jumped into her mind. What if he wasn't alone? What if he had a group of friends waiting in the room for her? That would certainly explain his eagerness to offer ten thousand for a night with her. Ten thousand split five ways wouldn't break the bank for any of them.

Five?

She needed to get a firm hold on her imagination. When the elevator doors whooshed open, she tensed, fully expecting a group of men to reach in and grab her.

Instead the doors opened to a hallway. He stepped out and looked both ways before nodding and motioning for her to follow him. She narrowed her eyes as she looked at him. "How many are there?"

He mimicked her gesture. "How many what?"

"Are you alone?"

Spiking an ebony brow, he gave her a sideways glance as he started down the hallway, conveying how crazy her question sounded. "I'm sure those colored contacts don't make your eyesight that bad. Come on."

Stunned he could tell she wore contacts, let alone they were colored, she followed him until he stopped in front of a door and swiped a card. The door clicked open and he stepped into the room.

Mia stopped at the threshold. Her distress gnawed away any confidence she'd built up. She was about to step into a room with a complete stranger, about to open her legs and offer up to him something she'd only offered up to a man she'd been in love with.

"I'm not going to hurt you," he stated gently and held the door open for her. With a wink that nearly dropped her to her knees, he nodded toward the door. "Come in. Let's have some champagne."

A drink? She definitely needed that. With a deep breath she stepped

over the threshold and into the room. A small room, with a tiny table and chair in one corner and a sink with a bottle of champagne buried in ice in the other, the majority of the space was taken by the king size bed in the middle of everything. It had a metal headboard and four metal posts. There was no doubt what this room had been designed for. Her stomach lurched.

When the door closed, she jumped. A deep chuckle pulled her attention to the man. "Don't be scared. I promise I won't bite."

Something in his manner soothed her rattled nerves and she let out a breath. "Right."

He walked over to the sink and popped the top on the champagne, poured them each a glass. Offering her a flute, she walked over and almost lost her balance again, grabbing onto the table to stop herself from going down. She recovered just as she accepted the glass from him.

He didn't even try to hide his smirk. "Let's get you out of that get up. Those shoes have got to be murder."

"You have no idea." Her already erratic pulse jumped, her heart in her throat as it thudded in her ears. She breathed deep to keep her emotions in check. *You can do this. It's only sex. You've had sex before. It's like riding a bike. Only this time you'll be riding something long, hard, and without any training wheels.*

That didn't help. A cold knot formed in her stomach, tensing whatever nerves weren't already so stretched they were close to snapping. Closing her eyes, she took a long drink and prayed this night wouldn't end like Aimee's last night here.

Chapter 2

"Have a seat on the bed," he instructed matter-of-factly. His back to her as he pulled something out of the cabinet under the sink, he stood and turned to her when she didn't move. His look conveyed his words even before he said them. "That wasn't a request."

Those steely gray eyes tunneled through her resolve. With an uneasy breath, she moved to the bed and sat on the edge, her feet on the floor. He approached her, a white apparel box in his hand. Did he plan to handcuff her to the bed? Spread her on her stomach and fuck her from behind? Her thoughts raced with all the things he could do to her, and she had no choice but to let him. If she refused she'd be kicked out of the club and lose any chance at finding her sister.

Kneeling in front of her, he brought his hand up and traced her stocking-covered leg with the tips of his fingers. His wicked gaze watched his fingers travel down her thigh, her knee, her shin. Ever so often he'd curl his sensual lips into a grin. When his hand reached her stiletto, he unfastened it and slowly pulled it off, his thumb running along the bottom of her sensitive foot. She jerked back, ticklish.

Smiling at her reaction, he held his focus on his hands as they traveled back up her leg and jumped to the other one. He followed the same path as before and removed her other stiletto.

Ah. Bliss. When he actually started to massage her feet, she wanted to kiss him. Those shoes really had been murder on her feet, and she'd only worn them for less than an hour. She couldn't imagine women wearing them day after day. The way he stroked her flesh shot blazing shockwaves straight up her leg, centering in on her vagina and heating her core.

"What's your name?" He now had both hands running up and down her right leg, sending delicious chills washing over her. His gaze flicked up to

hers and back down to his task.

"Candy. No, Cherry. No, um..." The heat slapped her cheeks when she realized she couldn't remember the name she'd used on her contract.

That slow, sexy grin he gave her told her it didn't matter. For the first time since her decision to act as a courtesan to find her sister, she felt some of the tension lift. Leisurely, he walked his gaze up her leg, pausing as he cocked his head to the side to watch his fingers as they disappeared to the soft spot behind her knee. Lifting her foot, he rested it on his thigh and crossed his arms on her shin as he brought those charismatic eyes up at her. Her heart flipped. Twice. "What would *you* like me to call you?"

Lover. Mia almost gave in to the pull of her body. But at the last minute reason caught her and she remembered her name. Her *fake* name. "Candy."

"Candy, it is." He winked then and her insides liquefied. Reaching up, he tucked his fingers under her thigh high stockings and slowly brought them down, one at a time. He discarded them along with the shoes. Now naked from her thighs down, she felt the hot moisture of his breath as he ran his lips dangerously close to her skin, all the way up to where the top of the stockings used to be. He paused there, flattening his hand on the inside of her thigh and slowly inching his way higher. She felt the tip of his finger brush the material of her panties, shooting burning tremors rippling through her pussy lips. Instinctively, she jumped back and locked her knees together.

The man pulled his hand free from between her thighs, rubbing his knuckles as he riveted this gaze on her, a crooked grin on his face. "Ouch."

"I-I just-I don't want—"

"Is there a problem, Candy?"

Hell yes, there was a problem. A *big* problem. She wasn't ready to have sex with this man. She didn't even know his name. Blinking rapidly, the spark of tears threatened to surface, her raw fear taking over any other emotion. Her bottom lip started to quiver and her breath grew shallow as her situation took hold.

He paid thousands of dollars for her to submit to whatever he wanted her to do. And she was contractually obligated to do it. He wasn't allowed to hurt her, but as soon as he penetrated her, stabbed his flesh into hers, the pain he'd bring would be more mental than physical.

Gulping hard, her tears nearly choking her, she sucked in a harsh breath. She couldn't do it. She couldn't offer her body up to this man. He'd turn her

in, she'd be kicked out, and she'd lose Aimee forever.

"I don't want to do this." Her voice broke miserably, knowing her admission signed her get-out-of-the-club card.

He stood up to his full frightening height in front of her and for one painful minute, she feared he'd force himself on her. Instead, he let out a long sigh and sank down on the bed next to her. "It's always a little scary the first time. You're safe with me. I promise not to hurt you."

"I've had sex before," she corrected. Now why would she go and admit that to him?

He chuckled and reached out, covered her knee with his large hand. Instead of it scaring her, it gave her comfort. "Then what's the problem?"

"I-I don't even know your name."

His gaze captured hers and his features hardened. "Why does that matter? I'm sure you don't remember the names of all the men you fuck night after night. What's one more?"

Deeply offended he'd think that of her, she jumped to her feet and backed away from the bed, the heat of his words creeping up her neck, fueling her fury. "How dare you!"

He brought his hands up like a traffic cop. "Slow down, Candy. Why take offense to that? It's true, isn't it?" Spiking his brow, he waited for her answer.

She snapped her mouth closed, pissed. She couldn't tell him the truth, couldn't tell him she'd only had sex a handful of times her entire life. She couldn't share with him the real reason she posed as a courtesan, the real reason she dressed like a whore and allowed herself to be auctioned off.

This man may know where Aimee disappeared to, and why. Hell, he may have had something to do with her disappearance. He still hadn't told her his name, which had her intrigued and scared at the same time. She didn't want to ask again. Swallowing her fear, she took a seat in the chair at the table and crossed her legs. "I-I'm sorry. I'm just a little nervous."

"No kidding," he replied wryly. "Listen, maybe if you slipped into something a little more comfortable and a little less," he paused and slowly raked that sexy gaze over her body, leaving her tingling wherever it landed, "revealing, you'd feel more comfortable?"

Would she ever! "I don't have anything else."

He stood then and brought the white box over. Kneeling down in front

of her, he opened it to her, unwrapping tissue paper and pulling out a long, black satin robe. Mia almost cried right there. It wasn't even see through. She grabbed it out of his hands and held it to her chest.

"I'm not here to have sex with you," he finally admitted. Her insides relaxed, while at the same time her suspicions went on full alert.

"But you paid for me."

He sat back down on the bed. "Yes."

"But you don't want to have sex with me?"

That grin shattered her guard, softening her to him. When he let out a light chuckle, those gorgeous steely eyes danced mirthfully. "I didn't say that. I said I didn't bring you here to have sex."

Completely baffled, she simply sat there, staring at him. He ran his fingers through his hair and stood again, went to the sink to pour more champagne. "Why don't you get out of that get up? Slip the robe on."

He turned and leaned back against the sink, sipping at his flute. She lifted the robe and stood to change into it. Looking back over at him, he simply stood there, studying her. "Are you going to watch?"

"Hell yes," he retorted. "I paid ten thousand dollars for tonight. I should at least get a glimpse of what I won't be getting."

Although the mortification slapped her cheeks, burning them to what she knew would be a glowing red, she didn't argue. If a little show satisfied him, she'd be happy to abide. He stood clear across the room and already told her he didn't plan to have sex with her. She didn't see the harm in it.

She tried to ignore that hungry gleam as he eyed her the way a panther would eye its prey right before it pounced. Bringing the flute up to his sexy lips, he took a long pull of his champagne.

"Okay," she agreed and set the robe on the table. Turning back to him, she hastily untied the string binding the corset around her.

"No."

She stopped, as did the beating of her heart. "No?"

"Do it slowly."

Ah hell. He *did* want a show. Nodding, she slowly loosened the tie and started to work the corset loose. "Like this?"

"Sway your hips."

"To what? There's no music."

"I could hum if you'd like."

His comment lightened some of the tension in the room, and her mood. With a slight smile, she started to sway. One by one she pulled the leather tie through the eyelets. It made her feel sexy as hell as her hips rocked back and forth to a steady beat inside her head.

"Touch yourself."

His comment threw her off. She lost her rhythm as she darted her gaze nervously. That dark primal hunger growing in his gray eyes shattered her propriety and suddenly she found herself short of breath. Just the thought of performing for him, turning him on with her little show and tell had her so wet she wouldn't stop him if he wanted to join in.

Slowly, unsure if he meant for her to touch her pussy or what, she started high and cupped her large breasts. Pinching her nipples through the material, the pulse surged deep through her womb and clenched the walls of her cunt.

"That's it. Now run your finger down the front of your panties. Feel the scorching heat of your sweet little pussy."

What harm was there in giving him a really good show? Besides, having him talk to her like that made her feel so deliciously dirty. She let her hand trail down the front of her, over her damp panties. The heat floated up from the material and burned into her fingers, exciting her.

"Now I want you to tease yourself. Play with your pussy, rub your clit the way you want me to," he commanded, his voice a low, thick growl.

She licked her lips, the full longing of her body and its need to be touched overtaking any other senses. Taking her middle finger, she slipped it down between her thighs, feeling how wet she'd gotten from this little show. Rubbing her throbbing clit, she closed her eyes and allowed herself to really enjoy the feeling.

"Fucking gorgeous," he groaned. "Keep going." This dirty little pleasure had her entire body on fire, her nerve endings tingling and sparking with erotic energy. "Is your pussy wet?"

"Yes," she hissed and swallowed down a moan. She shouldn't be enjoying this. It was so wrong to masturbate in front of a perfect stranger, and yet she couldn't stop. She didn't want to stop. Instead, she increased the pressure, the tempo. Oh, God. It felt so good, so wickedly forbidden to play with herself in front of him.

"Fuck yourself, baby. Slip your finger inside your panties and dip it into

your cunt. Tell me how it feels."

She wanted him to take the path, but since she assumed this was what he wanted—a show and nothing else—she decided to go all out. Doing as instructed, she pushed her finger deep inside her pussy. Her muscles fisted around her finger. "I'm so wet. My God."

"Slip those panties aside. Let me get a peek at that sweet cunt of yours."

Blinking her eyes open, they refused to focus. Instead her entire being focused on one thing and one thing only. She wanted to come. She needed it more than she needed her next breath. Pulling her panties aside, she exposed her swollen lips to him. Glancing down, she saw the glistening moisture clinging to her curls.

Not waiting for further instruction, knowing what her body craved, she pushed her finger between her lips and started to lazily circle her tight little clit. It jerked and spasmed as the waves of her orgasm started to grow deep within her. She licked her lips and threw her head back with a groan. Barely blinking, she rested her drunk gaze on him.

"Jesus Christ. It's beautiful." He licked his lips and her juices gushed. If he so much as whispered anywhere near her pussy, she'd come. She was already so close with the help of her own fingers. When he approached her, his eyes never leaving her face, she withdrew her finger and stood in stunned silence. "You're beautiful."

The air in the room crackled. Mia trembled with dark lust and something else she couldn't quite define. Pulling her into his arms, he lost his smile and bore his gaze deep into hers. She watched the hunger darken his eyes to almost black, swirling with a hazy lust that seemed to surround her. She licked her lips in preparation.

"Candy?"

She blinked up at him, not sure if she'd be able to get a word passed the lump in her throat. "Y-You said—"

"I'm not going to fuck you, but I am going to kiss you. May I?"

Was he kidding? He paid ten thousand dollars for the right to do whatever he wanted. If he wanted to tongue her from head to toe, she had to let him—and the thought didn't nearly have her as traumatized as it should have.

Nodding, she lifted her chin to grant him access. Lowering his head, he slanted his lips over hers, gently brushing them, testing her. When he pulled

back and ran his tongue across her bottom lip, she released a shudder.

He brought his gaze to hers, searching them, his need clearly blazing. Her juices completely drenched the folds of her pussy, her already swollen lips now tingling for his touch.

Slowly, he led her over to the bed and sat her down on the edge. "Let me finish undressing you," he whispered, his lips feathering across hers as he spoke. "I need to touch you."

"W-Where?"

"Everywhere you've just touched yourself for me. Let me finger fuck you the way you showed me you like it."

She nodded, unable to speak from the growing passion between them. He lay down on the bed with her and lowered his lips back to hers, really kissing her this time. This slow, lingering kiss reverberated through her entire soul. He parted her lips with a dart of his tongue, entwining it with hers. Their kiss deepened, awakening her body with lusty temptation. Wow, did this guy know how to deliver a kiss.

Her throbbing pussy demanded attention. His musky scent invaded her nostrils, sending her senses into a frenzy. Her body trembled for him to touch her, to attend to the growing ache coiling around her clit, crawling up the walls of her pussy. She felt her juices leaking around the thin material covering her cunt, pooling her desire in the crux she so desperately wanted him to concentrate on.

When he removed her corset and covered a waiting breast with his hand, pinching and rolling a hard nipple between his thumb and finger, she whimpered and weaved her fingers in his hair. His lips left hers to trail feathery kisses along her jaw line. As he settled in on the tender spot behind her ear, his hand left her breast and eased its way down to the flat of her tummy.

Bringing his mouth back up to hers, his lips captured hers and took her breath away. His hand descended in a lazy fashion, and when his fingers came to the satin fabric of her panties, he tucked them under the elastic and combed her coarse curls with his nails.

It felt so reckless to have him running his fingers through her mound. When he dipped his finger between the wet folds of her pussy, she pulled in a gasp. His kiss grew more demanding, consuming her completely. Like long lost lovers reunited after a forced separation, their bodies melted

perfectly together, and she instinctively spread her legs to open herself up to him.

"You're pussy is so wet," he rasped against her ear. The hot moisture of his breath sent shivers rushing through her, pulling at the tense coil squeezing her womb. He circled his fingers around her swollen clit, teasing her by brushing dangerously close, but not actually scraping a finger across. Whimpering again, she rolled her hips toward his fingers. "Do you want me to finger fuck you, baby? Do you want me to thrust my fingers in and out of your tight cunt until you come?"

She wanted his cock inside her, not his finger. She wanted his steely flesh pounding in and out of her pussy until she screamed his name in the throes of her orgasm. She wanted him to fuck her until she forgot *her* name.

But he'd already said he wasn't there to fuck her. And, she had to remember, she wasn't there to fuck him. "W-What else?" she urged, eager for him to continue his raunchy talk. The raunchier the better.

His deep chuckle rumbled in his chest and curled her toes. "You like it when I talk dirty, don't you?"

"Yes."

Nipping at her chin, raking his teeth across her sensitive flesh, he darted his tongue out to soothe wherever he bit. His fingers explored her inner lips, circling around her entrance but never penetrating. The sweet torment caused her hips to buck in an attempt to thrust his fingers inside her aching pussy.

His voice surfaced like low and lazy smoke. "I want to taste you. I want to cover your syrupy little cunt with my mouth and lick you until you come. Would you like that?"

"Oh, my God yes." She was panting now, so totally turned on by his words she didn't know if she could take any more. His fingers were relentless as they teased her pussy, barely brushing her clit, barely touching her entrance. "P-Please touch me."

"I am touching you."

"I want more," she admitted.

He brought his hand up away from her pussy and stroked the pad of his thumb across the peak of her breast. Her cunt released such a violent surge of juices she cried out. Instinctively, she loosely wrapped her arms around his neck as he kissed her collarbone, followed by the valley between her

breasts. When his mouth closed over a hard nipple, she cried out again, the sensation sending intense jolts of sensual pleasure swirling around her womb and attacking her pussy. Her lips prickled and softened, demanding his attention once again.

"Like me doing this?" He reached back down between her legs and thrust his finger deep inside her channel. She gasped and arched her back, pressing up against the palm of his hand, eager for contact against her clit. He withdrew his finger and swirled it around her entrance, tickling her, teasing her.

"What else have you got?" she purred, wanting him to take the same path with the raging hard-on he had pressed up against her hip. As a hint, she kicked out her hip and rubbed up against his cock, felt its hardness dig into her flesh.

"Not tonight, baby." He scooted his pelvis away. She whimpered in protest and tried to scoot closer. When his finger plunged back into her pussy, she hissed in a breath and dug her nails into his shoulders. "Ouch. Jesus, babe. If you take chunks as a result of a finger fuck, what would you do if I actually used my cock?"

"Why not find out?" She was desperate now, and had no problem begging. A slow heat invaded her, consuming her, removing any and all anxiety with pure and unbridled lust. Her body demanded release. He had the power to give it to her. "Please."

"Ah, all in good time," he rasped as he flicked his tongue over her nipple. She gasped and weaved her fingers in his hair. "For now, this is the extent of our good time."

"But—"

"Shh," he hushed her. "Just enjoy it. Fuck my finger, baby. Rub your hot cunt up and down my hand. Drench me in your sweet nectar. Let me feel you come."

He nuzzled into her neck as his fingers moved up and down her wet slit, mixing her juices, saturating her lips. When his thumb flicked her tiny bundle of nerves, the walls of her pussy quivered like a guitar string being strummed. With each stroke the quivering intensified. Tracing slow and lazy circles along her throbbing clit, he had her coiled so tight with sexual tension if he didn't speed it up, she'd shatter just from the torment.

Breathing in short gasps, a prisoner by her need for release, she rocked

her hips as he strummed faster and faster. She felt the first of the blissful waves surfacing and bit her lip.

Her orgasm crashed down in a white-hot explosion of light and pleasure so intense, it seized control over her. She threw her head back and cried out, grabbing on to the headboard behind her to pump against his hands. Wave after wave crashed down on her, and each time the blinding pleasure slammed her she cried out, thrashing her head back and forth.

When finally her orgasm slowed to aftershocks, her soul lowered itself back into her body. Dragging air into her burning lungs, she lay there, the harsh realization of what she'd just done sinking into her brain.

"Oh no."

"We didn't have sex," he pointed out. She jerked to a sitting position. He casually removed his hand from her panties and brought it to his mouth, watched her as he licked her juices from his fingers.

Oh, my God that was erotic as hell to see. She snapped out of her heated trance and tried to cover her bare breasts. "I did—You did—You promised!"

"And I kept it. We didn't have sex."

"Then what—"

"You needed to relax. An orgasm is a great way to relax." He pulled off his boots, then his jeans. Mia clearly saw the huge bulge in his boxers, pulsing with his own need.

"What are you doing?"

He rolled off the bed and stood, not at all trying to hide the enormous erection tenting his shorts. Pulling the leather vest off, he threw it on top of his jeans. After flipping on the side lamp, he walked over to the front door and locked it, and then turned off the overhead light. Her heart jumped in her chest at the sound, beating madly. Why did he just lock the door?

Casually walking back to the bed, his hard cock bobbing as he stepped, he sank back down on the bed and straightened out. He folded his hands behind his head and stared up at the ceiling. Mia sat there, puzzled as to what his next move would be.

When he closed his eyes, she darted her gaze back down to his rigid shaft. It stuck straight up in the air beneath his boxers, making it look like he had a teepee covering his groin. As if feeling her gaze, he shifted his cock, pushing it down toward his belly. It protested and sprang right back up.

Did he expect her to give him a blowjob? Hand job? What? "Um..."

"No."

No? "You don't even know what I was going to ask."

He opened his eyes and rested that steely gaze on her. There was almost a sadness mixed in the dark clouds of his eyes. "My hard-on will eventually go away. If it doesn't, I'll take care of it. I already told you, you're safe with me. I'm not going to make you do anything you don't want to do."

What if she really did want to take care of it? Her pussy throbbed, ached to be filled by that gorgeous steel rod. "But we just—"

"A finger fuck is not sex. And I did it because I knew you needed to relax." He closed his eyes again, let out a long sigh. "I, however, am already relaxed."

She eyed his erection. He didn't look so relaxed to her. This man baffled the hell out of her. "O-Okay."

"Tomorrow night we'll see if you're comfortable enough for me to eat you. I'm dying to taste that syrupy nectar as it gushes out of you when you come." He opened his eyes to slits and stole a glance her way. "Are you okay with that?"

Oh, dear God this man's raunchy words had her excited. And knowing he wanted to see her again had her insides twirling in anticipation. "Tomorrow night?"

He rolled and propped his head on his hand, his arm bent at the elbow as he looked at her. "And the next night. And the next. Maybe your boss will give me a weekly rate. At ten thousand a pop, this could get very expensive."

Weekly rate? The bile hit the roof of her mouth when his words reminded her of her place. She was a courtesan, a whore-for-hire. Of course he wanted to see her again. He didn't fuck her tonight. She wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. So he didn't sleep with her. Good. Great. She'd be able to keep her dignity for another day.

No doubt he'd keep bidding on her until he got what he wanted.

Humiliation slammed into her reserve, robbing her of breath. She'd just made out with a complete stranger, allowed him to finger fuck her until she came. God, she really was a whore.

"Candy, look at me."

Blinking back the burning tears of mortification, she turned and rested her eyes on his handsome face. He reached over and cupped her face with

his hand, undeniable sadness swirling in those dark orbs. "You don't belong up on that stage, we both know that."

Her breath hitched. He knew? How did he know? When did he figure it out? So many questions flooded her thoughts she didn't know which one to ask first. "How—what—why—"

"Are you always so articulate," he mused and leaned in to kiss her. It was a gentle brushing of his lips, and over before it truly started. "Now sleep. No doubt you'll need your rest to keep up your façade." He rolled over and turned out the light.

She sat there in the darkness, wondering whether this guy was for real.

Chapter 3

"Da man pay in cash," Guy explained as he handed her a wad of green bills. A few of the girls stopped applying their layers of make up to stare at the handful of money. "Here's your cut. Put it in a safe place."

All the questions came at once, and Mia found it too hard to focus on even one of them. She couldn't pull her gaze from the cash Guy placed in her hand.

"How much is it?"

"How much did he pay?"

"She's new, ain't she?"

The contract she'd signed, granting complete strangers access to every intimate part of her body, stipulated she'd receive fifty percent of the bid. Glancing down at the bills, she spread them, thoroughly enjoying the fact she held five thousand dollars in her hand. Without hesitation, she gave a hundred dollar bill to each of the women surrounding her. A few protested out of pride. Most didn't. Judging by the way they all hungrily eyed the bills, they needed the money more than she did.

She turned back to Guy when he grunted. His eyes wide, his mouth gaping, he shook his head. "You one crazy bitch. Dat be enough to buy a new hairstyle. Dat blonde nightmare you wear looks like shit." With that, he walked away, continuing to shake his big, baldhead.

"He don't like you much," Antoinette stated and crossed her arms as she walked up to Mia, shoving her hundred into a knee-high spiked boot. They both watched him leave the back area where the courtesans prepared for the night. A woman with bright red, frizzy curls and more makeup than Tammy Faye—fake beauty mark and all—kept her vacant mouse brown eyes on Guy. "Why is that?"

Mia shrugged and sat down at her vanity, not really caring about whether the creepy man liked her or not. It wasn't like she planned to invite

him to Christmas dinner. She folded the rest of the bills and slipped them underneath her wig. "Maybe he doesn't like strong women."

"I'm strong." As a demonstration, Antoinette held up her spaghetti thin arms and flexed. Mia cocked a brow. "Okay, fine. So I'm not Olympic athlete material like you. I can still hold my own against any John."

This was only her second night back stage at Seattle's Emerald Club and Mia already knew the girls referred to the men they bedded as their Johns. Unfortunately, even though she did feel a bond with the man who won her bid last night, she still didn't know his name. When she woke up this morning, he was already gone.

Another John.

She knew it shouldn't matter being so easy to resist. He'd paid a good chunk of change to sleep with her. She'd signed a contract, agreeing to comply with the benefactor's demands—no matter how sick and twisted they were—as long as it didn't bring her bodily harm. She never dreamed sleeping with her would be so literal.

After spending most of the night curled into a ball and leaned up against the headboard in that room with him, she finally gave in to sheer exhaustion. The courtesans weren't allowed to leave the room before the John. As long as he lay there sleeping, she had no choice but to stay and wait it out.

Now, as she stared at her reflection, her lids drooped. She'd barely been able to keep her eyes open all day as she typed up deposition after deposition. Being a paralegal didn't have all the bells and whistles she'd been promised in her eighteen months of night school, but it paid the bills.

"Why do you wear that ugly Carol Channing wig? You have long and gorgeous, thick hair the same color as the coffee I burn every morning." Antoinette plopped her skinny butt down next to Mia and started opening different lipstick canisters. Shaking her head, she capped them and threw each one down onto the desk and opened the next one.

"You know," Mia stated, pointed at the mountain of lipstick canisters scattered across her vanity and avoiding the original question. "If you organized those, you'd be able to find the shade you're looking for."

Antoinette waved her off. "I never know the shade I'm looking for until I find it."

Smiling, Mia shook her head and went back to her reflection. The blonde wig and brown contacts didn't nearly do her justice. Yes, the wig did

look like a cross between Carol Channing and the wig Julia Roberts wore in *Pretty Woman*, but it was the only one she could find that didn't make her look like a Halloween costume.

"There's a method to my madness," Antoinette went on to explain. "My lipstick has to match my mood. The last girl who sat in that spot thought my method was crazy, too."

The last girl?

"Tell me about her." Mia tried to sound casual, even though thoughts of her sister sitting in this very spot had her heart galloping. Lowering her eyes, she stared at her chipped polish on her short nails.

"Oh, some young thing. She had stars in her eyes, that one. Probably fresh off the ferryboat. Thought being a courtesan at the *great* Emerald Club was going to be all diamonds and champagne. I told her, 'Honey, this here ain't no *Moulin Rouge*,' you know? We don't break into song every night or wear glamorous costumes."

Mia glanced down at her bright red leather corset and matching panties. Definitely not glam. This and the black corset from last night came in a set. It only came with one pair of stockings, which she now had on. Not having enough sense to buy another pair of shoes, she had the brutal four-inch stilettos strapped back on her feet as well.

"The first couple of weeks she did just fine," Antoinette continued. Having apparently found a lipstick to fit her mood, she leaned toward her reflection to apply it. "But then Barry the Barbarian bought her for like a gazillion dollars."

"Who?"

"Barry," she repeated. "Really into BDSM. Heavy on the SM." Antoinette gave her a grin and a wink, which made Mia's insides twist. Was Antoinette into BDSM, too? And what did Barry the Barbarian do to her?

"What happened?"

Smacking her lips together to blot the lipstick, she smiled at herself. "Apparently she wasn't into it as much as he was. Now, I'm not saying this to scare you or nothing, but if you don't submit to whatever your John wants, you'll have Guy to answer to. That is if the John doesn't take care of it first."

Mia fought to keep her breathing steady. Cold beads of sweat broke out on her brow as she thought about what they did to that girl. She was almost

too scared to ask. Almost. "What did they do to her?"

"No one knows for sure," Antoinette answered sadly. "Guy disappeared for a few hours that night. We all know where he went."

Mia felt sick and swallowed down the bile threatening to erupt. "You do?"

"Again, I ain't telling you this to freak you out. But I think if the new girls know their place right off the get go, we wouldn't have so many leave." She put huge, God-awful earrings on and shook her head back and forth to watch them wiggle. They were so heavy they pulled at her lobes.

Mia wanted to scream at her to continue. Wringing her hands in her lap, she pressed the conversation. "What happened to her, Antoinette? What did they do to her?"

She stopped checking herself out in the mirror and turned toward Mia, openly studying her. "Why are you so interested? It ain't none of your business, Candy. It ain't none of any of our business."

Struggling to remain calm and not shake this woman, demand her to finish telling Mia what happened, she looked down and stared at the scatter of makeup across the surface of her vanity. *Quick, think of something.* "Like you said, if the new girls know their place..." she trailed off in the hopes it was enough of a prod.

"I don't know the details," Antoinette finally stated after a painful silence. "I just know that after that night, she changed. Before then, she was real friendly, you know? Like wanting to go out with all of us before everyone went back to our day lives. After a night with The Barbarian and Guy, she kept to herself, never showed up for work until right before it was time to go on."

"Where is she now?"

Antoinette shrugged her bony shoulders. "Don't know. She just didn't show up one day." She turned and shook her lipstick canister at Mia. "If you ask me, I think she ran away with one of her John's." She turned back and started to fluff her frizzy hair.

Please let her be with a John living it up in Bermuda. Mia tightened her fingers into fists, her nails digging into her palms. "Do you honestly believe that?"

"It's what we all want. Ask any of the bitches here. We aren't doing this because we all have an insatiable appetite to fuck strangers. I'd like to think

some rich dick out there wants the same pussy every night—at least one he doesn't have to rent."

Mia closed her eyes against the words. Antoinette made it sound so ordinary, like they weren't giving a piece of themselves away every night and dying a little bit more inside every time they opened their legs to another John.

She wanted to be disgusted at the words. Offended, at least. But she'd let her John kiss her, to bring her to orgasm with the help of his very gifted fingers. Just the thought of having him eat her, his tongue flicking her already quivering pussy walls had her sex weeping in anticipation.

"At least she didn't ask a million questions like the one before her," Antoinette mentioned as she continued to fluff her already frizzed scarlet hair. "I liked that kid. She actually sorta looked like you. Didn't bother with a disguise, though. It brought in high bids. You should think about losing the wig if you want to draw the big bucks, Candy."

Mia didn't say anything. She couldn't tell Antoinette why she came to The Emerald Club, couldn't tell her about her day job as a paralegal at a well-respected law firm. If word got out what she did at night, she'd be fired on the spot.

She focused on her sister and felt a stab of pain straight through her heart. Her baby sister went through hell here. The hatred she felt for Guy grew with a fury. "What was her name?"

"Who?"

"The girl before me."

"Bambi, like that cartoon."

Bambi? Mia's heart palpitated. Aimee loved Bambi. It was her favorite cartoon as a kid. She still had a thing for deer and always stopped to take pictures of them whenever she saw them. Well, Mia thought anxiously, at least she used to.

"Like I said," Antoinette continued. "She was pretty swell. I remember this one time, right after she fucked this nasty John with a bad temper—we all got bruises from that one before, let me tell you—she marched up to Guy and told him she didn't want to do this anymore."

Good for you, Aimee. Mia dabbed at her lipstick as she took in everything Antoinette said. "What did Guy do?"

"He got pissed, of course." Antoinette powdered her chest and armpits.

When she lifted her arm, Mia saw scars that looked like little shiny spots of flesh. She lowered her arm, not noticing how much Mia studied her. "Guy won't tolerate any of us bitches stepping out of line."

Her heart flipped. If that son-of-a-bitch hurt her little sister in any way, she'd kill him with her bare hands. "What did he do to her?"

Antoinette shrugged easily and powdered under the other arm. Mia wondered if she had the same type of scars on the other side, and wished she knew of a way to ask without sounding too nosey. "Put her in her place, of course."

She was afraid to ask, but couldn't stop herself. "How?"

"Same way he keeps all of us in line. He has this little wood burning tool he uses."

"My God," Mia muttered in sick astonishment. "Is that how you got those scars under your arms?"

Antoinette smiled, like she was proud of her scars. "I learned my place right away. You should see the pits of some of these bitches. They still ain't learned their place."

The lights dimmed and she wanted to protest when Antoinette jumped up, eager to get started on her next John. The women started to gather and Mia knew they'd have to wait to finish their conversation.

The time had come. She stood and, with a heavy sigh, tried to mentally prepare herself for another night with Steely Eyes. She wondered how much he'd bid for her tonight? What if the pirate had returned with even more cash? Or the boob-gazer? Or the Mr. T wanna-be?

"Not you, sweet ass." Guy appeared out of nowhere and stopped her as she approached the "X." The new girl always opened. She darted a confused look back toward Antoinette.

"Hey, Guy? Can we get this party started?" Antoinette pushed her way ahead of Mia. "While we're still young?"

"You first," he said and motioned to a young blonde who looked like she'd be more comfortable inside a lion's den with raw meat strapped around her neck than about to go on stage. She nodded and wobbled up in front of Mia.

Wobbled?

Dropping her gaze, she spotted a similar pair of four-inch stilettos strapped to her feet. Must be required footwear for the newbies. Antoinette

had told her the blonde showed up a few days before Mia and already had a regular bidding on her every night. Good for her.

Once the blonde walked out on stage and the whooping dulled to a few whistles, Mia brought her attention to Guy. "What's going on?"

"You already been bought, sweet ass."

Already bought? How? She'd yet to step out on stage. "But—"

"He tell me to give dis to you," Guy said and handed her a piece of paper with a number on it. As she eyed the paper, she recognized it as the room number from last night.

Steely Eyes.

"I don't understand," she whispered, her eyes still on the paper. Why didn't he have to bid on her again? Was this some sort of buy-one-get-one-free sort of thing?

"Da boss say you not screw da man. It be in your contract." Guy waited for her to pull her attention to him before he continued. "You gotta bed da man who buy you. Dat what make dis The Emerald Club."

Mia's entire body stiffened as her stomach knotted. "How did you know that?"

"Cameras. We got dem in all da rooms. Da boss watch da feed dis morning to see which ones to put on the next DVD. When he see you not fuck your John, he get pissed."

She wanted to protest, to tell them how wrong it was to watch people having sex—well, okay, *not* having sex—let alone taping it and selling the footage. "But he didn't want to."

Guy shook his head. "No matter. You bed him tonight, you got dat?"

No, she didn't get that. "What if he doesn't want to?"

"You is out. No need having a bitch who don't open her legs. If you good enough, he wanna screw you."

"But, what does it matter if he didn't want to?"

"If word get out we got us a bitch who don't put out, bids go way down. Da boss get pissed at me when bids go down and I gotta do what need be done to get bids back up. Dat my job. So you gotta do yours, got it?"

Her breath quickened with the beat of her heart. Why would they force her to sleep with the man if he clearly didn't want to? Did they expect her to force herself on him? Pretend to want him so bad he couldn't resist?

"Don't worry," Antoinette piped in and squeezed her arm to reassure her.

"The first time is always the hardest. When I fucked my first John, I cried the whole time. Brandy here, she stayed in the shower for hours after her first time. We had to pull her ass out before she froze to death, the water was so cold." Mia glanced over at a woman who looked like she could have been pretty at one time, but now just didn't give a shit. "What I'm trying to tell you is, we've all had to go through the first time. And you know what? It sucks. But we'll be here when you're done. When you think you've just done the most vile thing you could have ever done, you come back to us and we'll help you cope. That's what we do." Her voice faded as she finished, as did her grip on Mia's arm.

She turned to hug Antoinette, but the tiny woman had already disappeared behind the other girls, who seemed to have formed a wall to protect her. Nodding, knowing she had to keep up her façade if she ever had hopes of finding her sister, she wrapped her fingers around the paper. "I'll be back," she promised the others.

"I'll buy the first round, Candy." Brandy nodded back.

"You got it." Mia drew in a breath and marched as best she could toward the elevator. Holding back tears, reminding herself she was doing this for Aimee, she pushed the button to lift her to the second floor.

It was time to hold up her end of the contract.

Chapter 4

The knock at the door caused him to jerk and spill his drink all over his fingers. He shook his hand to throw most of the vodka off, and then wiped the last of it on his jeans. After last night, he expected a soft, timid knock. No, this knock sounded more like the knock of the authorities before storming the room.

He should know, having delivered that same knock a time or two.

Pulling in a deep breath, Wayne glanced at his reflection in the mirror above the sink. His dark gray eyes traced his appearance. His square jaw hardened as he studied it. Maybe he should have shaved. The dark stubble made him look like some Don Johnson wanna-be. The leather muscle shirt didn't scare her off last night, so he opted for a more visual approach. The white wife beater tank should do the trick. With a final dishevel of his midnight hair, he went to the door.

Throwing it open, he swallowed down the sincere desire to suck in a breath and instead offered her a casual smile. Good God, she was even more beautiful than he remembered. He wished he knew her real eye color. The brown contacts didn't nearly show enough depth to her eyes. And he'd bet vital parts of his rapidly growing anatomy the blonde bob she sported didn't even come close to her real hair color or length.

Ah, so she chose red as the color of her little costume tonight. His favorite color. Trailing his gaze slowly down her front, then back up, he stretched his mock grin into a genuine smile. "Candy. Come in."

She threw him a sultry look and he almost swallowed his tongue. How in the hell was he supposed to keep up a front of an uninterested man when she looked at him like that? His dick already started to twitch at the thought of having a little more action than his hand tonight.

Sometimes being an undercover SBI agent really sucked. He'd been instructed to do whatever necessary to maintain his cover, including having

sex if it came to that. But sex, at least to him, wasn't something he was willing to use as part of his cover. No, if he had sex with any of the women he'd been sworn to protect, it would make this too personal.

Personal equated to bias. He'd lose his objectivity, and for an undercover agent that could be a death sentence.

His senses slowed as he thought of his partner, now in the ground, wondering if she'd come up to the room willingly, never knowing the sick bastard who'd bid on her didn't want to fuck her. No, he'd had other plans.

He'd wanted to kill her.

Laurie Nelson knew how to hold her own. The man responsible for cutting out her tongue and mailing it to the SBI field office after dumping her body in the alley behind The Emerald Club had to have been better than a black belt. Because Nelson *was* a black belt, and would have put up one hell of a fight.

Wayde was positive the location of Nelson's body would have been enough to shut down the club and haul everyone's ass in. But no. The director of his field office threw out the request, even for a simple warrant. "Too many possibilities," he'd said.

Possibilities? An SBI agent was dead, her body brutally mutilated, and his director thought it wasn't enough? It sure as hell was enough for Wayde to take a personal interest in finding the person responsible for Nelson's murder.

He—or they, if there were more than one son-of-a-bitch killing these poor women off—had to have known Nelson was with the Washington State Bureau of Investigation. They had to have known she was undercover, risking her life to take them down.

He eyed Candy. Did she even know how to recognize a threat? The way she darted her gaze nervously, surveying the room when she should be more concerned with the man in the room, told him her priorities were way off base.

"Would you like something to drink?" He went back to the sink and pulled out the bottle of Grey Goose. Turning, he came close to dropping the bottle when he spotted her on the bed, legs opened wide and bent at the knees. The swell of her juicy pussy lips were clearly visible. "Jesus," he rasped.

"I'll take it straight up, no chaser." She licked her middle finger before

sucking it into her mouth, her eyes glued to him the entire time.

Swinging around to position his back to her, he breathed in and out. In and out. *You are not going to let it happen again tonight. No kissing. No finger fuck. No oral sex. No sex. Period.*

Goddamn it.

He thought taking an assignment in an underground sex ring would be the easiest thing ever handed to him. He considered himself lucky, even. Watch Nelson's back. Make sure she bagged and tagged whatever scumbag paid to nail her that night. Easy.

Easy? Yeah, right.

He had no idea it would turn into something like this. Glancing at the woman on the bed, sprawled out for him and all the cameras to see, he could just make out the dark curls of her cunt hair through the reflection of the mirror. Forcing his attention down at the bottle, he uncorked it and grabbed a nearby glass.

Give him never-ending, boring stakeouts. Shootouts. Anything but being here looking at this gorgeous feast and pretending he didn't want to eat it. Jesus Christ, he was only human.

"Something the matter?"

He spun back around, rested his eyes on her. "What makes you think that?"

"You—uh—are taking a long time over there."

"Anxious to get started, are we?"

"Just ready to get this over with, Steel."

Steel? Where'd that come from? "Why Steel?"

"Your eyes. They are the color of dark steel. And you seem hard," she stopped and flicked her gaze down to the bulge in his pants. "I mean—I—"

He couldn't help but smile, if reluctantly. She was just so damn cute when she spoke her mind, then colored so beautifully. He'd have to work on that if he expected them to work together. "We've got all night. I told you that you'd be back tonight."

She thrust out that stubborn chin. Damn if he didn't already like that about her. Another endearing feature he'd have to work with her on if he convinced her to work with him. "I have a feeling you already knew that after we didn't—uh—"

So that asshole Guy must have reminded her of her contractual

obligations, which Wayde so casually pointed out to him during their meeting earlier when he paid him the ten thousand. He had to do something to bring her back to him, and forking out another ten thousand would put him on his director's shit list. He'd already received a nice ass chewing from him for bidding the first ten thousand.

But he knew the split second she walked out on that stage she didn't belong up there, which fit perfectly into his plan. Night after night he'd watched the women parade out on the stage and he could always separate out the ones who looked like they wanted to be anywhere else but about to be auctioned off for sex. It tore the shit out of him to watch their innocence fade, their very *life* fade little by little each time they stepped out on the stage.

He needed to get Candy off the stage before she ended up like the rest of them. She had no idea what she'd agreed to when she signed that contract, real name or not. And, if he had anything to do about it, she'd never know. He'd talk to Guy tomorrow about taking her under sponsorship. He'd pay just about anything to make sure she stayed off that stage, to make sure no one but him had the pleasure of her company every night.

"Are you prepared to take the next step?" He grabbed the two glasses of vodka and slowly made his way over to the bed. Instead of joining her, he handed her the drink and went back to the sink to grab the white box with the robe in it. He'd already killed the audio feed to all the cameras in the room, but had a sneaking suspicion her little get up had to be bugged as well. If he could get her out of the outfit and into the robe, he could throw the entire get up inside the specialty bag he brought with him and really talk to her.

So now he had to somehow convince Candy to work for the SBI in her occupation as an illegal prostitute. Not that there were such a thing as legal ones, not in Seattle. That was all his assignment included. Find someone on the inside.

He wasn't supposed to win the bid, or stick his tongue down her throat, his finger up her cunt. And sure as shit wasn't supposed to have any sort of feelings for the courtesan. Not that he did, of course. But, he reasoned, he had to keep it that way.

"Next step?" She sat up, snapped her knees together.

Atta girl.

"You know," he said and reached for the white box. "I plan to eat your deliciously sweet little pussy tonight. Are you okay with that?"

Please say no. How was he supposed to resist her if he buried his face deep inside the crevasse between her thighs? Sure, he'd feast on her flesh, have her come and lap up her juices until she begged him to stop, but what about him? He wanted her. Desperately. Introducing his tongue to the most intimate place on her body would only make his desire for her grow into a hunger unlike he'd ever known.

"Uh—if that's what you want." She tried to give him a smile, but it came out wilted at best.

Oh, he wanted so much more than a taste. He wanted to thrust his cock deep inside her pussy. He wanted to piston-drive her over and over until she screamed out his name and clawed the shit out of his back. That was exactly what he wanted.

He'd have to settle for licking his own lips, since he wouldn't be licking hers. "Let's get you out of that get up." He tossed the box onto the bed, knowing if he got too close he'd join her horizontally again.

"Is that the robe?" She sat up, grabbed the box and threw off the top, pulled out the long black robe. "Oh, it's just beautiful."

He ignored the way his entire chest pinched at her reaction. Looking away, he set his drink on the nearby table. "Do you need any help changing? Can I offer my assistance?"

Please say no.

"I'm good."

You could say that again. Despite knowing it would leave his cock rock hard and his balls aching for hours, he glued his eyes to her to watch her undress. "Just put your outfit in the box. I'll take care of it."

She narrowed her eyes at him. "You're going to watch again, aren't you?"

"Yes." The look on her siren face made him rethink his decision. Clearly she didn't want to undress in front of him as her pretty eyes widened in fright. "Do you have a problem with that, Candy?"

She drew in a deep breath and kicked off her shoes. "No. You d-deserve to watch. You p-paid for a show."

"Why are you stuttering?"

An uneasy smile quivered on her lips. "I s-stutter when I'm n-nervous."

Ah, Christ. That wasn't good. He couldn't use someone who had something as obvious as a stutter. It would give her away in a heartbeat. She wouldn't last a single night as an informant, and he'd more than likely end up pulling her body out of the same dumpster he pulled Nelson out of.

As much as he didn't want to, he needed to end this. Now. He'd just have to find someone else to go under for him. Setting his glass down, he turned to her. She was so damn beautiful, and he really would have liked getting to know her better. "Listen, Candy. I've changed my mind. Go ahead and get your things."

She froze as his gaze grazed her face, resting on her heaving chest. Jumping his gaze back up to her face, he centered in on her eyes. They were glistening with fresh tears. "Y-you don't want me?"

He barely restrained the want in his voice as he lied to her. "No. You aren't who I thought you were." The way her eyes widened at his statement sent blisters of pain across his heart. Goddamn it.

"I can be whoever you want me to be," she protested. The way her voice pleaded, her eyes joining in her pleas, had him in agony as he fought to keep his true want to himself. "P-Please. Don't send me away."

Every muscle in his body tightened as he watched her openly cry. It wasn't a sobbing cry. No, she cried in absolute silence. The way those enormous tears melted down her cheeks pulled at his resolve. "Why is it so important for you to stay?"

She stared back at him in defiance and determination. Her tears slowed. The look in those pretty eyes told him she wasn't going to give up that easily. "Let me show you. I can make you want me."

"Candy—"

"Have a seat. I'll give you a show that will make last night seem rated 'G'."

Holy hell. That comment sent jolts of erotic imagery from his brain straight to his groin. His cock bulged and strained against his pants. What was an innocent show? He wouldn't allow it to go any further than that. Right? *Riiight*.

Instead of offering to hum again, he reached over and flipped on a local radio station. Seattle had plenty of stations to choose from, so he decided on classic rock. "Do you want to dance for me again?"

"I didn't *want* to dance for you last night."

"Then why did you?"

"Because you asked me to."

"Do you always do what you're asked?"

She smiled, though it seemed forced. "When it's in my contract."

The reminder of the contract brought the situation stark and vivid to the forefront of his attention. They were in a business engagement and nothing more. He was here to protect her, not fuck her.

Objectivity.

Still, she wanted to give him a show. Who was he to deny her? "Dance for me. Move your hands on your body as if they were my hands. I want to see how you want me to touch you. Let's take it further than we did last night." *Since I won't be touching you.*

The poor woman stiffened as she thrust out her chin again, and his admiration for her pride jumped a few bars. He couldn't figure her out. One minute she seduced him with her eyes, the next she seemed scared as hell to be there.

She relaxed and even started to sway to a ballad by a hair band. Closing her eyes, she untied the leather bindings of her corset, her hips rocking to the melody. One by one the strap popped out of the eyelet, and each time his hard-on kicked up a notch. By the time she'd reached the last eyelet, he was so hard his cock pulsed along with the music, begging to be freed. He unfastened his pants and let his dick out, judging her reaction. If she really wanted to fuck him, she'd see the gesture as an invitation. If she didn't want to be there, seeing his dick free should send her running.

She blinked her eyes open and slowed when she eyed his erection. Licking her lips, she didn't pull her eyes away and sucked in her lower lip between her teeth.

Wayde groaned deep in the back of his throat at her reaction. His cock hurt as it pulsed to the music, desperate to bury itself deep inside her blistering cunt. And, goddamn it, she continued to simply stare at his hard-on, making him so hard he had no choice but to wrap his fingers around his raging steel rod and stroke it lazily.

"Is it your turn tonight?" She turned her back to him and gyrated her hips, teasing him with the curve of her ass. Peeking over her shoulder, she winked playfully and brought her hands down her hips, slowly caressing her cheeks and driving him fucking crazy.

He stroked his cock, not at all embarrassed. After all, she started it. "Pinch your nipples."

She whipped around and stared at him like a deer in the headlights. "What?" He stared back at her, debating whether he should continue to push her, or just tell her to get the hell out of the room. Out of the club scene. Hell, get out of Seattle if it would keep her out of danger.

"Pinch your *fucking* nipples," he demanded, his voice deep and underlying with agitation. If he didn't scare her straight tonight, she'd become another lifer of this goddamn underground sex club scene. "Now."

Instead of her being scared, she flared her eyes at him and bunched her fists on her ample hips. "Order me around and let's just see how far that gets you."

"Oh yeah?" he challenged and stood, tucked his raging hard-on back into his pants. His balls were on fire and it hurt like hell when he fastened his pants to keep his libido in check. If he kept his dick out while he approached her, he didn't know if he'd be able to resist the pull to tuck it between her thighs, to thrust it into the depths of her warm pussy.

He stopped, his mouth inches from hers. Licking his lips, purposely leaning in and brushing his tongue along her lower lip, he chuckled when she shuddered. "I said, pinch your nipples."

She thrust out her chin and met his eyes with hers, defiance shining in them. "Make me."

Chapter 5

He could do this. He could touch her, show her how to touch and please herself, without cracking his armor. It was all for show, anyway. His cock spasmed in protest to his reasoning.

He inched closer so their lips were almost touching. He smelled the nervousness on her breath. But he also smelled her arousal, the fragrance of her juices wafting up into his nostrils and straining his already painfully hard dick. "Turn around."

"W-What are you going to do?" She started to tremble as she turned her back to him. He threw off his tank top in a hurried motion, the pull to feel her skin against his too much to resist. He was slowly losing the battle to resist her, and he didn't give a shit. He wouldn't see her again after tonight. He wanted her. Her body responded to him. They were two consenting adults. And, after all, he did pay for her.

Well, sort of.

When he took a step in so his chest rested against her soft back, he stiffened as much as she did. An inferno erupted when their flesh touched, molding them together. Reaching up, he rested his hands on her shoulders, loving the silky feel of her flesh, so soft beneath his rough hands.

"Since you obviously have issues with directions, I'm going to show you how I want you to touch yourself." Before reason overtook his sudden burst of lust-induced insanity, he bent down and brushed his lips across her neck, inhaling deeply. The scent of her sweet pussy coated his senses and intoxicated him. Dizzy with hunger and greedy need, he forced himself to focus on the act of the seduction and not his ardent need to bury his cock deep inside her hot cunt, over and over until they both collapsed.

Baring his teeth, he tenderly nipped at her neck and shoulder. When she shuddered and tilted her head to grant him full access, he darted his tongue

out and licked wherever he nipped.

"Y-You aren't moving your hands," she pointed out, breathless.

"Is this better?" He slowly slid his hands down her arms, gently caressing her. At her elbows, he reached under her arms and flattened his hands out on her well-toned stomach. Goose bumps peppered her skin and he kissed every last one he could reach.

Bringing his hands up, he gently scraped his thumbs across the lower roundness of her breasts before taking them both in his hands. He moved his hands back and forth, tenderly cupping her. Her nipples puckered to hard little marbles in his hands. When he circled them with his thumbs, flicking them, she let out a slight whimper.

"Am I hurting you?"

"N-No."

He switched sides of her neck and started to feast on her ear. "Do you want me to stop?" Her breath grew ragged as she shook her head. "Would you like me to walk you through what I'm going to do?"

She nodded. "Are w-we going to fu—ah!" He pinched her nipples between his thumb and finger, rolled them until they hardened even more. "What happened to you walking me through what you're about to do?"

He increased the pressure on her nipples and when she threw her head back with a moan, he took advantage of the exposed flesh by attacking her neck with his lips and tongue. "Sorry. I didn't tell you I was about to squeeze your nipples, to show you how I wanted to touch you. You were talking and I didn't want to interrupt."

"How very polite of you," she whispered.

"I'm about to reach down and slip my fingers under your panties." Still tweaking one nipple, he lowered his other hand, indeed slipping his fingers beneath the thin material of her panties. He felt the heat from her arousal through her curls. Dipping his finger between her hot, slick lips he felt her juices surrounding him, welcoming him. His voice, thick and raspy with lust, scratched as it sounded. "My God, your pussy is drenched. Is all that flaming juice just for me? Are you that hot, that wet knowing I'm about to fuck you with my tongue?"

"I want you to fuck me with your cock. Please!" she pleaded, her voice quivering. "I need your cock inside me."

Fuck. Fuck, fuck, and double fuck. He wanted to lay her down and

pump into her until they both screamed out their release, but he couldn't. Goddamn it. He just couldn't.

Letting out a slow breath, he blew in her ear. She shivered. "Are you ready for me to taste you?"

"No," she cried and writhed in his arms. "I need you."

He reached forward and flicked her clit with his thumb. "Like this?"

"More!" He flicked again and barely caught her when she collapsed. Apparently he hit the G-spot. "Oh, my God. Please do that again." She jerked forward, out of his hands. Spinning around, she covered her breasts as she gaped at him. "I-I mean...uh... Oh, my God. What am I doing?"

He chuckled deep in his chest, proud of the fact he had the power to make her so delirious she forgot what she'd been doing. "Candy, sweetheart. It's okay to enjoy this. You aren't breaking any rules by letting yourself go."

Hiding her eyes, she looked off to the side and gave a curt nod. "Yes, I am."

The shock of her statement stopped him in his tracks, not to mention solidifying the air in his lungs. Did she honestly think allowing her body to enjoy his touch made her a bad person? That didn't make any sense. Why then would she sign a contract to have sex with complete strangers?

Not for the first time, Wayne wondered just what exactly this woman had been looking for when she came to The Emerald Club.

Abruptly, she whirled around and practically jumped on the bed. Scooting all the way back against the headboard, she finally brought her head up. That's when he saw her tears. His heart pulled and twisted at the sight. Dear God, he'd made her cry. Again. He felt like a pile of shit. "Let's just do this."

He held his position and crisply folded his arms, even widened his stance. Even though he wanted—no, *needed* to run to her side and comfort her, he stood his ground. The last thing he wanted to do was scare her, to make her cry. Yet, he'd done both.

No more games. No more pretending to be the uninterested, yet horny-as-hell man who just wanted to be her friend. He needed to get her out of The Emerald Club. He couldn't have her working for the SBI, not with her stutter and obvious issues with direction.

But he couldn't simply have a conversation with her tonight or Guy and whoever the son-of-a-bitch who ran the club and studied the cameras with

scrutiny would know. No doubt they watched the new girl very closely. He'd have to give them some kind of show. He couldn't allow her to raise any suspicion. "No."

She threw him a baffled look through watery eyes. "No?"

"Not unless you're ready to give in to what your body really wants."

"I don't need to enjoy it." To add to her point, she shook her head furiously.

"Actually," he countered and unfolded his arms. "You do. I won't touch you until you ask me to."

It was her turn to fold her arms, her face hidden. "That's not going to happen, Steel. I need to be here. Just please don't push the issue."

"Then—"

"And don't ask me why."

Damn it to hell. She cut him off, knowing that was exactly what he wanted to do. "Fine. Then I guess you just get to come back night after night until you tell me what's really going on."

"No," she said and shook her head slightly as she darted her gaze up at him before lowering it to her knees. She pulled them tightly to her chest to cover her exposed breasts. "Guy told me if I don't fuck you tonight, I'm out."

"We did that last night."

"You know what I mean. Fingers don't count." She shot him a scolding look.

This woman was something else. He didn't drag her into the ring. He didn't stand over her, force her to sign a contract agreeing to have sex in exchange for money. She was a hired pussy, and she was pissed at him?

Why the hell did that bother him so much?

He drew in several breaths to keep his temper in check. Fine. This could be a blessing in disguise as well as an irritating and giant pain in his ass. If he could get her to at least leave the club that would be one less woman he had to worry about disappearing. He'd just find someone else to work as an informant. "Then leave."

"I can't."

"Why the hell not?"

"I have my reasons."

He didn't miss the flare of temper in her tone. Whatever her reason definitely had her pissed. Shoving his hands in his pockets so he didn't reach

out to touch her, ignoring his rock hard cock as it pushed against the zipper of his pants, he sank down on the bed and scooted to the headboard next to her.

This woman definitely had a dislike for her current predicament. He'd be able to work that to his advantage. It didn't make him the nicest guy on the block, but if it kept her alive, then he could live with it.

As long as *she* lived. He owed it to her. He owed it to Nelson. As much as he wanted to pull her out of the ring, if she was hell bent on staying on the inside, he'd have to use it. *He'd have to use her.* He hated what he was about to ask her to do, but he needed her. With her help he just might be able to find out who was taking women and doing God only knew what to them. If he explained who he was, what he wanted, she just might agree to be his inside informant. He couldn't get backstage, but she could.

"How about we make a deal?"

Eyeing him skeptically, she loosened her grip around her knees. "What kind of deal?"

"Take off your clothes. Give them to me." He grabbed the robe she'd left on the bed and handed it to her. "I'll wait."

She did and once he had her entire get up, shoes and all, inside the protective bag and sealed, he joined her back on the bed. Now they could talk frankly without worrying about anyone hearing them. "I'm not who you think I am."

"I don't know who you are."

True. Wayne thought of another approach. "I'd like to offer you a position."

She looked at him, befuddled. Shaking her head, she lowered it back to her knees.

"That isn't what I meant," he corrected, rolling his eyes at his choice of words. "I'd like to help you."

"You?" She looked up, riveted her gaze on him, robbing him of breath. The conviction in her voice didn't come close to matching the conviction in her eyes. "How?"

He searched her eyes, watched them cloud over with uncertainty even through the contacts. Urgency coursed through his veins as he searched her face. He saw the desperation darkening her pretty eyes and, in turn, found himself desperately wanting to help her. "What kind of trouble are you in?"

"Nothing I can't handle."

Somehow he doubted that. "You signed a contract to fuck complete strangers."

"I know." She stopped him with a raise of her hand. "Just tell me what you want me to do." She met his eyes with clear and hard determination. "I'll do it. No questions. No objections."

He almost told her. He wanted her to pull his dick into her mouth, to slide those luscious lips up and down his rock hard shaft until he roared out his release, jetting his own juices down her throat. He wanted her to swallow him as he came, and then lick him clean.

That's what he wanted.

But what he wanted and what she needed were two entirely different things. And he would not give in to what he wanted until he gave her what she needed. And, right now, she needed to relax. He knew exactly what she needed in order to relax. She needed to come. Once he had her relaxed, he'd try talking to her again.

"Instead of me telling you what I'm about to do, I want you to tell me what you want me to do." She took a breath, but he brought up his finger to stop her. "And you can't tell me to leave, or go to hell, or anything like that. Deal?"

She seemed to hesitate and just when he was about to give up on her, she nodded. "But you have to stop if I say stop. Okay?"

This from a courtesan? *Yeah, right.*

"Okay," he agreed. Eyeing her slowly, his entire body tense in anticipation, he turned to her. He shifted so the aching steel rod between his legs didn't feel so stressed. "So what would you like me to do first?"

"Uh..." She glanced around the room before resting her gaze on her knee. Stealing tiny glances up at him, she bit her lower lip. "Fetch my drink."

Nodding, smiling, he did as she ordered. This could get interesting. Drink in each hand, he returned to the bed. "Shall I serve it to you?"

Parting her pouty, sexy lips, she let out a slight whimper. Licking her lips, she lifted her chin. "Yes."

Leaning in, he brought the glass up to those amazing lips, licking his in response. He tipped the glass so the vodka trickled into her open mouth, wetting her lips. Tipping it up further, the contents spilled out of the glass,

trailed down her chin, onto her heaving breasts. He met her gaze and curled his lips into a sly grin. "Oops."

"It's cold," she whispered. Her nipples puckered beautifully and he had a suspicion it had nothing to do with the temperature in the room, which had to be two hundred degrees judging by the way he'd worked up a sweat.

"Would you like me to clean that up?"

She nodded.

Without hesitation, Wayde lowered himself to her breasts and covered a waiting nipple with his mouth. It peaked inside his mouth. He flicked it with his tongue and she arched her back in response.

"I think it all landed between my—ah!" He scraped his teeth over her nipple, then kissed and licked it slowly when it hardened angrily.

"My bad. I guess it didn't make it this far. Just to be sure, would you like me to check the other one?"

"Just to be sure." As he brought his lips over to the other nipple, she stretched her fingers in his hair, sending chills dancing across his skin. He kissed, he licked, he flicked. By the time he left her nipple, now swollen and glistening from his mouth, she had her back arched up to him. When he licked the valley between her breasts, cleaning all the vodka off her chest, drunk from the taste of her, she tightened her grip in his hair. He tasted her skin, her perfume, and her very essence. Everything about her had him drowning in her.

Licking and teasing her neck, he followed her jaw line with his tongue before finally reaching her lips. He ran his tongue along her lower lip until she darted her tongue out to meet his. He couldn't resist and matched her tongue's thrust. Their lips melted together. The kiss sent the pit of his stomach into a wild spin that shot straight to his already throbbing cock.

Their tongues engaged, he deepened the kiss by wrapping his hand around her neck and pulling her to him. Caressing her mouth more than kissing it, he sent a series of slow, shivering strokes from his tongue across the softness of her lips.

"Tell me what you want me to do next," he rasped huskily. He nibbled on her chin, kneading her neck with his fingers. "What do you want, baby?"

"T-Touch me."

"Where?"

"Everywhere," she whispered.

"Lie down."

She did, and when he positioned himself between her legs, she parted them in response. The robe opened to reveal her pink, weeping pussy lips to him, her inner folds so slick they glistened with her own juices. Dropping down, he buried his face between her legs.

"Now what," he asked in a tense voice. He moved closer, his lips poised just above hers. He could smell her musky desire, and his mouth watered as he licked his lips in anticipation. His tongue barely brushed her curls covering her hot pussy, and she jerked in response.

"Oh, my God," she whispered.

"Tell me what you want." Stretching his tongue, he ran the tip along the coarseness of her curls, tasting and loving the moisture clinging to them. He'd never tasted a sweeter cunt in his life. "Just say the word. One word."

The tension tightened the air in the room. His ears rang from the silence as he waited for her answer.

Please say yes.

"Yes," she whimpered. He lowered himself, parting her lips with his tongue and darting it between her swollen flesh. Dear Jesus, she tasted even better than he could have ever imagined. The sweetness of her juices consumed him, and in turn he wanted to consume her. He ran his tongue down one side of her inner folds and up the other, all the while lapping up her inebriating fluid.

With his middle finger, he thrust it deep into her moist pussy, burying it up to his knuckle before pulling out and replacing it with two. His tongue found her tight bundle of nerves and he flicked it as a test.

The way she writhed and grabbed his head to pull him in deeper gave him the permission he needed. Surrounding her clit with his lips, he sucked the little pea into his mouth and brushed his tongue over it. And over it. And over it.

She rocked her hips against his face, fucking his tongue, tightening her grip in his hair. He increased his tempo, along with his pressure. His fingers moved in and out of her cunt, faster and faster, keeping time with each flick of his tongue against her swollen nubbin. Her muscles tightened around him, her fluid surrounded him, and he knew she was close to coming and flooding his mouth with her exhilarating juices.

"Tell me when you come."

"Oh. Oh. Oh. I'm so—Ah!" She screamed and trapped him between her legs with her knees, locking him in place. He greedily sucked and licked as she came and juices exploded down her shaft, completely saturating her cunt. He went back to her clit and pulled it into her mouth. It quivered and pulsed between his teeth. Darting his tongue, kissing and loving her to keep her orgasm at its peak, she cried and arched her back as another orgasm shot a wave of fresh nectar out, coating his fingers. He eagerly sucked and drank every last drop.

After several wet seconds, she slowly lowered herself back onto the bed, her breath ragged. Caressing her lips with his, gently nibbling and loving the way she jumped when he scraped his teeth against her sensitive button of pleasure, he kissed her inner thigh and then lazily made his way back up to her breast. Taking a swollen nipple into his mouth, he teased it until it hardened.

"The other," she pleaded.

Not one to show favorites, he went to the other nipple and suckled it until it, too, grew hard in his mouth. Pulling back, satisfied with the deep red, swollen buds, he reached her mouth and lost himself in the taste of her kiss, plunging his tongue inside and dancing with hers.

His cock fought to break free of his pants, but Wayde ignored his own need to cater to hers. Her need for release far outweighed his. Their tongues melted together, eager to taste each other, and he held out until he couldn't take a full breath before breaking their kiss. Dazed from their intimate connection, and drunk in the darkness of the lust clouding her eyes, he collapsed down next to her and rested his head on her shoulder.

"Thank you," she said, her voice a faint cry of a whisper.

He lifted his head to look at her. "For the orgasm? I should thank *you* for that. Dear Jesus. Your pussy is like sweet butter cream when you come."

A smile tried to pull at her lips, but she fought it. "Well, that's a new one. I've never had anyone compare me to a food product."

He ignored the jab at the fact someone else had tasted her pussy before him. Of course she wasn't a virgin. But it still bothered him. "And it only makes me hungry for more," he rasped and kissed her shoulder, danced kisses across her skin. "You were tense. I know what you needed to relax." He kissed her shoulder again. "You needed to come."

"You seem to know my body better than I do."

Kissing her shoulder one last time, he rested his head back down. It gave him amazing pleasure to see her writhe beneath him as she came, as her pretty eyes clouded over in the heat of her release. Yes, he did know what her body needed more than she did.

And that scared the shit out of him.

Chapter 6

"Ms. Andrews?"

She jerked awake and blinked her eyes wide. Oh shit. Panic filled her veins as her heart beat wildly at the abrupt interruption. No, not interruption. The partner had every right to wake her ass up.

She'd fallen asleep at her desk again. Fumbling at the stack of papers in front of her, she pretended to organize the ever-growing pile. "Yes, Mr. Smythe? Did you need something?"

He narrowed his dark, grayed and aged eyes down at her. With highly manicured hands, he reached up and adjusted his silk tie. The dark suit hung well on his tall, slim frame, and Mia knew right away he'd had the suit tailor-made. "I understand the legal profession may be a bore to some, but I expect my secretary to at least make a show of interest."

Embarrassment slapped her cheeks, warming them. She nodded and thrust out her chin, her gaze never leaving his scrutinizing glare. "It won't happen again, Mr. Smythe."

"See that it doesn't," he stated and dropped a piece of paper onto her desk, adding to her stack. "Now, I need you to contact this officer and take his statement. We are defending the man he arrested and his deposition is crucial to the case."

"Yes, sir." Grabbing her pen, she took notes on a piece of paper.

"And Ms. Andrews?" She looked up from her notes. "You are quite the, shall we say, *asset* to this firm. I understand you've finished your training as a paralegal."

Her heart started to dance. "Yes, sir. Just last month."

He nodded and his perfectly combed gray hair didn't so much as bob. "Take the statement. Once I poke holes in it and win the case, we'll celebrate by talking about you moving up in this firm. Surely you want to be more than my secretary."

Was he coming on to her? "Sir? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I'd like to spend more time alone with you. I'm sure we can find a way to secure your future here." He wiggled his overly-bushy gray eyebrows at her.

"Aren't you married?"

"Patricia and I have an open relationship."

This much she knew. Patricia Smythe must either really love her slimeball of a husband or she loved his money more and therefore forgave his indiscretions. Mia had sent many different floral arrangements to the Smythe residence since working as Dewey Smythe's legal assistant.

Mia shook her head, knowing full and well it could be the end of her time at Reed, Smythe, and Heathrow. She liked Patricia Smythe and refused to be a party in his never-ending extramarital affairs.

"After this case, I think it is time you and I had an intimate conversation about the position you'd like to be in."

She shuddered inwardly at the thought. Dewey Smythe had a reputation throughout the legal community. If he didn't get his dick wet in the paralegal of his choosing, she was as good as gone. Unless he showed up at the club and won her bid, he'd never see her outside this office building.

"That sounds," *disgusting*. "Interesting. I'll let you know when I have his statement." He walked away, and she knew he didn't even hear her response. She waited until the crusty old bastard disappeared behind his office door before rolling her eyes. "Sick."

Grabbing the phone and punching the numbers, she listened while it rang. When the voicemail came on, she let out a petulant sigh. No doubt she'd have to wait around the office all night until the guy decided to check his messages. If ever. She'd be late to the club, and have Guy to answer to.

"Special Agent Wayde Davis...*is unavailable. Please leave your message after the tone.*" Mia froze, the receiver dangling in her hand. She knew that voice. That sweet baritone swallowed her, washed over her senses, reminding her of the pleasures he brought to her body. A shiver shook her, unsettling her.

She'd been intimate with its owner, allowed him to do all sorts of unspeakables to her last night and the night before. When the tone beeped, she blinked back to her task. "Uh, Mr., uh, Agent D-Davis. This is...uh...from R-Reed, Smythe, and Heathrow. I need to take your...uh...you

n-need to call me."

Jesus, she couldn't even talk and sounded like a complete fool. She hated her stutter, spent years in speech therapy overcoming it. Yet whenever confronted by this hard-bodied man—correct that, just the sound of his *voice*—she stammered like she was back in grade school.

Slamming the phone down, she drew in several breaths, not even realizing she'd stopped breathing until the dizzy spell hit her. Closing her eyes, she let out a long sigh and rested her head in her hands.

He was an agent? For which agency? What was he doing at the club? Did he plan to bust her for prostitution? She'd never work in law again if he did. Hell, she'd have to leave Seattle altogether.

The acute loss invaded her heart. She couldn't lose her only lead on her sister. If he planned to arrest her, she'd just have to talk him out of it.

The sound of the phone almost made her fall out of her chair. What if it was him? What if it wasn't? Swallowing, she pasted on her smile and pulled the receiver to her ear. "Reed, Smythe, and—"

"Are you always so articulate?"

Her breath hitched painfully. It was him. And, based on his comment to her, he knew it was her as well. "Oh, my God, it's you."

"I thought it might be my sweet Candy, but having you know it was me from that statement confirmed my suspicions."

Oh no! Quick to recover, she glanced down at the display on her phone and smiled. *SBI Field Office*. Gotta love caller ID.

Hold it. SBI? Her smile dove for cover. Why would the State Bureau of Investigation have an agent at The Emerald Club? They usually dealt with criminal cases crossing multiple jurisdictions, taking the cases the city and county couldn't, or wouldn't, touch. Something big had to be happening at the club to pull in agents from the SBI.

The realization, harsh and tormenting, caused her throat to ache as she held in her emotions. *Tell me what you know about my sister!* She knew she couldn't come right out and demand answers. No, she'd need to keep with her façade, as he pointed out the other night. "Agent Davis, is it?"

"I think we are well beyond formalities at this point, don't you?"

"I don't think so. I don't even know you. I assumed it was you. The caller ID shows the SBI Field Office, and you're the only call I'm expecting from your agency. I'm afraid I have no idea who you are."

"Oh," he sounded, and she clearly heard the disappointment in his tone. She refused to accept the erratic tempo of her pulse at his reaction as anything more than nerves. "So who are you?"

"I work for—"

"No." He stopped her. "Who *are* you? You're name? *Real* name, if you don't mind."

She didn't want to tell him her name, but since she'd been instructed to take his deposition, she'd be signing her name to the document anyway. "You may call me Ms. Andrews."

"Is that your real name this time?"

"Agent Davis—"

"*Special* Agent."

"Sorry," she offered, trying not to sound impressed. "Special Agent Davis. I'm not sure who you have me confused with, but I called to ask you to come into the office so I—"

"I'll be there in ten minutes." The line went dead and, numbly, Mia hung up the phone. He didn't seem convinced when she told him she didn't know him, and once he saw her, he'd know. She wore her brown hair down and her green eyes without the mask of her contacts, but he knew her body. She couldn't disguise her athletic frame, the way her breasts responded just at the thought of seeing him again. Even now. Her nipples puckered and tented the heavy fabric of her suit jacket. Damn it.

She was in serious trouble.

* * * *

"I'm on my way there now. I'll meet you in their lobby." He slammed the phone closed and grasped the steering wheel for more control. He drove like a bat out of Hell, his siren blaring, weaving in and out of traffic and narrowly missing several vehicles. It had to be her. He knew that sexy voice and was already growing irritatingly fond of her little stutter.

It had to be her.

Rounding the final corner, sliding through a red light, he ripped into the parking lot of Reed, Smythe, and Heathrow. Throwing it in park and tearing the keys from the ignition, he jogged into the building and, after glancing at

the directory, took the stairs up to the fourth floor.

He stopped outside the door to the office and drew in several breaths to slow his heart rate. Pushing the door open, he casually walked in and looked around. Oak and marble accents on everything gave the appearance of money and power. No waiting room, which struck him as odd. The light gray carpet felt plush beneath him, with deep padding that again screamed expensive.

No one sat at the large oak and marble reception desk, and he slowed in disappointment. He really had hoped he'd get a chance to see her in her natural element, not dressed up like some whore, selling herself off to the highest bidder.

He heard a thump from under the desk. "Ouch, damn it! Where the hell did that stupid piece of paper go?" Another thump, more cussing, and then she climbed out from under the desk and sat back down in the chair, blowing her bangs out of her pretty face.

When their gazes collided, he felt the pull clear to his groin.

Dear God in Heaven, it *was* her. She looked even better with her thick brown hair waving down to the middle of her back. Her eyes, so gorgeous in a deep green, held him paralyzed to the spot. A rush of color flooded her cheeks, and he couldn't help but smile.

Simply stunning. A hot ache grew deep in the pit of his stomach, coiling around his chest, compressing it until he couldn't pull in a breath. And, as sure as he was, he also knew by that look in those wide, beautiful eyes, she knew he knew.

With a slight shake of her head, she implored him with her eyes. "Are you Special Agent Davis?"

Ah Jesus. He wanted to reach out to her, to touch her. His fingers tingled to brush across her soft cheek, to weave into that gorgeous, thick mane of chocolate waves. Clearing his throat, he put on the front of uninterested agent. Both their covers were at risk. "Ms. Andrews?"

Forcing a smile, she nodded and stood. He noticed her conservative skirt stopped below the knee. Her low heels didn't nearly show off her amazing calves, and the brown suit she had on made her look so prim and proper. Not at all like the Candy he knew and lo...lusted after.

"Follow me."

"Anywhere."

He loved her reaction. She stiffened, but recovered quickly, and never turned back around. He couldn't pull his gaze away from her lovely ass as she marched down the skinny hallway and opened one of the identical doors leading into what he'd assume to be an identical conference room. He knew he should wait for the DA, but having his sweet Candy command him to do anything made him powerless to resist.

Holding the door for him, he slowed and eyed her lips as he moved passed her. She licked them and pulled her bottom lip between her teeth. His dick twitched at the sight. Thank God he wore loose-fitting slacks today. Although loose, they were rapidly tightening around his stiffening cock.

Jesus. He had no self-control when it came to this woman.

"W-We can do it in h-here."

"That's a new one for me," he replied with a sly curl of his lips. He noticed the way her nipples puckered beneath her blouse and his smile widened. Wondering just how much her body responded in the areas less visible, he wrapped his hand around her neck and pulled her to him, crashed his lips into hers. She responded with a whisper of a moan.

Oh yeah. This woman kissed just like his sweet Candy. The way she parted her lips for him, darted her tongue out to meet his, convinced him. He desperately wanted to rip that skirt away from her beautiful curves and bury his face between her thighs, to see if she tasted as intoxicating during the daytime as she did at night. His cock hardened painfully as their kiss deepened hungrily.

He needed to back away from her, needed to pull his lips off hers before someone walked in on them, but he just couldn't do it. He was losing himself in her, losing control over his senses.

And he fucking loved it.

Breaking their kiss for no other reason than to finally fill his lungs with life-giving oxygen, he sucked in a breath and kissed her temple. His tongue peeked out, licked at her flesh as a tease to what he intended to do to her clit.

"Does this room have a lock?" he asked her breathlessly. She nodded and turned away to close the door. He followed her, rested his hands on her shoulders and nuzzled up to her neck. Delicious chills washed over her skin and he nipped at them playfully.

"S-Steel," she whimpered, more in longing than protest.

"Wayde," he corrected her, his voice thick with lust.

"W-We can't." Even as she protested she reached out and locked the door.

Turning her around, he moved his lips over her jaw, raking his teeth across her skin, loving her sharp intake of breath. Moving his hand slowly down the flat of her tummy and onto the front of her skirt, he was pleased to find a zipper waiting for him.

Convenient.

He wasted no time in unfastening her skirt, knowing the DA would be there any minute and ruin all their fun. The skirt slipped off her hips and fell to the floor around her feet.

"Oh, God," she murmured when his fingers disappeared beneath her panties and dipped between the folds of her pussy. Slick, blistering heat surrounded his finger, pulled him toward her core. He fucked her hole relentlessly as he used the palm of his hand to rub her clit.

Her hips rocked back and forth in rhythm to his finger slipping in and out of her drenched cunt. He wanted to drop to his knees and lap up her juices, make her come for him and scream out his name—his real name—but knew there wouldn't be enough time for that. No, they'd have to settle for a finger fuck and maybe a hand job.

"Touch me," he rasped and rubbed her pussy, rolling his pelvis against her hip to give him friction against his rock hard dick. "Jesus God, I need to feel your hand wrapped around my cock."

She eagerly unfastened his belt and dropped his pants and boxers just enough for his hard-on to spring out, demanding attention. Wrapping her slender fingers around his penis, she squeezed and dragged a moan out of him.

"You're so hard," she purred and dove her lips to his neck, kissing and licking at his flesh. He lifted his chin to give her the access she needed to run her tongue up and down his neck. Ah, Jesus. The chills ripped through him and pulsed in his cock.

"Stroke me, baby. Imagine your hand as the walls of your hot pussy. You are pulling me in deep. Squeeze me the way you'd squeeze me if I had my cock buried inside you."

"Oh, Wayde." Her breathing increased as she started to stroke him. The way she squeezed and rubbed him already had cum bubbling inside his balls.

"Talk to me," he whispered in her ear as he licked her lobe. "Tell me what my hand is to you."

"You are driving your cock inside my pussy, rubbing your hips against mine and pushing me...so close..."

"Tell me, baby. You want an orgasm, don't you?" He bent his head and licked at her lips as he spoke, tempting her, teasing her.

"Oh, yes." She started to stroke him faster. He met her pace with his own and felt her muscles start to spasm around his finger.

"Do you like the feel of my cock thrusting in and out?"

"Yes."

"Do you want it deeper?"

"Oh, yes." She squeezed his dick and he damn near lost it. Pushing his own limit, he drove his finger deep inside her cunt and flicked her clit with his thumb. Whimpering now, her legs wobbled as her need for release had her stroking him hard, demanding his own release.

Covering her lips with his in the nick of time, she cried into his mouth as her orgasm crashed down on her. Her legs gave out, but Wayne already had his other hand around her waist, holding her to him. She bucked her hips wildly, fucking his finger through her waves of pleasure.

He couldn't hold back. A guttural growl escaped his mouth as she stroked him to a blinding orgasm. Jets of life spurted out of the end of his dick with each peak of his climax, threatening his consciousness. Each shot of cum felt like a new orgasm, crippling his system and rendering him helpless but to ride it out.

Dear God in Heaven, he'd never come so hard in his life.

Both panting, they leaned into each other and simply stood there, using each other to keep the other upright. "What," she panted, "was that?"

"I'm not sure," he answered and swallowed to wet his throat.

"I'm supposed to be taking your statement."

"Well, you definitely got something out of me." He laughed when she pushed him away. Both hurried to right themselves before anyone realized what they'd done.

After he finished by fastening his belt, he glanced at the floor and winced. There, right on the carpet, were several telltale puddles of exactly what they'd been doing.

"Are you going to tell me your name now?" He combed his fingers

through his hair and gave her a sideways glance. Her lips, swollen from their contact, suddenly thinned. Those pretty green eyes flared as she nailed him with a look of scorching disdain.

What the hell? Two strokes ago he had her screaming into his mouth.

"How dare you," she snarled. "You did that on purpose."

"Hey," he defended and put up his hands to ward off the inevitable attack. "It wasn't like you were screaming for me to stop. You knew what you were doing when you locked that door."

"Typical." Jerking away from him when he reached for her, she angrily flipped the lock on the door. "You men are all alike."

Wayde spiked his brow, pissed that she was pissed. "What right do you have to be upset?"

"You took advantage of me."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Irritation tightened his nerves. He clenched his teeth and tried to ignore the increase in his heart rate.

"Like you did last night, and the night before."

Unbelievable. "Forgive me for being the one to remind you, but you are, in fact, a courtesan. Men pay you to have sex with them."

She folded her arms beneath her breasts and looked away. Something shifted in her eyes. The way her body stiffened at his words had him convinced it wasn't the sex that had her working at The Emerald Club.

Before he had the chance to ask, the door opened to reveal a tall, way-too-skinny crusty old lawyer. He eyed her skeptically, then turned that untrusting look on Wayde. With determination, he straightened his spine, marched his crusty old legs up to Wayde and stopped within a foot. "Mr. Davis?"

Wayde gave her one last look. She thrust out her chin and grabbed the notepad she'd set down on the table. Inwardly cursing for not being able to keep it in his pants, or his finger out of her cunt, he turned back to the crusty old lawyer.

"Special Agent," he corrected and didn't take a step back even though the lawyer invaded his personal space. His breath smelled like a combination of too many Altoids to cover up too many cigarettes. Wayde caught the old man eyeing the woman to their side, recognized a dark lust in his crusty eyes.

In your dreams, counselor.

He knew by stepping back he'd be releasing control to the old man, submitting. Wayde Davis didn't submit to anyone and only rarely released his control. His gaze jumped back to his sweet Candy. She widened her eyes and looked over at the old man. Wayde followed her frightened gaze back to the lawyer, who had a disgusting sneer on his otherwise pasty face.

The old man eyed him, his dark hooded eyes attempting to bore into him. But Wayde looked the lawyer straight in the eye and refused to back down until the old man nodded to acknowledge his title, and who was really in control. He'd worked his ass off getting the damn title, enduring twenty-one weeks of training back east to earn the right to be called special agent. "Of course."

That's better. They shook hands, and Wayde squeezed his a little harder than he needed to, but wanted to make sure this man knew where he stood on Wayde's list. That would be somewhere between the dog shit he scraped off his shoe this morning and the toilet paper he used to wipe his ass.

"*Special Agent* Davis, I'm Mr. Smythe. I'd like to sit in on your deposition if you don't mind."

"Actually," he started. Hell yes, he minded. Not only was it a conflict having the opposing counsel in the room while he gave his statement without the DA present, but with the old man in the room he couldn't demand answers from his sweet Candy. Like why in the hell would she sign on as a courtesan when she already had a job? Most of the women he'd met at that club were lifers, the money they made each night their only source of income. Yet another intriguing contradiction from this woman. "I do."

Smythe stopped from sitting down at the end of the table. Wayde had to give him props. Taking the end of the table gave him the air of being in charge. Obviously this man was used to being in control of his situations.

Too damn bad. Wayde was used to the same and didn't plan to allow a lawyer to take that power from him. "I'll give my statement to Ms. Andrews."

"She's my assistant."

"Will she be trying the case against the scumbag I took in after he ran over his partner when he caught him stealing their stash of pirated DVDs?"

Smythe took a seat anyway. Wayde decided he'd better remain standing. His interest in the dear Ms. Andrews took a back seat to his current situation. Smythe obviously thought he could intimidate Wayde with his

reputation and presence. Nice try.

"She may be in the courtroom."

Wayde shot her a sideways glance. The news shocked her as much as it did him. "I'll wait for the DA."

Smythe arched his gray brows. "You called Joy Carmichael?"

Not bothering to hide his smile, he nodded. He knew how the scum-sucking defense attorneys felt about the state's district attorney. Joy Carmichael was as tough as they come. She'd cut off the man's balls and feed them back to him, one at a time. *That* was only if she liked him. And Joy Carmichael didn't like any defense attorney, especially Smythe. If Wayde remembered correctly, Carmichael rambled on and on about the sexual harassment inquiries brought to her attention, centering around the crusty old attorney. The way he kept eyeing Ms. Andrews, it looked like grounds for another harassment case in the making.

That was if his sweet Candy didn't take care of it herself.

"She's taken a personal interest in the case," Wayde stated.

"I would expect something as trivial as involuntary manslaughter would be assigned to one of her assistants."

"You thought wrong," Carmichael barked as she walked into the room and dropped her briefcase onto the glass table. Wayde half expected it to shatter and cringed, as did everyone else in the room. Everyone, that was, except Carmichael. A short, round Hispanic woman with chin length dark hair and even darker eyes, Joy Carmichael was a pit bull with one hell of a vicious bite. "And last I checked, your boy was looking at ten to twenty for vehicular homicide Smythe, so don't bullshit me. I'm getting damn tired having to cart my butt down to this office every other day. It's either a legitimate complaint about your wandering hands, Smythe," she stopped and glared at him. "Or it's to chase SBI agents around who have bigger balls than brains."

She glared at Wayde, telling him she'd deal with him later for his demand to drag her down to this meeting at the last minute. Feeling like a little kid who'd just been visually scolded by his mother, he took a seat next to her and folded his hands on the table in front of him. When Ms. Andrews sat directly across from him, Smythe stood with a grunt and joined them all down at the other end of the table.

"Ms. Andrews, please take thorough notes throughout this deposition. I

don't want to miss anything."

"Better yet," Wayde added and riveted his eyes to her. She fidgeted in her chair. "Do you have a recorder? I don't want to have to repeat myself."

She looked at him with determination, anger blazing in those striking green eyes. "I'm very thorough."

"I'll bet."

"Enough." Carmichael jumped in. "Let's just get this done. Whatever you two got going will have to be settled later."

"Believe me," Wayde stated evenly, his mood edging from intrigued to irritated as hell. "It will."

The deposition took less than an hour. Carmichael took her own notes and exchanged them with Ms. Andrews. She looked down at the paper. "Mia Andrews? Why does that name ring a bell?" Mia's eyes darted to Wayde. The sheer mortification of having him know her full name shined in her wide eyes. Carmichael looked up from the paper and glared at her. "Well?"

"I file several of Mr. Smythe's depositions at the courthouse," she explained. Wayde knew in a heartbeat she had to be lying. She wouldn't look at Carmichael, and she didn't hold an ounce of conviction in the tone of her voice.

"No." Carmichael shoved the papers into her briefcase and grabbed it to leave. As she walked out the door, she stopped and abruptly turned back to Mia. "Aimee Andrews."

The slight gasp Mia let out as she slapped her hand over her mouth pulled Wayde's attention to her. "What about her?"

He didn't miss the hitch in her breath, the anxiety in her voice. Without thinking he reached over and touched her shoulder. His heart hammered in his chest when she leaned toward him and closed her eyes.

"Missing persons, right?" Carmichael commented. She glanced at Wayde's hand on Mia's shoulder and then looked up at him with arched brows. He gave her a slide shake of his head.

Mia nodded. "I filed the report myself."

Missing persons?

"Ms. Andrews, please show them out." Smythe turned to walk away. The heartless dickhead didn't give a shit his employee had filed a missing persons report. Wayde watched and smiled inwardly as the prick slipped on the wet spot on the carpet. Catching himself before he completely lost his

footing, he tried to recover by straightening his tie. "And leave a note for the cleaning crew to pay special attention to this room. There appears to be a spill on the carpet."

Wayde and Mia exchanged looks.

"And it smells funny," Carmichael added.

They exchanged looks again. The look of sheer mortification at what she'd done shined in her eyes. Not for the first time, he wanted to kick his own ass for touching her.

Chapter 7

She applied her makeup with rushed, angry strokes. After throwing down her mascara and picking up her lipstick, she yanked off the cap and threw it.

"Honey, you seem tense." Antoinette pointed out the obvious. "Are you okay? Do you want to talk about it?"

"Not really," she growled and did a half-assed job at her lipstick. It didn't matter. Either she was out since she didn't sleep with Mr. Steely Eyes, aka Special Agent Wayne Davis, or she was back in the room with him. She hoped for the latter.

She had a few questions for the *special* agent. First, she'd demand he tell her what he knew about her sister. Once he told her what he knew, she'd then tell him to go fuck himself as he'd never get the chance with her.

Guy suddenly appeared behind her, his large hands on her shoulders. The contrast of his dark skin made her look so pale. The creepy man's hands felt like thousands of spiders crawling across her exposed flesh. Drawing in a strengthening breath, she looked up at him in the mirror's reflection.

That's when she noticed he only had nine fingers. He saw the way she eyed his missing pinkie finger on his left hand and squeezed her shoulders to pull her attention away. She tried not to wince from the pain. "What's up, Guy? I have things to do."

"Not so fast, sweet ass."

Her heart not only sank to the pit of her stomach, it fell right through the floor. She was out. She'd lost her one chance to find her little sister. The realization hit her and she had a hard time taking a breath through the enormous lump weighing down her chest. The pain of her failure hurt more than the nine digits digging into her shoulders. "I'm out?"

"No," he said and held her down in her chair when she tried to stand. His hands tightened on her shoulders. When she tried to struggle out of his

grasp, he curled his fingers, digging them deeper into her flesh. She hissed in a breath. "Da boss like you. He say you get one more chance. You do exactly what da man who buy you tonight ask you to do. Dis time we make sure you open your legs to more dan just a face."

The heat of humiliation burned into her cheeks. She hated that they had cameras in the rooms. It felt so violating knowing Guy and who knew who else had seen her sprawled out, legs open wide, Wayde's face buried deep between her thighs. "But he didn't—"

"Not interested, sweet ass." When he didn't loosen his grip, she tried to move out of his reach. He increased the pressure until she stopped struggling. "You is a pain in da ass. I don't like you. Good ting da boss does. He say you bring good money to da club, and tinks you be worth it. If your DVDs don't bring da cash, you be out."

She looked up at him through the mirror, her breath hitching at the news. "DVDs?"

"I tell you before, man. Why you tink we got dem cameras in all da rooms, bitch?" Sweet Jesus. Mia swallowed down the bile creeping up into her throat. They were recording the courtesans and selling the footage. How could she forget? Not only was this degrading, they were immortalizing her humiliation on film. With a final, painful squeeze, Guy let her go and waved his hand at her as he walked away. "Goddamn bitches," he muttered.

"I've never seen him hate a girl so much," Antoinette informed her in her whiny voice.

The lights dimmed. Mia stood and, after finding the cap to her lipstick, set it down on her stand as she turned. Feeling much more comfortable in the three-inch heels she purchased on her way here, she held her head high as she approached the "X." She didn't even wobble once.

Guy sent daggers at her with his narrow glare, but she ignored him. This wasn't about him, or whether he liked her or not. This was about Aimee and the fact Mia couldn't find her.

And tonight she'd demand answers.

* * * *

When she appeared on the stage in her less-than-flattering blonde wig

and back in the black get up from the first night, Wayde's entire body stiffened. He was still pissed as hell Guy wouldn't give him one more night with her, and his director made it clear he was not to bid on her again. Fucking director. He had a reach longer than God. He had to swear he'd find a new lead on an informant and leave Mia Andrews the hell alone if he wanted to remain on the case.

But seeing her up on that stage, stiff and terrified, sent his pulse racing. Someone else would win her tonight. They would screw the light out of those brilliant eyes, and Wayde had no choice but to stand back and watch it happen.

Would Mia meet the same fate as his partner? Would the man who bid on her tonight want more than sex? The thought of any other man so much as touching her had him so tense he was ready to put his fist through a cement wall. Knowing he had to simply step aside and allow it just about killed him.

With disgust, he shook his head and tore his gaze away from her. He was such a pussy. A stronger man would have told his superiors to go to hell. A stronger man would have fought harder to stay by her side. A stronger man wouldn't give a shit about anything else but protecting Mia Andrews. After all, he was an agent. Serve and protect, at any cost.

A squeezing and harsh realization sank into his brain. She knew he wasn't just some John in here looking to get laid. She knew his *real* name. His entire cover relied on her keeping her goddamn mouth shut. Could he trust her? Did he even have a choice at this point?

Shit. He'd have to bid on her again, if for no other reason than to make sure she didn't talk to anyone else. He didn't deny the flip in his chest at the thought of them spending another night together. Maybe they'd get a chance to use more than their hands on each other.

"Let's start the bidding at—"

"Five thousand," Wayde offered and gave her a terse nod when she darted her gaze his way. She squared in on him and took a breath to say something.

"Six," another man quietly stated. Wayde dragged his attention from Mia to focus in on a blond man sitting in the corner, sipping at a drink. He glanced off in Wayde's direction before centering his gaze on Mia.

That had to be the other agent the director told him would be here

tonight. Wayde didn't recognize him, and he'd all but memorized the men that showed up to bid night after night. *Just try to stare me down with those piercing blue eyes, buddy. I'll dig the goddamn things right out of their sockets.*

"Seven," Wayde answered, not taking his eyes off him. He took a step toward the stage and stopped, a silent challenge to see if the man planned to make another bid.

"Ten." The blond accepted the challenge without hesitation.

Son-of-a-bitch. "Twelve."

"Fifteen."

Goddamn it. Apparently whatever department he came from had a hell of a lot more money than the SBI. And why in the hell were they bidding against each other, for Christ's sake? But, until he saw some form of ID from the other agency, he refused to back down. His gut tightened at the thought that this man bidding against him may not be an agent at all. He may be just some horny John looking to get laid. "Seventeen."

The blond man sat back, openly studying Wayde. He took a long pull from his drink, but didn't make another bid. Satisfied, Wayde moved to glance over his shoulder at Mia when the man's bid forced him to rivet his eyes to him. "Twenty-five thousand."

No way. No *fucking* way. Wayde clenched his jaw until it ached. He didn't even have the cash to make the first bid. His director already made it perfectly clear. If he made the bid for her tonight, the state wouldn't be covering the bill. He didn't have that kind of money without taking out a second mortgage.

He ground his teeth together, knowing he'd lost the bid for her. His hands shook as he struggled to contain his fury. If the man wasn't an agent, if he wasn't bidding on Mia to secure her safety, then God help him when Wayde found out.

He turned and looked up at Mia. The pleading look in those pretty eyes, the way they sparkled at the threat of her frightened tears escaping damn near broke his heart.

I'm sorry, he mouthed. Her shoulders rose and fell with her labored breathing. She shook her head slightly, mouthing the word *no* over and over. Her lower lip started to quiver. Ah Jesus. She was about to cry. He took a step toward the stage to reach out and comfort her when the announcer

slammed the gavel against the podium, the sound dumping a crushing weight on his chest.

No! He couldn't let this happen. He wouldn't let this happen. *Think, Davis. Think, damn you.* Mia just stood there, staring at him, imploring him with that frozen look of fear on her face.

"Deliver the girl to my suite, Guy." Wayde whipped around at the sound of the other man's voice. He stood and approached, flashed a genuine smile—first to Mia, then to Wayde. Just who the hell did this guy think he was smiling at either one of them?

"I'm James Pearce," he stated and offered his hand. Wayde simply looked at it. He wasn't about to shake hands with the man who took Mia from him. Agent or not, he'd rather double up his fist and knock out a few of this man's perfect teeth. "And you are?"

"Not interested," Wayde rasped and turned away. He looked up to see Guy grab Mia's arm and drag her off the stage. Not once did her gaze leave his until Guy pushed her into the elevator.

The son-of-a-bitch was going to pay for that. The way he manhandled Mia made Wayde's blood boil and every fiber of his being wanted a piece of the bastard.

"I believe you are, actually."

The man's voice pulled Wayde's attention away from the doors of the elevator. Irritated, ready to knock him out cold, Wayde barked, "What?"

"You've had the courtesan for two nights in a row. Obviously you want her again." He nailed Wayde with those blazing blue eyes. "I'm offering you that now."

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

Pearce smiled again and it really pissed him off to see the man so damn happy at the situation. "Join us."

His gut clenched and a dark spark ignited deep inside him. Did he hear him right? "Excuse me?"

"I want you to join us. Please. With you there, she should feel a little more comfortable."

Was he serious? He tossed the idea around in his head. He could go with him, stay by Mia's side, make sure Pearce didn't do anything she didn't want him to. It would also give him the chance to talk to her, to make sure she knew not to use his real name. He had no idea if Pearce really was an agent,

or just a horny man looking for an expensive fuck. "What do you want me to do? Watch?"

"No. Actually, I have other plans for you." When Wayde didn't respond, he placed his hand on Wayde's shoulder and continued to explain. "See, I have...certain tastes."

Wayde eyed Pearce's hand on his shoulder. The man was about two seconds away from losing his digits. "Get your hand off me. Guys aren't my thing."

"That isn't my intention," he stated and removed his hand. "I, like you, am not into men. But I do need a little...encouragement in order to..."

It clicked and Wayde almost felt sorry for the guy. "You need to watch."

Pearce lowered his eyes and nodded. Ashamed, was he? Well too damn bad. This guy was not going to watch him and Mia butter bread, let alone have sex. Yet, deep down, the anticipation of doing just that had him intrigued. A tight coil swirled in his gut, tightening as he weighed this man's offer.

"The courtesan—"

"M—" Wayde stopped himself before he corrected Pearce with her real name. Jesus. What was the matter with him? He almost blew her cover, and he was worried about her? "Ms. Candy. Her name is Candy."

Pearce nodded and smiled again. "Candy. I like that. It fits her."

The hell it does. "So how would this work? We go to your room and... What? What is it you're asking me to do?"

"Seduce sweet Candy for me. Let me instruct you on exactly how I want you to touch her, to pleasure her. Let me love her through you."

"You want me to have sex with her? In front of you?"

"Exactly."

The idea of having Mia any way he could, including in front of someone else, caused the coil to squeeze hard. Pulses of electric current surged through him, settled in his groin. "And you won't be touching her?"

"Not tonight."

Wayde eyed him skeptically, fury at the thought of Pearce touching her in any way consuming him, tensing him. "Planning to win her bid again?"

Pearce nodded. "I only need to watch the first time. After that, I can take care of her pleasure on my own."

His protective nature shot into overdrive. He couldn't let this man touch

her, at least not without him there to make sure he behaved. If he didn't, if he so much as stepped one toe out of line, Wayde would kill him without a second thought. "I'll make you a deal."

"I'm listening."

He had to do it. This guy could be the one they were after, the one taking the women and doing God only knew with them. He had no choice but to have sex with Mia if he had any chance at protecting her.

The irony slammed into his resolve, solidifying his decision. "I'll go with you tonight. I'll follow your instructions and seduce her. But we *come* as a package deal. Each time you win her bid, I go with her. You are not allowed to touch her without me there. Those are the terms. Got it?"

"Shouldn't that be Candy's decision?"

"*Got it?*" Wayde repeated with a little more grit in his tone, sharpening the edges of his meaning.

Pearce nodded and motioned toward the elevator doors. As they walked over and stopped to wait for the lift, he turned to Wayde. "What is your name?"

"Steel," Wayde answered after remembering Mia's nickname for him. He only hoped he had a chance to get to her and remind her to call him Steel before she went and called him by his real name.

"Well, Steel." They stepped into the elevator and waited until the doors closed before continuing. "I like you. You are fiercely protective of her, even though she isn't yours to protect. That tells me a great deal about your integrity."

Did this man just compliment him? Reluctantly, Wayde said, "Thanks, I think."

"Oh, that's a good thing." Pearce nodded and smiled sheepishly, lowering his gaze to the floor. "I'm hoping, in time, you grow to at least trust me."

"I don't trust anyone."

"I won't hurt her. And I'll never do anything she doesn't want to do," he looked up from the floor and waited until Wayde looked back at him before going on. "If you don't trust me, at least trust in that."

Wayde knew how to read people. It was his job. And he knew Pearce meant exactly what he said, saw the sincerity in his eyes, heard the assurance in his voice. It made him feel a little better. Not much, but

knowing he wouldn't have to beat the man off Mia helped.

"This way," Pearce stepped out of the elevator when the doors whooshed open. Wayde took note of the floor they stopped on. The fifth floor? He shouldn't be surprised. If the man could afford to fork out twenty-five thousand dollars for a night of voyeurism, he could afford the top floor suite.

Scanning the short hall, he noticed there weren't any cameras in any of the corners. Interesting. Apparently extra money entitled you to privacy, too. Pearce opened the double doors leading into the suite and stepped aside for Wayde to enter first.

He did, his longing to see Mia again overtaking his otherwise practical senses. When he didn't see her right away, his suspicions went on high alert. This could be a trap. Pearce could have lured him here, using Mia as bait. Did they know who he really was? If they knew, did they know Mia's true identity as well? His actions cooled even though his heart rate spiked. Was this how they got the jump on Nelson?

Wayde clenched his jaw as his anger nearly overwhelmed him, coursing through him like molten lava. Turning, tensing, ready to take out Pearce and anyone else who tried to stop him, he stiffened abruptly when he heard her voice.

"Steel?"

Spinning on his booted heel, he spotted her and felt the weight lift from his shoulders, while at the same time tightening his gut. He didn't know what he expected when he saw her. What he didn't expect was the way his pulse jumped erratically, finally settling in at about one-twenty.

"Candy."

Her eyes lit up and it did captivating things to his emotions and consumed his senses. She was actually glad to see him? After what happened earlier today, he'd expected her to come at him with her nails drawn. He couldn't ignore the pull in his chest at her reaction, though he tried. His penis twitched, eager to escape the confines of his jeans.

Her cheeks splashed with color and he grinned at how beautiful she looked, ugly wig and all. His dick surged and the mere thought of her showing him just how happy she was to see him. "W-What are you d-doing here?"

"I invited him," Pearce offered up and closed the doors behind him. As

Mia watched Pearce, Wayde pulled his attention from her long enough to survey the room. No visible cameras. No obvious wires for audio. That didn't mean they weren't there. Expensive looking pictures lined the walls. He spotted an actual wet bar off to the side by a full bathroom. A table twice the size of the one he had in the room he rented sat perched in front of a veranda bigger than his entire room. The king size bed here appeared dwarfed in comparison to the size of this suite.

"Why?" Mia kept blinking. Her contacts must be bothering her. She rubbed at her eyes and blinked several times.

"For you."

She stopped blinking and looked at Pearce incredulously. "Me?"

"I want you to be comfortable. Inviting Steel to join us will, hopefully, help you to relax."

"I know exactly what she needs to relax," he commented and watched her, judging her reaction. Her gaze slid down to his expanding cock and back up to him. When she caught him looking at his groin, her color deepened furiously.

"Are you two—" she stopped and started to breathe in shallow gasps. The color drained from her face. If she didn't get control over herself, she'd pass out.

She swayed and he rushed to her side, his desire replaced with concern. Tucking her under his arm, every need in his brain replaced with a single goal of Mia and only Mia, he helped her over to the table and sat her down in one of the chairs. Kneeling in front of her, he touched her cheek, her neck, her shoulder. It could still be a trap. They could have drugged her to lure him to her. Her pupils were wide, but not too wide. No, she was just having a panic attack. He recognized the symptoms after having to help his sister through them dozens of times.

"Breathe with me." He grabbed her face and forced her to look at him. She mimicked the pace of his breathing and soon let out a long sigh, signaling the end of her attack.

Shit. He had to get her out of this place, out of any danger. His gut twisted at the thought of anything happening to her. It didn't make any sense, and he didn't bother to spend any time analyzing it. He barely knew her, and still didn't know her story. Yet he knew to trust his gut, and it told him to stay by her side no matter what.

He brushed the ugly blonde wig out of her eyes. "Better?"

"No!" She still hadn't regained any of her color as she darted her gaze over to Pearce before leaning in to whisper for his ears only. "Am I going to have to sleep with him?"

"No." She seemed to relax, but he didn't want her to get too comfortable with that thought. From the sounds of it, she'd end up sleeping with him soon enough. "Not tonight, anyway."

Her eyes flew open wide again. What little color splashing her cheeks disappeared instantly. Her breathing started to pick up once again. "He's going to bid on me again?"

Wayde nodded, the idea of Pearce so much as touching her slicing harshly deep in his conscience. "Tonight he just wants to watch."

He didn't think it possible, but her eyes opened even wider. This time she accompanied the gesture with a gasp and slapped her hand to her mouth. A heated color crept up her neck. "Watch?" She asked, her mouth still covered. "Us? Doing what?"

He looked at her. When she didn't respond, he spelled it out for her. "He wants me to seduce you in front of him."

"Seduce? Like have sex with me?"

He nodded again, his insides clenching tight. Bringing his hand up, he brushed her cheek. Anger and uncertainty knotted inside him. Damn her for ever stepping foot into The Emerald Club, and damn him for giving a shit. "Don't worry. It'll be me. I'm not some stranger. It's me, baby. Wayde. I know your body, and you know mine."

When her lower lip started to quiver, he almost lost it. He hated to see her cry. It pulled at his heartstrings, which irritated the hell out of him. He brought his other hand up and cupped her face, forcing her gaze to snap to his. "It's me."

Pearce cleared his throat. Grudgingly, Wayde stood and stepped to the side, though close enough to keep a protective hand on her shoulder. As long as he had a breath in him he vowed to stay by her side, to comfort and protect her any way he could. He'd never felt the burning and fervent need to possess someone, to call her his own. Yet, from the moment he first saw Mia, he knew he had to have her, to have and to hold.

She trembled and he gave her a squeeze to reassure her, ran his thumb along her shoulder. It wouldn't even come close to comforting her, and he

knew that. But he couldn't just stand there and do nothing, not when he was about to do the one thing he swore he wouldn't do on this assignment.

"Have a seat, Steel." Pearce stated and walked over to the wet bar. He grabbed a tray and set glasses on it, followed by a bottle of something being chilled in an ice bucket. Fruit. Crackers. Cheeses. Once he walked over and dropped off the tray, he went back and grabbed another, filling that one with more food.

Were they having a picnic?

After depositing the second tray, Pearce took a seat next to Mia. Wayde tried to ignore the way his temper spiked and instead took the seat on the other side of her after scooting his chair close.

Mia looked over at Wayde, then over at Pearce, then back to Wayde, her confusion evident in her eyes. "What are we doing?"

"We," Pearce stated and reached over to pour them all drinks, "are getting to know each other." He handed Mia her drink with a genuine smile that bore right under Wayde's skin.

She stared at the drink, carefully hiding her eyes from either man. "What do you need to know?"

"Candy?" Pearce waited until she lifted her troubled gaze to him. "Please, don't look at this as a chore or something you were forced into. I'm simply looking for a little company tonight. I'm not asking you to do anything you haven't already done with other men who paid a hefty sum of money to spend the night with you. I'm just trying to be a nice guy here."

Nodding, she brought her trembling hand to her mouth and took a long pull on the drink. "S-Sorry. I'm just nervous."

"That makes two of us," he replied with too damn much charm for Wayde's liking. When Mia smiled in response to his comment, Wayde grit his teeth. "Trust me. I don't usually do this."

"That makes two of us." She gave his words back to him. Wayde inwardly corrected her.

That makes three of us.

Chapter 8

Mia drew in a deep breath and held it. This couldn't be more awkward. Not only did she have the proverbial tall, dark, and definitely handsome agent following her around, she now had a good looking man with playful blond hair and gorgeous blue eyes vying for her attention. Wayde's features looked like they could have been chiseled from granite they were so hard. Just like the rest of his body.

Glancing over at the other one—she didn't even know his name—she noted his features were more jovial, his eyes smiling even when he wasn't. Sitting between them, she felt the radiant heat encompass her. A deep pulsing energy mounted around her womb, pushing its force down the walls of her pussy and centering as a tingle on her lips. Why would simply sitting between them have her stimulated this much? Her clit was on fire, aching as it yearned for attention. Wayde's intense gaze burned into her, warming her further.

He hadn't left her side since entering the suite and she didn't really know what to think of that. Flattered? Annoyed? Grateful? All of the above?

"My name is James Pearce," the man said while reaching over and grabbing some grapes. Popping one in his mouth, he chewed and swallowed. "I'm thirty-five, a Scorpio, and I hate my feet."

"Your feet?" Mia hadn't heard of a man hating his feet before.

He nodded and pulled his foot out from under the table to show her. "They're too big. See?"

"They look normal to me," she lied. Dear God! They were huge. She hoped the old saying of a man's feet equating to the size of his penis didn't hold true here. He'd split her in two. Her heart spasmed at the thought. She jumped her gaze down to his groin and then quickly blinked her attention to the floor.

"I suppose you like long walks on the beach?" Wayde chimed in, his

voice dripping with sarcasm.

James laughed and Mia watched as Wayde tensed. "No. I actually hate the beach. That sand gets into *everything*. I'm not a big fan of the water, either."

"Yet you live in Seattle," Wayde stated evenly. "The floating bridge capital of the world."

"I know, right? I should be firmly planted in the hills of Montana or something. But Seattle is one of my many homes, and I love it here."

"You love the rain and gray clouds three hundred days of the year?" Wayde leaned over and grabbed a handful of cheeses. After taking a bite, he sat back and chewed slowly, his careful gaze resting on the other man.

Mia watched the two men as they made small talk, not ever saying anything of any importance. But, then again, if they did say anything worth her listening in, she didn't hear them. No, her mind clouded with images of her in bed with the sexy agent, having him touch her and bring her to climax as he rooted his cock deep inside her. Instead of being scared, or even nervous, her body responded to the thought by dampening her core, tingling her pussy lips as they softened and expanded to welcome him in.

"So you agree?" James asked. Mia blinked back the mental picture of Wayde's body over hers, both writhing and slamming into each other in the throes of passion.

"What?" The heat of her embarrassment seized her, leaving her momentarily speechless. She bounced her gaze to his groin again. The unmistakable bulge of his cock twitched. Her cunt clenched in response and she sucked in a breath as she quickly pulled her gaze back up to him. His eyes danced mirthfully. Heat engulfed her face at being caught.

"What were you thinking just now?" James smiled at her and her breath hitched. That twinkle in his eye convinced her he already knew.

"Uh—nothing. I agree." Nodding to seal her answer, she pasted a smile on her face, all the while wondering what in the hell she'd just agreed to.

"You do?" Wayde's tone had her heart dancing in her chest. He obviously didn't think she'd agree to whatever she'd agreed to. Shrugging to hide her confusion, her fake smile melted when he stood and reached his hand down to her. "Then let's do it."

"Do it?" A flicker of apprehension coursed through her when she realized exactly what she'd agreed to. "You mean *do it* do it?"

Wayde's smile turned her to putty in the chair. "You are always so articulate." She accepted his outstretched hand and when he brushed his thumb over her wrist, a shiver washed through her. "So," he turned to James as he stood. "How does this work?"

James walked over and positioned a sitting chair in the darkest corner of the room, and then took a seat. "Stand behind her." Mia's insides were in turmoil. Why was James telling Wayde what to do? What did she miss when she decided to take a mental vacation instead of listen to their conversation? When Wayde stood behind her, pressing his hard body against her back, she let out a shaky breath.

"Good. Settle in behind her. Perfect. Now run your hands up and down her arms. No, do it slower. Just like that. Nibble her neck."

She began to lose herself in his touch, but quickly recovered. Another man watched them as they acted out his instructions. She shouldn't be willing to accept this. But, not only was she accepting it, she actually took immense pleasure in it. The way Wayde licked and teased her neck had her nipples erect, hard as stone, and painful as they brushed against the tight corset.

"Take a deep breath. Can you smell the heat of her arousal radiating up from her pussy?"

Wayde inhaled deeply, traced his tongue up and down her neck, and she shuddered in a shower of gratifying chills. "Oh yeah."

"Tell me how she smells."

He moved on to her jawbone, delivering delicate kisses that left her body on fire wherever his lips touched. Her body responded by curling her lust around her channel, squeezing and releasing as her slick juices drenched her pussy completely. "Sweet. Delicious. Good enough to eat."

"Like Candy?" James asked, his voice strained.

"Like Mia," Wayde whispered against her skin. His breath, so wet and hot, had her body responding in kind. She knew James wouldn't have been able to hear Wayde's comment, and knowing he called her by her real name made her cunt gush, the moisture from her aching need surrounding her entrance.

"Reach around to her front. Untie the corset and toss it aside. Let's get a look at those beautiful breasts."

Wayde scraped his teeth on her shoulder, tightening her nipples and

melting any restrain she mistakenly thought she had. Bringing her hands up, she reached up behind her and weaved her fingers into his hair. When he reached the last eyelet, he ripped the corset from her and, indeed, tossed it aside. The coolness in the air nipped at her already sensitive flesh, exciting her.

Without instruction, he cupped her heavy breasts in his hands, gently squeezing them. His fingers reached her hard little buds and she whimpered when he pinched them. He already knew how much she loved that. The coil encircling her entire inside tightened, shooting bolts of lightening from her nipples straight to the lips of her throbbing pussy.

She needed him to touch her, to stroke her. Completely drenched from her own juices, the feeling pure and erotic, she rocked her hips back to rub against his erection.

Oh dear God. His cock felt even bigger than she remembered him being when she had his rigid member in her hands earlier today, when she stroked him until he came. She wanted him then, and she wanted him now. Oh God how she wanted it, wanted his cock buried deep inside her pussy. She wanted to be filled by his flesh, stretched to capacity, feel him slide in and out of her tight hole.

The sound of a zipper caught in her ears. She turned in his arms, wanting to wrap her hand around his hard shaft, stroke him until he threw her down and the bed and plunged into her. Reaching down, she brushed her hand over a fully covered erection and stopped, puzzled. If it wasn't him, then it had to be...

"Turn back around, Candy. I need to see you." She did and what she saw had her awestruck. Frozen, unable to pull her gaze away from his groin, she simply stood there and stared. Apparently the old saying held true.

His feet were nothing compared to his enormous penis. If she could think of another word that meant something bigger, she'd give his giant organ that title. He had to be a foot long! And *OhMyGod* thick. It was the biggest cock she'd ever seen in her life. Her insides quivered at the thought of that dick driving into her, filling her beyond anything she'd ever experienced.

"Jesus, man." Wayde rasped, his hands protectively on her shoulders. "What the hell do you eat?"

"All my vegetables," James responded in a low voice. "And as much

pussy as I can."

Wayde chuckled and she felt the deep vibrations clean to her soul. His hands went back to her breasts, caressing them, loving them with his fingers. With restrained ardor she pulled away from him and felt him run his fingers up and down her spine. The gentle massage sent currents of liquid desire coursing through her, pooling between her legs.

His hands slid back around and across her stomach, dipping lower until the tips of his fingers touched the top of her panties. He stopped and pulled back again. This time when she heard the zipper, she knew it had to be Wayde's since James already had his cock out and stroked it slowly.

The sight should have disgusted her, she reasoned. Instead, seeing him pleasure himself with his own hand had her ready to submit to either one of them. Both, even. That thought had her juices gushing, tickling her as she lubricated her cunt for their control.

Running his finger up her ribcage and back down, she let out a giggle and jerked back. He grabbed her hips and pulled her back to him. Instinctively, she arched her back, pushing her ass into his hard-on, taking pleasure in the way he rocked, moving his cock up and down her crack through the fabric.

"Remove her panties."

He didn't need to be asked twice and took no time in yanking the tiny piece of clothing from her body. She now stood for both their viewing pleasure in nothing but her stockings and heels. It felt sexy as hell.

"Dip your finger inside her pussy. Taste her juices."

Wayde's thick finger pushed between her swollen lips, easily sliding into her slick channel. She shuddered and leaned back against him. He held her up and repeated, plunging his finger inside. The palm of his hand brushed against her stimulated clit, and her body squirmed to maintain the pressure.

He pulled his finger out and brought it up to his mouth, licking her juices like he'd done the other night. It had the same erotic reaction on her as before. Her knees almost buckled as she watched him.

"It's time to move to the bed."

Wayde lifted her in his arms and she curled into him. Laying her down, he leaned in to kiss her. She lifted her chin to meet him halfway.

"No!" They both stopped, blinked at each other. Then, in unison, they

turned to James. "No kissing."

Wayde growled deep in the back of his throat and Mia felt him tense. "Why the hell not?"

"Kissing makes it personal," James explained. "Until there are no secrets between us, no kissing."

"What the fuck are you talking about, Pearce?"

"You expect me to believe Steel is your real name?" He dropped his eyes from Wayde to Mia. "Or Candy?"

Wayde sat up on the bed, faced James. Mia remained down, hoping this conversation would end so he'd come back to her, place his hands on her body once more. "It is the only name you're going to get from me." He placed his hand protectively on her thigh. "Or her. So you either except that or the deal is off."

Deal? What *deal*? This time, Mia did sit up. "What did you just say?"

"You are welcome to leave," James offered and even gestured to the door with his free hand. "I'll just find someone else to fuck her."

"I leave, she leaves with me."

"I don't think so."

"Then I'm not leaving," Wayde insisted and scooted closer to her. When he tried to push her behind him, she felt both secure and irritated. She could handle her own, thank you very much.

James sighed and leaned forward, shadowing his semi hard-on. "Then we are back to the no kissing rule."

"If you think—"

"It's okay," Mia placed her hand on his shoulder and leaned in to brush her lips across his neck. She didn't want him to leave her alone with James. He seemed like a nice enough guy, but she knew absolutely nothing about him. At least she knew Wayde was an agent. "We don't need to kiss."

He looked over his shoulder, down at her. "Baby—"

"Stay with me, W—" She caught herself. "Won't you?"

With a terse nod, he agreed to the terms and the weight crushing her heart lifted. Mia watched James lean back in the chair. "I'm sorry I didn't make the rules clear from the beginning. Now we have some ground to make up."

Wayde didn't take his eyes off her as he spoke. "You let me worry about that." He leaned in and just when she thought he was about to kiss her,

lowered his chin and tucked his head into the crook of her neck. Kissing and teasing, he had her breathing in long, drawn out and surrendering moans by the time he trailed his tongue down her collarbone and enclosed his mouth over an aching breast.

She arched her back against the warm wetness of his lips. He flicked her hard tip with his tongue and she cried out as a shockwave rippled through her, tensing the coil gripping her womb.

"Do it again," James urged, his voice barely above a whisper. Wayde followed his instructions and did, pulling another gasping cry out of her. "Oh, you like that, don't you, Candy?"

"Yes," she whimpered. Curling her fingers in his hair, she held him to her swollen bud until she writhed from the electricity scorching through her body.

"Would you like Steel to eat you? Or would you rather have him fuck you?"

Couldn't she have both? "I have to make a choice?" Wayde moved down her tummy, kissing and leaving a searing trail of wet warmth as he went. No doubt, he'd already made up her mind for her.

"Taste her for me," James instructed. "But don't make her come. Lick her pussy until she pleads for your cock. I want to hear her beg. Only then do I want you to fuck her." Wayde spread her legs wide with his shoulders and barely breathed a kiss across her curls when James spoke again. "Remove your clothes, Steel. Let Candy see what she's about to have buried deep inside her."

Another instruction James didn't need to repeat. Wayde kicked off his boots and threw his dark shirt and jeans to the floor. Once the boxers joined the rest of the pile of clothes at his feet, he stood up straight.

Dear God, he was as hard-bodied as she'd remembered and simply beautiful. His muscles had muscles. With his erection hard and full, he knelt down on the bed between her legs. Lust darkened his eyes to almost black, and as he raked his gaze over her, she quivered.

Passion radiated from the soft core of her body when he lowered himself between her thighs. She felt his breath on her inner folds and stiffened in anticipation. When his tongue darted out, lapping up her nectar but carefully avoiding the tight bundle of nerves she desperately needed him to suck, she twisted from the sweet torment.

His tongue went up one side of her tender crease and back down the other, but never flicking against her clit. Rolling her hips, she tried to chase his tongue, but he evaded her. "Not fair."

"You know the rules," he teased, his voice nothing more than a caress against her swollen, sensitive lips.

"Are you really going to make me beg?"

"Those are the rules," James chimed in. Oh goodie. *Now* they decide to get along and even form an alliance against her. She couldn't believe this. They were going to make her actually beg to have sex. Sex, she tried to tell herself, that she didn't want in the first place.

Oh, who was she kidding? She wanted Wayde more than she'd ever wanted another man. She was under attack by his tongue, being tortured to a slow and sexless death. "P-Please?"

"You can do better than that," Wayde murmured against her flesh. "Let me hear it, baby." His tongue barely grazed her clit and heat rushed through her entire body. He circled her peak, pulling the coil tighter and tighter, bringing her to the edge of orgasm.

And then he stopped.

"No!" She panted, sweat beading up on her lip and forehead. "You can't stop. Please."

"Please, what?" Wayde gave her a crooked grin that had her annoyed and aroused at the same time. Tracing a finger up and down the inside of her thigh, his eyes flashed as his grin grew wicked. Without warning he thrust his finger deep inside her hole. "Do you like the way my finger fucks you?"

She wriggled to push it in deeper. She needed it deeper. When he pulled it out, she whimpered in protest. "Again."

"Don't you want something more?"

"Yes," she cried, completely helpless to her own desire for release.

"Say it, Candy." James groaned from the corner. "Please. You have me pleading to hear you beg for his hot cock inside that sweet cunt of yours."

Dear Jesus. She couldn't take it any longer. Abandoning her senses, she allowed her body to take control. "I need you. Please!"

"More!" James urged. "Tell him what you want."

"I want you to bury your cock deep in me. Please. Make me come!" She couldn't believe she said it. She actually said it. Wayde grabbed her legs and held them up by the ankles. She felt his smooth tip press against her

opening. "Yes," she hissed.

He pushed past the barrier so just his head rested inside. Throwing his head back, he let out a guttural groan. "Holy shit. You are so tight."

"More," she whimpered, not nearly satisfied.

Pulling back out, he plunged deeper, pushing further inside. With slow, steady thrusts he buried deeper and deeper until he completely filled her. He stretched her, the slight burn as her body grew accustomed to his size melting into nothing but blinding pleasure. When he moved with more force, pumping in and out of her, the sweet rapture had her ready to come.

"Oh God!" Mia cried out as the waves hovered. "Harder! Harder!"

Wayde slapped his body against hers, increasing their erotic tempo. "Come on," he grunted. "Come for me, baby. Come. On." He pounded each word with a thrust of his hips, burying his thick cock to the hilt. "I want to feel your beautiful cunt grab hold of my cock. Milk me dry."

His words pushed her over the edge. A white-hot explosion erupted inside her, rendering her incapable of anything but bucking her hips and riding the swells of her orgasm. Her channel constricted around him and triggered his own climax. He drove hard as he jetted hot semen deep inside her hole.

She lost all track of time. Her body, finally sated, went limp as a wet noodle. Wayde stayed buried in her, still on his knees between her legs, dragging in breath after breath. After several seconds, he rolled over and landed next to her on his back. They both lay there, staring at the ceiling, trying to recover from their shattering orgasms.

"Perfect," James muttered from the sidelines. "Absolutely perfect."

Wayde looked over at him and gave him a salute. "I aim to please."

That he did, Mia thought. That he did.

Chapter 9

Meet me at the center benches in Pioneer Square in an hour.

Mia looked at the note again before glancing up, searching the darkness for any sign of life other than the occasional rodent scurrying around scrounging for food. She'd been sitting here on the iron bench for almost an hour, freezing her ass off at four in the morning, waiting for him to show. If he didn't show up soon, she'd...

"Mia?"

She jumped up and whipped around at the sound of his voice, and her heart wanted to jump right out of her chest at the sight. How could he look so handsome in nothing more than faded blue jeans and a beat up old Rainer Beer cap, and at four in the morning? He wore a jean jacket with leather sleeves as well and, of course, his cowboy boots. Undeniably sexy, she noted, as disheveled as he was, and she knew no way did she look that good after spending most of the night on her back, writhing and thrashing beneath his hard body.

James had them tease and play with each other until they were both so anxious for sexual release neither of them lasted long the second time. Or third. The memory flashed in her brain, just as vivid as if she were still there, being loved by this man. "Wayde."

He just stood there, captivating her with those steely eyes, holding her breath in her lungs. He didn't say anything. He just stood there and stared.

Their nonverbal connection spoke louder than any words. Sexual energy charged the air, crackled in her ears, heating her core. The crispness of the night melted away as warmth flooded her veins. She still smelled him, his very essence on her flesh. Her body still tingled where he'd touched her, pleased her, pulled orgasm after orgasm from her.

Without warning, he reached out and wrapped his hand around her neck, pulled her to him. He crashed their lips together and Mia tasted the

desperation in his kiss, matched it with her own. Parting her lips, he thrust his tongue deep inside her mouth, twisting it with hers, kissed her with such hunger her body came to life from the sensations it drew from her.

"Oh God, baby." He tore his lips from hers and held her close, rubbing her back, her neck. "I'm so sorry. It was the only way."

She knew exactly what he meant by that comment. He'd promised her he wouldn't have sex with her, and yet he did. And he did it well. "It's okay."

"No," he barked and grabbed her shoulders, looked her hard in the eyes. "It's not okay. I told myself I wouldn't do it. But then Pearce won your bid, and I just lost my mind thinking about his hands on you. It was the only way for me to stay by your side. I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm so sorry."

"Wayde, listen to me. *You* were there. *You* made it okay." Mia decided right then and there. And it was okay. It was better than okay. This man sacrificed his own personal pledge for her safety. He was also one hell of a gifted lover. Hell, yeah. It was way better than okay.

His hardened features softened as he let out a sigh, and she knew she'd just said the one thing he needed to hear—her permission, her approval for what they'd done together. "I'm not going to let it happen again."

That news sent odd sensations rushing from her ears, through her heart, and centering with disappointment deep in her core. Was he rejecting her again, even after they'd already had sex? Did she do something wrong? Was she not sexy enough for him?

Maybe he preferred women with smaller breasts. Or smaller waists. Smaller brains, perhaps? She didn't possess any of those traits. She didn't have the perfect 36-24-36 frame and never would. Tears sprang up, stinging her eyes as they threatened to break free. She knew she shouldn't give a second thought about what this man thought of her, yet she did. It shouldn't matter, but it did.

Blinking several times to clear her vision, she successfully pushed her stubborn tears back into hiding. If he didn't want her, then fine. She knew what she had to do, knew it the instant she stepped foot into The Emerald Club and signed that contract. If she had to have sex with every man in Seattle in order to find her sister, she would. It may take her years of therapy to get over the shock of having men she didn't even know touch her anywhere they wanted, but she'd have Aimee back to help her get through it all.

Mia cleared her throat to make sure the lump cutting off her breathing wouldn't also cut off her voice. "Why?" She didn't trust her voice for anything more than a single word.

Her question seemed to confuse him. He furrowed his dark brow as he studied her. Scratching the back of his neck, he let out a harsh chuckle and shook his head. The sound broke into the air, sending several of the rodents diving for cover. She couldn't help but feel like she just might be safer diving with them instead of staying here, standing up against the hard-bodied, hard-headed agent.

She saw emotions, dark and tortured, cloud his eyes as he stepped back from her. "Why?" he barked her word back to her, the incredulous tone clearly evident. "You just had sex with a man you barely know!"

She lifted her chin defiantly, refusing to back down, and charged at him with her own anger sparking her words. "It was you! *I'm not some stranger. It's me, baby.* Those were your words, Wayde." She mocked the very statement he'd made as he'd attempted to comfort her back at the club.

"And what do you know about me? Huh? Absolutely nothing. You didn't even know my real name until I showed up at your office." His tone snapped at her, sliced into her resolve.

Instead of allowing his words to take over her confidence, she turned it to anger, and directed it all on him. Seeing red as she looked at the man she mistakenly felt a connection with, she challenged him. "So you were just bullshitting me? Saying what you knew I needed to hear so I'd open my legs to you?"

His eyes grew dark, hard, not an ounce of kindness in them as he pierced her with them. His arrogant, square jaw hardened to stone. He snarled as he threw her a venomous look. "News flash, sweetheart. That's what you were paid to do."

"You son-of-a-bitch! I hate you!" Before she could think, she reached up and slapped him across the face. He barely moved his head as she struck him. Instead he brought his eyes back to hers, and his expression softened. They stood in silence, staring each other down, both unsure what to do next.

He finally spoke in a tone that hitched her breath. It was so thick, so full of emotion. "Is that really what you think of me?"

She didn't want to think that, but he left her no choice. "I don't know what to think! I barely know you, like you said."

"If I wanted to fuck you that bad, I could have taken you the first night, forced myself on you. But I didn't. And I didn't the next night, either. The only reason I slept with you tonight was to keep up with both our covers."

Her breath slammed into her chest and stayed there. The bite in the night air settled into her bones, cooling her flesh even where it couldn't touch. The jar to her system from the words he just spit at her hung between them. Staring at him, searching his dark eyes for the truth and not seeing anything but a hard-ass agent's cover, she conceded. "The only reason?"

"Mia, that isn't what I meant." He lifted his cap and combed his fingers through his hair in agitation. "Christ, I can't say anything right with you." Pausing, he added, "We had to have sex. If we didn't, Pearce would have gone to Guy. We would have been tossed out on our asses."

"So you really didn't want *me*," she said it aloud and looked down at her feet, humiliation smacking her across the face. "It was all for the greater good. I get it. I guess I should thank you for your sacrifice."

The reality of what she'd done came crashing down on her. God, she was so stupid. She'd actually believed him when he'd said those things to her back at the club. Now she realized he'd only said them so he'd be the first to lay claim to the new girl. She hated him right now, and really hated herself for falling for such a line. Those damn tears jumped back to the surface, and this time she didn't fight them.

"Are you serious?" Silence. She refused to look up, to show him just how hard his words cut into her, how deeply they carved into her heart. "Goddamn it, Mia. Look at me when you insult me." He grabbed her chin and forced her face up.

She jerked out of his grasp and took a step back, then another. Swallowing tightly, her body awakened with fear and another feeling she couldn't, and wouldn't, define. Against her better judgment, she turned to face him and almost crumbled from the power those damn smoky eyes had over her.

"How could you think I don't want you? You've seen the way I react to you, how hard you make me. I can't even see straight for how hard I am around you. Now that I've had a taste, I want more. I want you. All of you. I want you away from that club, in my *own* bed. I want to see those beautiful green eyes hazy with passion as you come for me."

She wanted it too, wanted to believe there was truth in his words. "What

about tonight?"

His body visibly tensed as he bunched his hands into fists at his side. Not once did he look away from her. "I wish—" he stopped and audibly growled. "I'm not sorry it happened. I'm just sorry *how* it happened."

"If you had to do it over?"

He buried his gaze into her soul. "I'd make love to you all night. Alone. In *my* bed. Not at some club, and definitely not in front of some stranger."

The subtle throb that had started minutes ago settled into a heavy pulse. It had her pussy lips burning with an ache she knew only he could tend to, her thick juices easing from her opening to coat her entry.

Refusing to acknowledge her body's reaction to his words, she tried to ignore the tingling in her cunt, the jolts of desire spiking her nipples to a painful attention. The way he'd kissed her here, coupled with the thought of them having anything outside of this crazy situation, had her heart in a gallop. A shiver blazed through her, some from the cold, but mostly from the memory of the feel of his body against hers, his hard flesh deep inside her.

His muscular legs chopped up the distance between them and he easily pulled her to him. Slanting his lips over hers, he licked her lips open, kissed her with gentle yet indisputable hunger. He nibbled on her lower lip and traced the creases of her mouth with his tongue as he kissed her, devoured her. By the time he started to seal their kiss she could barely breathe.

He pulled back and rested his forehead against hers, his breath ragged as it tickled her face. "Damn you, Mia. How could you think that about me? I'd just as soon die before I'd ever let another man touch you. And I wouldn't hesitate to kill the son-of-a-bitch who so much as thought about touching you without your consent."

His declaration had her ready to climax right there. The image of lying in his bed, his hard body covering hers as they made love on a lazy Saturday morning, had her entire body alive with what might be. But then reality invaded her senses yet again. She couldn't fall in love, or even severe lust.

Everything else fell second to finding her sister. With Wayde around it only clouded her vision, made her forget why she'd agreed to this insanity in the first place.

She had to fall back into her role as whore-for-hire and ignore her secret desire to run away with this man and never look back. "I'm a courtesan. It's

what—"

"Bullshit!" The angry tone in his voice caused her to take an involuntary step back. His hardened features softened when he noticed her reaction. "You and I both know you are not a courtesan. You're a paralegal at a law firm, one who is definitely in over her head. What are you looking for, Mia? Why are you there?"

"And you're an agent with the SBI," she countered, ignoring his question.

"*Special* agent," he corrected in a hiss.

She ignored him. "Why are *you* there, Wayne? Why would an agent be undercover at The Emerald Club? Because I don't think you make a habit of paying ten thousand dollars for the right to sleep with a courtesan."

His jaw hardened as he narrowed his eyes. He stared back at her, those gray eyes blazing with a fury unlike she'd ever seen. But there was something more, something primitive in them. Lust, thick and dark, mixed with his anger as he continued to watch her. "Don't turn this around and make it about me. I'm there for a reason, as are you."

Damn evasive answer. "Tell me why you're there!"

He shook his head. "You first, sweetheart."

"Fine," she snorted, her pride in full swing. Pissed, hurt he didn't trust her enough to tell her the truth, she tried to think of something to insult him, to hurt him like he hurt her. She thought of Antoinette, of the words she'd said to her. "You want to know why I'm there? Because I have an insatiable appetite to have sex with pain in the ass, bull-headed men like you."

"Nice try," he retorted harshly, his voice hard. "Or should I say nice lie? Let me guess your reason for signing on at The Emerald Club since you obviously aren't going to tell me. The DA mentioned Aimee Andrews. Who is she, Mia? A sister? Cousin? What?"

An aching weight landed on her chest at the mention of her sister's name, shattering her bravado. Fighting back tears, pain, and a world full of other emotions, she drew in a ragged breath. "Aimee is my baby sister."

His expression turned somber, raw, dark with emotion. Comprehension settled into his features as he regarded her. "That's why you're doing this? You think you'll be able to find your sister at an underground sex club?"

"I know how it sounds," she answered in a frayed voice, the thick lump in her throat threatening to rob her of breath. "But it's the only way."

"This is insane."

"I know what I'm doing."

"The hell you do," he drawled, his voice rough from the emotion clouding his eyes. Taking a step toward her, she lifted her chin defiantly and waited for his next verbal blow. "You are scared to death, Mia. Even now. I can see it in your eyes. You don't want to be at that club any more than I want you there. Just the thought of some other man winning your bid tonight had you so terrified you looked ready to faint. It's only a matter of time before you end up with some dickhead who won't give a shit about your fear. Not all of them will be satisfied with watching."

He took another step as he lowered his voice, both in volume and tone. "He won't be satisfied with a finger fuck and peck on the cheek good night. It won't be about your pleasure, only his. He might want to tie you up, blindfold and gag you, and then flog you. Have you ever been flogged, Mia? Answer me, damn you."

She shook her head and fought to cover the pain his uncaring tone inflicted. Bitterness flashed in his eyes, cold and exact. But then that dark look returned, thick and undeniably flamed by hunger.

"Some of those guys in that club are heavy into the BDSM scene. They'll hurt you, whip that sweet body of yours until you are covered with welts. Some of them pool their money, take the courtesan into a room and take turns fucking her. To them, you are nothing more than a tight hole."

The memory of Antoinette's words at what happened with Barry The Barbarian blinded her. "T-They aren't allowed to hurt us. It says so in the contract."

"Do you think they give a shit about some contract?" he growled fiercely, impatiently. "Jesus, Mia. Those contracts are worthless. How would you be able to enforce it? It's an illegal prostitution ring, for Christ's sake. It's not like you...can...leave..." His words trailed off as something else flashed in his eyes and he snapped his fingers. "That's it."

For a moment he studied her intently, nodding slightly. She watched the play of emotions on his face. When he didn't say anything more, she pushed. "What?"

"Let's get out of here."

"But—"

"I'll explain when we get back to my place. Now let's go."

His place? Mia snapped her mouth shut when he grabbed her hand and pulled her over around the corner to a black jeep. He pushed her in the passenger's side and ran around to the driver's side. They rode in silence.

Ten minutes later he pulled into the parking lot of an old brick building. Mia looked up at the rusty fire escape through the side window. When he stepped out of the vehicle and started toward the back entrance, she jumped out and followed. "Where are we?"

"My place," he answered gruffly and shoved his keys into his jacket pocket, only to take out another set. He unlocked the iron bar door and then the second, heavier door. As they stepped inside into a small foyer, she expected warmth to envelop her, but instead let out an involuntary shiver. It had to be colder in here than outside.

The smell of old wood, even older wood polish, and stale socks filled her nostrils. She stopped herself from covering her nose with her hand and instead planted a smile when Wayne looked back at her over his shoulder.

"Kind of makes you miss the club, eh?" He started to climb the wood stairs, the creaking and protesting from the steps echoing throughout the building. "I'm on the second floor. Come on."

"This is where you live?" She tried not to sound astounded, but she knew it had to have come out that way anyway. Stepping up on a stair, she felt her foot sink down and grabbed for the railing. Dear God, the stairs were rotting out from under them. "It's...nice."

He chuckled. "Yeah, right. I think it's a dump, which is why I kicked everyone out. Until I can renovate it and put in an elevator, I'll be the only one living here."

She paused at the top of the landing. "This is *your* apartment building?"

"My granddad died last year and willed it to the oldest Davis boy. Since my dad didn't want to touch it, he signed it over to me. My little sister, Leah, was pissed as hell he didn't give it to her, not that she'd know what to do with it." He chuckled as he stopped in front of a door. "I don't even know what to do with it. The payments are killing me, and I have no tenants, and the location sucks."

"So why did you take it?"

He turned the key in the door and kicked it open, a crooked grin curling his sexy lips. "Because I'm a damned fool idiot. But I also didn't want to see it leveled and turned into a parking garage. I have a lot of good memories

about this place. My granddad lived here for as long as I can remember. Leah and I used to come here to visit him all the time. We lost our mom when we were both pretty young, so our dad would drop us off at Gramp's place on his way to work. Well, here we are."

Mia stepped across the threshold and lost her breath. It was like stepping into another world. The hardwood floors were highly polished and simply stunning. The walls looked freshly painted, the pictures flawlessly balanced against the colors. The furniture, so masculine in brown leather with wood trim, fit perfectly. "Wow," she breathed.

"Thanks, I think." He threw both sets of keys on top of the—was that granite?—countertops in the kitchen. Walking over to the enormous stainless steel refrigerator, he opened it and stared inside. "I'd offer you something but I only have leftover Italian from *Viola's!* down on the corner. It's been in there a while, so I wouldn't trust it."

He pulled out a cardboard box and opened it to take a sniff. He curled his lip and closed the box, replaced it back into the refrigerator. Shifting a few more things, he pulled out a bottle of water. "Would you settle for *Aquafina?*"

"That's fine." She took a seat on the couch and removed her coat. At least the heat worked in here. Seeing Wayde in his natural element had her imagining the both of them walking around the apartment, her in the PJ top, him in the bottoms. The thought had her yearning for something she'd never had, and probably never will.

So they'd had sex. So what? He'd already admitted it was for their cover and nothing more. Her mind raced to find the reason why they were here in the first place. It wasn't for a nightcap or for him to seduce her with water.

Wayde joined her on the couch and handed her a glass of water. He held up the bottle as a toast and took a swig. She sipped and set the glass down on the oak coffee table. "Now what?"

He stopped drinking and looked at her with those steely eyes. "Excuse me?"

"You brought me back here and I still don't know why."

His lazy grin increased her curiosity. He leaned forward and set the bottle of water next to her glass. Instead of leaning back, he scooted toward her on the couch and didn't stop until their legs were touching. She held her breath and looked up into his eyes, which were focused on her lips. "To be

honest," he started in a slow, sexy drawl as he brought his dark gaze back up to hers. He slid closer so their lips were so close she felt the wet heat of his breath on her mouth as he spoke. "I had thought about ravishing your body until you begged me to stop."

She licked her lips as a quiver ripped through her body. Her pussy pulsed in anticipation. "What if I don't want you to stop?"

He grinned. "That's what I was hoping you'd say." He leaned into her and gently covered her mouth in a kiss so tender it pulled at her heart and soul. Licking and teasing her lips with his own, they both opened their mouths and explored each other, using their tongues as guides. What started as a flutter deep in the pit of her stomach grew to a swirl of intense pounding, pulsating need straight to the lips of her wet cunt.

She shifted on the couch to flatten herself up against him. Her breasts ached for his attention. He lay back and pulled her down on top of him, straightening them both out lengthwise on the couch. Wrapping his arms around her, he held her tight as their kiss deepened.

She reached down and stroked his rigid cock through his jeans. He sucked in a breath and broke their kiss. Loving his reaction, she increased the pressure and stroked him again. "You keep doing that and he won't be satisfied settling for a hand job."

"Who said anything about settling for a hand job?" She licked and nipped at his lower lip. No way would her clit be satisfied with a hand job. She needed him, needed his dick inside her, stretching her.

"Aren't you sore from earlier?"

Yes. But she wasn't about to admit it and have him stop. "I want you to make love to me, Wayde. No Emerald Club. No courtesan. Just you and me."

"No Pearce," he added and kissed her, plunging his tongue deep into her mouth. "No one telling me how to touch you." He kissed her again, the passion clear and concentrated. He followed the action by caressing her breast through her shirt. Her nipple peaked immediately. "No one telling me I can't kiss you." He delivered another kiss, this one so full of ardent fever it hit her in her heart and peppered her skin with a rapid succession of delicious chills.

He pulled his shirt up over his head and threw it on the floor. Mia followed his lead and did the same. Reaching around, he unlatched her bra

and slid it out from between them so their flesh melted together. He rocked his hips and pushed his rock hard cock up against her.

Mia whispered a heated moan into his ear when he unbuttoned her pants and slid his hand beneath the fabric and under her panties. Parting her drenched pussy lips, he slowly sank a thick finger deep inside her cunt. "Yes. Oh yes," she whimpered and fucked his finger, pitching her hips forward to rub her clit up against his hand.

"This just won't work." He withdrew his hand and sat her up. Her heart lurched at his words.

"What?"

"There is no way I'll be able to get my dick into that sweet pussy of yours if we have this many clothes on." Even as he spoke, he pulled off his jeans and boxers. His beautiful cock, so full and hard in his want for her, bobbed when he sat back down on the couch. "Get those clothes off."

She undressed quickly and joined him back on the couch. He lay back and motioned for her to follow. "Now who's giving orders?"

He curled his lips into a sly, sexy grin as he folded his hands behind his head. "You are."

"Exactly. Now you just relax and let me take care of you."

He widened his grin. "I like the sound of that. And I definitely like you taking control like this. Very hot."

She smiled in return, giving him her best attempt at sultry. The way his cock sprang up told her he got the message. Remembering back to their first night together and how erotic it felt to have him slowly lead up to her cunt, she decided to grant him the same pleasure.

Leaning down, she ran her hands up and down his muscled legs, loving the feel of the coarse hairs beneath her palms. When she reached his balls, she took them in her hand and fondled them gently. He groaned and rocked his hips. The head of his dick bulged and a crystal drop of pre-cum escaped the tip. Licking her lips, she eyed him with a grin.

"Do it, baby." He urged her. "Suck my cock."

"Hey," she said and stopped in mid-descent. "I'm the one giving the orders, remember?"

He moaned in protest and lifted his hips off the couch in an attempt to bring his rock hard penis up to her. Not wanting to prolong his suffering, she slipped his rigid flesh between her lips and flicked her tongue across the top,

stealing the glistening drip of pre-cum from him. He moaned again when she slid her lips down his shaft, taking the entire length of his cock into her mouth.

"Jesus, sweetheart. That feels great." He pushed up against her, burying his dick deep inside her mouth. She swallowed and squeezed the tip of his cock with her throat. "Oh yeah. Fuck, Mia. Much more of this and I won't last to take you."

She hummed and he shuddered in her mouth. She knew first hand his dick recovered quickly. Wanting to taste the sticky, hot semen as it jetted out of the head, she increased her tempo and buried his penis down to her throat again. Sucking as she ran her lips up and down the length of his shaft, she wrapped her hand around the very bottom and squeezed, stroking him in rhythm with her lips.

"Ah Jesus, Mia. I'm so fucking close. Yeah, suck me. Just like that. Suck it. Fuck me with that hot mouth. Oh yeah. Take it all. That's it. Fuck me!" His entire body went rigid as the first shots of sizzling semen filled her mouth. She swallowed and sucked, milking him as he jetted thick cum into her mouth over and over. When he'd spilled the last of his life into her, she cleaned him completely by licking up and down his now semi-hard penis.

"Mmm," she hummed and lowered her lips around his shaft. He started to harden in her mouth. Rocking his hips, he buried his cock to the back of her throat. She squeezed the base with her hand and his dick twitched, swelling to its full length of hard, gorgeous flesh.

"Come here," Wayde drawled thickly. She slid up the length of his hard body and straddled him, her knees on either side of his hips. As she rested down on him, her pussy lips parted and wrapped themselves around his cock. He shifted and eased the head inside her. She pushed herself against him and slid the rest of his cock into her slippery cunt. They moaned in unison.

"I love the feel of your pussy around my cock, baby." Wayde grabbed her hips and slowly rocked her so his dick worked in and out of her slick channel. "You are so fucking tight. I can feel every little muscle spasm."

"Like that?" She squeezed the walls of her pussy, tightening her muscles around him.

"Holy shit." He buried his cock deep inside her and held her still. "Do that again." She did and he let out a guttural groan. He moved inside her,

rhythmically driving in and out. The tight waves of her impending orgasm started to twist around her womb. "You are so beautiful, Mia. Your face glows when you make love. Your cheeks are flushed and your eyes are unfocused. It makes it so hard for me not to fuck you hard, pound that sweet cunt of yours until you scream my name."

His words had the waves circling faster, coiling inside her body and intensifying. She rode him, increasing their tempo, her need to release the tension growing inside her too much for her to deny. Even as she grinded her hips, she couldn't get enough friction to unleash her orgasm. She whimpered in frustration and tried to arch her back so her clit rubbed up against him.

"Touch yourself," Wayde urged. "I want to watch you play with yourself. Fuck that delicious little clit of yours and make yourself come. Let me watch you."

She loved it when he talked to her like that. Lowering her finger between her legs, she flicked her clit and the walls of her pussy spasmed. He tensed and slammed his dick inside her. Crying out at the pleasure of being stretched by him, she slowly circled her tight nerves, feeling the waves of her orgasm growing, and growing fast.

He thrust his cock in and out, piston driving over and over, fucking her faster and faster. She circled her clit in rhythm to his tempo. As he moved faster still, she masturbated, her orgasm teetering on the cusp. A final plunge of his cock drove her over the edge and into erotic ecstasy. Her climax slammed into her, rendering her incapable of anything other than allowing her body to ride the waves. He strained and hollered as he buried his cock inside her pussy and spurted his hot seed deep inside her.

Crying out at the pleasure of having him empty his very life into her, driving her into another, smaller orgasm, she bucked her hips and continued to rock until neither of them could sustain the rhythm. Only then did she collapse on him, sated.

"That," he panted, "was amazing. And unexpected."

She curled into him as close as she could. "You were expecting something else?"

"Well," he paused. "Yes, actually. I figured after tonight at the club, you'd be too sore. Or want to sleep."

Actually, she really was sore and wanted to sleep. But her want to

please Wayde outweighed her want for slumber. Now that they were both satisfied, she only wanted sleep. Closing her eyes, she let out a content sigh.

"My sweet Candy." He rubbed his fingers up and down her back, causing chills to wash over her. "What am I going to do with you?"

Love me. She knew this feeling unbalancing her nerves and occupying her senses, and it didn't make any sense. She barely knew Wayde. Their only time together had been at the club, as part of their cover.

Until now.

What did this mean? Were they something outside of the club now? Or was this act of them making love all part of their cover as well? She tried not to think about it, but damn it if her mind didn't take off on that thought anyway.

She had to ask. "Why did you bring me back to your apartment?"

He caressed her bare shoulder with his hand and again, washed her with delicious chills. "Isn't it obvious?" He rocked his hips up against her.

"I don't believe you." As her mind cleared, she thought back to Pioneer Square. He said something about the women leaving. She highly doubted fucking her senseless on his couch was on his mind when he dragged her back here. "Tell me about the other women."

He tensed. "Don't you think it's a bit early in the relationship for that question?"

Her heart flip-flopped in her chest at the thought of them having a relationship. "I mean the girls from the club. The ones who are missing."

The tension growing in his muscles oozed into the room, settling in the air. Mia pushed off of his chest and grabbed a shirt off the floor, threw it on over her otherwise naked body. As the material moved passed her nose she drew in a breath and held it. It was Wayde's shirt and damn did it smell good.

"Mia," he stated in a low warning. Reaching over, he grabbed his boxers and slipped them on. "I can't discuss it. As a paralegal, you know that."

"Can you at least give me something on Aimee?"

"No."

Frustrated, she blew her bangs out of her eyes. If she couldn't get the information out of him, she'd just have to ask someone else. "Are you the only one from the SBI at the club?"

Frowning at her, his expression heavy and dark, he dropped his gaze to

the floor. "Yes."

That didn't sound right. She knew protocol and knew the SBI worked in groups. No way would they send an agent in under cover, special status or not. "What happened to the others?"

His eyes bored into her, tore away her resolve layer by layer. Emotions conflicted in his features, hardening them, softening them, and scaring the hell out of her. "It's just me now. That's all you need to know."

Her heart stopped and painfully started again. *Now?* What did that mean? Did he have someone working with him before now? What happened to him? Or her?

It clicked. "Is she one of the missing women?"

"No," he answered, sadness weighing on his tone. "We know exactly where she is."

"Then what—"

"Drop it."

She didn't want to drop it. She wanted to know what happened to the woman he'd been working with. Were they lovers and had a falling out? That thought had her breathing in shallow gasps to ward off the idea. "What happened to her?"

"Mia—"

"I deserve to know."

"The hell you do." He jumped to his feet and grabbed the water bottle off the table, threw back the rest of the contents. "Goddamn it. I need something stronger than water." He crushed the bottle with his hand and padded into the kitchen. When he threw the bottle in the trash, it made a loud thump and Mia jumped at the sound.

Okay. So that didn't go over as well as she'd hoped. She decided on another approach. "I'm looking for answers, just like you are. Those answers are at the club, Wayde. I can feel it."

The way those steely eyes dug into her, burning her soul on the spot, had her swallowing over and over to keep the nervous lump out of her throat. When he finally spoke, his words were clipped, his tone cool and unkind. "I'll find those women, Mia. It's my job. Not yours."

"But—"

"No!" He slammed his fist on the granite countertop. She flinched and blinked at him. His hardened features softened when he saw her reaction.

"Baby," he said and joined her back on the couch. "You have no idea what you are in to. This is dangerous. Whoever is taking those women obviously doesn't want them found. Every day you are there, you are in even greater danger."

Instead of that scaring her, it only fueled her need to be at the club. She had to find her sister before she lost her permanently. "Let me put it this way," she countered. "I'm not leaving the club, and you can't make me. If you think I'm in such danger, then come with me. I'm going back to the club with or without you."

"You are a pain in the ass, Mia Andrews. Has anyone ever told you that?" Even as he said it, his voice filled with mirth and his eyes danced. Damn the man was sexy as hell when he looked at her like that.

She thrust out her chin. "Are you going back to the club with me?"

He let out a humorless chuckle and shook his head. "Son-of-a-bitch. You really aren't giving me much of a choice here."

"You could always say no." *Oh, but please don't.*

A flicker of amusement shimmered in his steely eyes. He winked and Mia felt it slice through her, causing her inner walls to quiver, her pussy to clench. "I have a feeling watching over you is going to be a fulltime job, my sweet Candy. I'm in."

Chapter 10

Wayde stared at the computer screen without focusing. After sealing their deal with a passionate kiss, he took Mia to bed and held her close. He had to feel her next to him in his own bed, curled up like a little cat, sleeping soundly. No Emerald Club, no contract for sex. He watched her fall asleep, whispering kisses across her forehead, assuring her safety if only for one night.

They woke up curled into each other, both groggy as hell from only a few hours of sleep, both perfectly at ease. Oh yeah. He could definitely get used to having her wake up next to him every morning for the rest of their days on this rock.

He ran a search on Pearce from the prints he lifted off the table and chair. Inadmissible, he knew, but he wasn't trying to build a case against him. If he needed more evidence, he'd get it. This time, he just wanted to know more about the man he'd had sex in front of last night.

James Lloyd Pearce, born November second, a resident of King County. Wayde had to Google it, but soon confirmed he'd told them the truth about being a Scorpio. The guy was cleaner than a newborn's conscience. He didn't even have so much as a parking ticket.

He rubbed his eyes and grabbed his paper cup, threw back the rest of the cold coffee and forced the nasty shit down his throat. He'd skipped breakfast to get Mia back to her car at Pioneer Square so she wouldn't be late for work, didn't have time for lunch, and now had about fifteen cups of toxic waste the office called coffee stirring in his already knotted gut.

Crushing the cup and tossing it into the trash to join the others, he leaned back in his chair and rubbed his stubble-covered chin. Maybe he should call her, check to make sure she made it to work okay. Besides, they needed to go over their plan of attack again. The half dozen times he made her repeat it back to him didn't do anything to calm the growl of

apprehension sinking into his gut.

A dark weight grabbed hold of him, engulfing him, making him hate himself for agreeing to this insanity. Pearce wanted Mia, no doubt about it. Wayne couldn't compete with that kind of cash. He had all of his money tied up in the debilitated building he called home.

He had no choice but to stand on the sidelines and watch Pearce take her. Just the thought of anyone touching her had his entire body tight with tension. Would she go through with it? *Could* she go through with it?

Fuck that. Could he stand back and let it happen?

Maybe he should just call her. He picked up the phone and hesitated. If he called Reed, Smythe, and Heathrow would she be the one to answer the phone? If she didn't, what excuse could he use to get her on the phone? Would that stiff Smythe find out and rat him out to Carmichael? He dropped the receiver back down with a muttered curse.

No. He needed to leave her alone. She'd already told him she needed to mentally prepare for tonight, and assured him she'd be ready. No doubt Pearce would win the bid for Mia again and have the crazy idea he'd be able to fuck her, at least alone. Well too damn bad. If Wayne couldn't have Mia to himself, then he'd at least be right there to make sure anything and everything Pearce did to her met with her approval, and his. Wayne would join them, wouldn't hesitate to turn their little twosome into a threesome if it meant another night buried deep inside her velvety warmth. His dick jumped at the thought.

Down, boy.

Just the thought of having her body sheath him so tight he'd be ready to come in a matter of minutes had him already growing in anticipation.

"Alright, Davis. What's up?" Wayne watched his director approach and take a seat on the edge of his desk, the sticky note in his hand. A short, stocky man with no hair on his head and too much hair poking out of his ears, Ben Browning narrowed his dark eyes and folded his hands on his knee. Wayne sat back when the stench of those God-awful Swisher Sweets on his director's breath wafted into his nostrils. "What's so damn important?"

Wayne sat forward in his chair. *Here goes nothing.* "I have a new angle on my case I'd like your support on."

"Which one?"

"The missing women from those clubs."

"Oh, you mean the one that I had to fork out ten thousand of the taxpayer's hard earned dollars for."

Son-of-a-bitch. So far *not* so good. "That's the one."

"Am I going to like what you have to say?"

"Probably not."

Browning let out a long sigh and Wayde held his breath to avoid the stale cigar smell. "Does this have anything to do with getting someone else on the inside?"

"Yes."

He stood while shaking his head. "Then the answer is no."

Wayde inhaled harshly. "Come on, sir. At least hear me out."

The director put his hand up to silence Wayde's protests. "My hands are tied on this one, Davis. Carmichael heard what you did at the club and is pissed as hell."

Tensing, confusion and apprehension coursing through his system, he looked up at Browning. "How does the DA know what I did at the club?"

Browning shifted his gaze from Wayde to the ceiling. It was a classic move to stall for time. Just how much did his director really know about the club? "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out, Davis. It's a sex club and you bought a girl."

Great way to not answer my question, asshole. "So she's pissed because I did my job?"

"Your job," Browning countered, "is to protect those women, not fuck them. Two nights in a row you were in a room with the same courtesan."

His suspicious nature kicked into overdrive. How did he know that? Wayde never mentioned it, so unless Browning was actually there at the club, he couldn't have found out.

Unless someone told him.

Shit. There was a leak at the club. Great. Just fucking wonderful. No wonder they couldn't get a bead on the killer. Not only did Wayde still have absolutely no lead on who was taking the women, how they were taking them, or what they were doing with them, he now had to deal with the very real possibility of an inside job.

When it shits, it pours.

So how did his director play into all of this? Was he the leak? Or did his involvement run deeper? Did he have anything to do with the missing

women? Wayde played down his suspicion, careful not to give Browning any reason to suspect anything.

Shrugging, he flashed his director his most charming grin. "I'm only human, sir."

"So are all the other sorry bastards spending their week's pay on an expensive fuck. It makes me sick to think how many of those men have families to go home to. How many of them bring home whatever disease they pick up from the whores there and give it to their wives?"

Wow. Where did all of this come from? "You seem to be taking this a bit personal."

"It just pisses me off when men make decisions with their dick without any regard as to how it will affect those around him. And the whores who take them away from their families should all be shipped off to an island somewhere, away from decent civilization."

Oookay. Wayde made a mental note never to tell him how he and Mia met. And Browning definitely wouldn't like to know what Wayde and Mia did last night. He wouldn't want to know how Wayde buried himself into the blazing heat between Mia's thighs, how he pounded her pussy as she screamed out her release. And he most certainly wouldn't want to know Wayde planned to do it all over again tonight.

His gut tightened with the thought of him not being there with Mia when Pearce won her bid, when he brought her up to his suite and seduced her on his own. Would Mia scream for him? Would she writhe beneath Pearce in the height of her orgasm, claw at him as her body convulsed in its release?

He doubted it. No, Mia and he shared something more than chemistry, something neither one of them could deny. They had a connection at an entirely different level, and it was something he'd never experienced with anyone else.

"Don't be one of those guys, Davis." Browning shot him a look of disdain. "Stay out of the rooms. Stay away from the whores. I know you've got a thing for the one you bid on. Don't fall for her act. If you do, you'll be sorry. Don't ask me how I know."

Wayde kept the painful grin plastered on his face even though he clenched his jaw so hard he was about to chip a tooth. The son-of-a-bitch knew more about the club than he ever let on. "If you tell me, you'd have to

kill me, right?"

Browning smirked and for the first time, Wayne saw the evil lurking in his director's dark eyes. "Exactly."

* * * *

James sat in his office staring at the stack of paperwork, not seeing a single receipt. In his mind he kept replaying Steel and Candy's tantalizing lovemaking, second by stimulating second. He'd never been so aroused, so rock hard and ready to take the woman alone on the first night until last night. Steel didn't even tie her up, flog her, gag her. None of the things James usually required in order to stimulate an erection. Steel didn't do anything other than love her, and love her well.

Would she respond to him the same way? She definitely responded to Steel, wanted him, came for him. Once that dark lust flooded her eyes, colored her features, she disregarded all her inhibitions. Her wild want and bold words had him so hungry for her he almost jumped into the middle and took Steel's place between her legs.

A heavy moan rumbled up out of him. He released it, let it float out into the otherwise silent office. The thought of what the night had in store had his large cock semi-hard already. He wasn't sure if he wanted to try sex with Candy tonight or just tie her up and instruct Steel to fuck her again. He came twice watching them and wouldn't mind taking that same path tonight.

His penis jumped, protesting at the very thought. Obviously parts of him wanted to fuck her, to take her as his own. It scared him to even think about sex. He'd hurt too many women with his thick, twelve-inch dick. If he hurt Candy he'd have Steel to answer to. The man displayed a fierce protectiveness over her.

James found it intriguing. Would spending a night buried inside her blistering cunt bring almost savage reactions out of him as well? He didn't know, but he wanted to find out. Now that Steel had fucked her, staked his claim between the men, he should be more receptive to the overall plan.

Tonight not only would he instruct Steel on how to touch sweet Candy, he'd join in.

Pushing away from the desk, he stood and grabbed his coat. If he

hurried, he'd make it to the club in time to have dinner delivered to the suite and set it up for Candy and Steel before the bidding started. For what he had in mind, they'd all need their strength. He made a mental note to stop by his favorite store and purchase new toys. For Candy, everything had to be perfect. That meant no used vibrators, butt plugs, restraints, anything.

She deserved only the best. And, between the two men, they'd deliver.

* * * *

"Are you going to give us bitches any of that this time?" Antoinette still hadn't found tonight's shade of lipstick and kept throwing tube after tube back down on her vanity. "I only made six hundred last night, so anything you want to throw my way won't be refused."

Twelve thousand, five hundred. As in dollars. Cash. Mia had never held that much money in her hands before. It was enough to pay off her car, fix the leaky roof, and still have enough left over to buy a few decent pairs of shoes to wear out on stage.

Looking at Antoinette, she noticed the black marker filling in the scuffmarks of her boots. The zipper on her short schoolgirl skirt didn't work, a safety pin held it up on her skinny frame. She needed the money so much more than Mia did. Without hesitation she pulled a thousand dollars out of her wad and handed it to Antoinette.

Her eyes flew open wide as she took a breath to protest. Deciding against it, she smiled sheepishly in thanks as Mia shoved it into her leather bra. "Take it," she ordered lightly. "Buy a new pair of boots."

Antoinette glanced down at her scuffed, worn out boots. "But I've just about got these ones broken in." She brought her gaze up to Mia, gratitude and shame mixing in her brown eyes. "Thanks, Candy. I really do need the dough. You're all right."

Mia smiled and finished applying her lipstick. "Have you found your shade, yet?"

"No," Antoinette stated in disappointment. "I don't know what kind of mood I'm in tonight. The John I had last night was—" She stopped with a gasp. "Oh my God! I forgot! We haven't talked since you had to fuck your first John. Well? Did you?"

Accepting her fate, embracing it actually, Mia nodded. They didn't just have sex, and he didn't just fuck her. He was like a fire inside her, pulsing, dancing, blistering her with need and consuming her from the inside out. He pleased her, over and over, and all in front of James. It shouldn't have turned her on that much to have sex in front of someone, but it did.

It *really* did.

"Oh, sweetie," Antoinette cooed, reached over to brush her bony hand over Mia's shoulder. "How you holding up?"

She couldn't very well tell her she wanted it to happen again. The anticipation of seeing Wayne again, touching his hard body, already had tight swirls of sexual tension coiling around her womb, releasing thick juices down her channel and flooding her cunt. "I'm good."

"It'll get easier. After a while, you just become numb."

"Then why do you stay?"

Antoinette shrugged. "I dropped out of high school when I was in tenth grade, never finished. I tried a few jobs here and there but there's only so much you can do without a diploma." She grabbed a lipstick and smiled with a nod, leaned toward the mirror to apply. "So I got a job as a stripper, then as a private room host. That's just a fancy word for a stripper with benefits." She wiggled her overly darkened eyebrows.

Interesting. So Antoinette thought having men stab her with their steely flesh in exchange for money was a benefit? "How did you learn of The Emerald Club?"

"I came across a real nice John at one of the strip clubs I worked. A short bald guy who was liberal with his dead presidents, if you get me. God how he stunk when he smoked those skinny little cigars. Still, he tipped great. He told me about this place. I've been here ever since." She smacked her lips and puckered up at her reflection. "See you bitches later. I need me a little pick-me-up before I go on. Where did Guy disappear to?"

The alcohol ran like water backstage, and the drugs were readily available. The courtesans had their choice of anything they wanted, as long as they performed. Guy wasn't only their pimp. He was also their dealer, their bouncer, and their caretaker. Antoinette got up and walked away calling out for him in her whiny voice.

Mia eyed the blonde sitting alone in front of the vanity two chairs down, eyes wide and hands trembling. What was her story? Did she show up on

their doorstep and beg to be fucked every night by complete strangers all for the love of money? Or was she, like Mia, searching for something? Or someone?

No better time than the present to find out. Standing and pretending to smooth out her stockings, she worked her way over to Blondie and took a seat at the vacant vanity next to hers. "Hi, Blondie."

"What do you want?" The wide, frightened look in those dark green eyes pulled at Mia's heart. Aimee's eyes were close to the same color. Would she ever see her sister's eyes again? Her chest pinched at the thought.

Mia glanced around, saw that no other women were within earshot of them, and leaned closer, careful to keep her voice low. "You don't seem like you really want to be here."

"Don't you start with me, too. Guy already read me the riot act for not showing enough enthusiasm on stage." She looked at herself in the mirror, the light in her eyes faded, her stare vacant. "Like I should be so grateful."

"They why not just leave?"

"Yeah, right. And end up like the others? No, thanks." She stood and turned away from Mia.

"Others?" That surprised her. How did Blondie know about the others?

"Let me tell you something," she said and whipped back around to face Mia. "I see the way Guy treats you. You definitely are not one of his favorites. Don't push him. He can be very dangerous if you piss him off."

Okay. She'd had enough of this cryptic talk. If Blondie had something to say, then just come out with it. Stop scaring the hell out of her already. "How do you know this?"

Blondie closed her eyes as she visibly shuddered. "Let's just say he can be very convincing." She lifted her arm to wipe at the tears Mia didn't even notice had started to fall. No, she was transfixed on the burn marks in Blondie's armpit. "Oh my God," she breathed out quickly, mortified.

Blondie jerked her arm back down to her side and threw her eyes open. "It-It's nothing."

"Did Guy do that to you?"

"Leave it alone, Candy. If he suspects you know..."

She had to help her. She had to get her out of here. Now. "Blondie, listen to me. Let me help you."

Blondie laughed and flopped back down onto the stool in front of her

vanity. "Yeah? How?"

"I'm working with the SBI," she admitted, knowing if Blondie didn't really want to leave, it would be over for Mia. It was a gamble, but one worth the taking if it meant saving this poor woman from a fate worse than death. Being stuck here in this club, opening your legs night after night to stranger after stranger, dying a little more inside each time he stabbed himself into you, had to be worse than death. "I can get you out of here."

Mia saw the desperation in Blondie's eyes. She blinked and leaned toward her to close the gap between them. "Are you like a cop?"

"Not really, but I'm working with them."

She shook her head. "No, thanks. I'll stick around and take my chances with the Johns."

"Blondie," Mia almost yelled when she stood and started to walk away. Blondie stopped and waited for her to continue. "He won't ever hurt you again. Let me help you."

"Yeah? And what's in it for you?"

"Maybe others will leave, too. If he doesn't have any women to torture, he's ruined."

"He'll just find new ones."

Mia smiled, knowing Blondie really wanted to leave and was within an inch of giving in. "Not if we shut him down. Help me shut him down."

A slow and careful smile curled on Blondie's lips. "You can really get me out of this?"

"Absolutely," Mia answered, praying her wavering conviction didn't sound in her tone. She knew if she could get to Wayde, she could get Blondie out. But she had to get to Wayde, first. "Can you meet me in Pioneer Square at 4am?"

"Oh yeah," Blondie whispered, almost in awe. "I can go home. I-I can see my kid sister again."

Mia smiled despite the pain that warped through her. "I bet she'd be happy to see you."

"Thank you. I'll see you there. I promise."

Blowing out a breath, Mia stood and went back to her vanity to finish getting ready for the night. One down, and who knew how many to go. At least Blondie would be one woman who wouldn't end up on a missing person report.

The lights dimmed and all the women stood, shuffled into position to be auctioned off, one by one. Mia stood in the front as usual. Guy suddenly appeared by her side and narrowed his eyes at her. She thought of those burns in Blondie's armpits, her own aching in support. With a wide smile, she pulled in a breath and held it.

"Why you so goddamn happy?"

"Just happy to be here," she replied, trying not to sound sarcastic. It came out less than sincere anyway.

"No one happy to be here," Guy replied. "You get fucked for a living. Ain't nuttin happy about dat, at least not for da bitch. Now get your ass out dere and make da boss some money."

Asshole. She walked through the opening Guy created when he pushed the curtain back. Glancing back over her shoulder, she caught Blondie's eye and gave her a knowing, reassuring smile. Blondie smiled back and, for the first time, Mia spotted a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

That made it all worthwhile. With a newfound pride, Mia stepped out on that stage, knowing she'd found her purpose. She'd get as many women out from under Guy's control as possible. She'd shut him down. No women, no club.

She squinted against the stage lights, scanning the crowd for Wayde. He wasn't posted against the wall by the exit as he'd been the last three nights. Her heart skipped slightly when she didn't see him. Did the SBI find out what they did last night and ban him from the club? Arrest him?

A familiar chuckle pulled her attention to the dark corner James sat in last night. There, laughing and sharing a bottle of something brown, sat both Wayde and James. Since when did they share a booth, let alone a drink? And why were they both smiling like that?

That wicked glimmer in Wayde's smoky gaze couldn't be missed, even in the dim light of the club. He and James were up to something, she'd bet her earnings from last night on it.

"Let's start the bidding at—" the announcer stopped abruptly as Guy hurried out from behind the curtain, leaned over and whispered into the other man's ear. The announcer nodded and pounded his gavel against the podium. "Gentlemen, you're too late. This courtesan has just received sponsorship from one of our executive members. Thank you, Mr. Pearce."

The announcer nodded his thanks as James held up his drink, nodded

back in return. Wayde's grin widened.

What the hell was sponsorship? How did she receive it? Did that mean she didn't have to be bid on every night?

Guy approached her, the look in his eyes lethal. She took a step back and instinctively pressed her arms to her side, protecting her armpits. "What—"

"Get your sweet ass off da stage. We got other bitches to auction." He pushed her toward the stairs and over to the elevator. Grabbing her arm, digging his fingers into her flesh, she cried out in fear and pain. She didn't want to be burned. Her armpits ached in fearful anticipation.

She shook from her blonde wig down to her three-inch stilettos, tiny tremors of terror that had her heart spasming in her chest. What if he planned to burn more than her underarms? Or worse? Turning in his grasp, desperate to find Wayde, she cried out again when Guy jerked her back around. "I gotta teach you your place, bitch. I give you back to Pearce if dere be anything left to give. Now get your ass in da elevator or I fuck you right here, right now."

She took a breath to scream out for Wayde. Or James. Or anyone to save her from what Guy was about to do to her. He grabbed her chin and squeezed it as he pulled her face to his. "Scream and I kill you when I be done wit you." He then chuckled evilly and Mia's world went numb. She thought of Aimee, of what this man must have done to her. Was Barry the Barbarian waiting in some room for her? Was this what sponsorship meant?

Why would James sponsor something like this? And why would Wayde go along with it? No way did they know what Guy was about to do to her. She twisted in his grasp and caught Wayde's gaze. *Help me*, she mouthed, pleading silently.

Wayde appeared in an instant. He yanked Guy's hand off her, while at the same time grasping him by the neck and squeezing. His fingers sank into Guy's dark flesh. Guy's face contorted in pain as he brought his hands up in surrender.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing, Assmunch?" Wayde narrowed his dark eyes on Guy.

"I be taking her to Mr. Pearce's suite," he lied. Wayde snapped his eyes to Mia, who shook her head.

Wayde brought his attention back to the man he held up by his neck.

"Why don't I believe you?"

"Dat be your problem."

"No," Wayde countered. "That is your problem." Danger, cool and completely controlled, fueled his tone. He squared his jaw and challenged Guy with nothing more than a look. "You touch her again and I'll kill you."

Guy narrowed his eyes at Wayde. Oh, dear God. Was he really stupid enough to challenge Wayde right back? The words weren't even directed toward her and they still scared the hell out of her. When James appeared and stood on Mia's other side, Guy nodded tersely and lowered his gaze until Wayde let him go.

"Now apologize to the lady," Wayde demanded.

"I don't see no lady," Guy snarled back at him. This man just didn't know when to back down. When he shot her another lethal glare, she shrank down and James pushed her behind him.

"You heard him," James added.

Guy looked at James, then back over at Wayde. Fury clearly seethed inside him, but he nodded and glared at Mia. "My apologies."

"I'll be making a phone call. You won't be breathing the same air as her, let alone touching her again," James told him, his voice low and even. She'd never heard him speak like that before. "Let's go." James kept himself between her and Guy. Wayde didn't turn his back to Guy until they were safely inside the elevator with the doors closed.

"Thank you. Both of you." Mia started to shake again, small aftershocks of adrenaline pulsing through her system. She was safe, for now. But what happened tomorrow night when she had to be backstage with Guy once again, no one to protect her but women who were either content and didn't want to create waves, or women who were too scared to challenge him? Did James really have enough pull to keep Guy away from her? What about when no one else was around?

Any way she looked at it, it didn't look good for Mia. On the other hand, now that she had sponsorship, would she ever need to be backstage again? The thought of leaving the rest of the women to fend for themselves against that madman made up her mind. Their safety outweighed hers.

She had to rescue the ones who wanted out. She owed it to the courtesans before her who didn't stand up to him and were now lifers. She owed it to the courtesans who did stand up to him and suffered some sort of

torture as their punishment. And, Mia swallowed tightly, she owed it to those missing women—including her baby sister.

She just hoped she wouldn't soon be one of them.

Chapter 11

He couldn't believe it. He was actually nervous. James refilled Candy's wine glass before moving over to Steel's. Once they were both topped off, he poured the remainder of the bottle into his glass. "I hope you found dinner satisfactory."

"I'm more interested in dessert," Steel rasped, his voice thick and deep. James chuckled and nodded. He couldn't agree more and flicked his gaze to Candy to judge her reaction to the words. She flushed beautifully and he swallowed a groan. "What did you have in mind tonight, Pearce?"

Oh, he had so much in mind. First they'd start with Steel devouring Candy's large, beautiful breasts for a little visual stimulation. Once James felt the stirring in his cock, he'd join them, knowing he'd be too nervous to fuck her on his own.

He thought about their situation. None of them were who they said they were. It didn't take long for James' PI to track them down, especially when they met up at Pioneer Square after leaving the club. Candy, the tantalizing courtesan, was really Mia Andrews—a paralegal at a Seattle law firm. Steel, the hard-bodied and fierce lover of Candy, screamed law enforcement. When the PI returned with the name of Wayde Davis, special agent with the SBI, James wondered just what the two were up to.

Ignoring his nervousness, whether it had to do with Steel being an agent or him fucking Candy for the first time, he didn't know, James stole a glance at the sweet woman who would provide dessert for them tonight. He'd rarely seen such genuine beauty in the club scene. What he wouldn't give to have her alone, if only for just one night.

But Steel would never allow it. James had a sneaking suspicion if he so much as whispered the thought of him fucking her outside of their ménage, Steel would tear him limb from limb. So, since he couldn't have her to himself, he'd have to be satisfied with sharing her.

The overstuffed duffel bag full of sex toys would only enhance tonight's experience. He wondered if Candy had ever had anal sex. Had she ever had a butt plug pushed deep inside her tiny hole and then had the vibrator turned on? He didn't want to rush into things. If she didn't feel comfortable, then he'd be perfectly satisfied fucking her night after night until she was.

They all sat around the table, the roasted duck and potatoes completely consumed along with the mixed vegetables. Apparently they all had a hefty appetite tonight, which James hoped would work to their advantage. Once he grew hard, he could last for hours.

The loose black silk teddy he had Candy change into looked so much better on her than that tight corset. He hated seeing her in that slutty outfit. She had such beautiful curves. The teddy gave her a sophisticated charm, and made her sexier than ever.

"Let's start with this," he said and pulled out the vibra-mitt. A snug-fitting glove with little sensors that vibrated when pressed, and increased in vibration when the pressure on them increased, he found the toy quite useful in pleasuring not only his partner, but him as well.

"What the hell is that?" Steel took it from him, held it up.

"Slip it on."

Steel looked at him curiously, then darted his gaze to Candy. She nodded and even gave him a sly smile. He did and flexed his fingers. "It's just a glove."

"Now, touch sweet Candy wherever you think she would like to be stimulated."

With a sinful flash in his eyes, he reached over and cupped her breast. James heard the vibration start. Both Steel and Candy jumped back from each other, and the vibration stopped. She let out a giggle, but when Steel reached back over and pinched her nipple, setting the vibrator back in motion, she hissed in a breath and let out a moan.

"I take it you like it?"

"Yes," Candy breathed and relaxed back in the chair. Her nipples sprouted beneath the black silk, the hard little buds tenting the fabric. "Oh, wow."

"Squeeze harder," James urged. Steel did and the vibrations intensified.

"Oh, my God," Candy whimpered. Her cheeks flushed and she closed her eyes. Steel moved his chair directly behind hers. James moved his

directly in front of her, facing her. Candy was sandwiched between them, looking magnificent as the flush in her cheeks crept down her neck. "That feels so amazing."

"What else do you have in your bag of tricks, Pearce?" Steel moved to the other nipple, licking his lips as he watched her reaction to the glove. James pulled out the butt plug and held it up. Steel shook his head and motioned for him to put it back. Not one to create waves when things were going so well, he did without hesitation and grabbed a vibrator. Nodding, even tossing James a crooked grin, Steel glanced down at the crux between Candy's legs, then back at James.

He knew what Steel wanted him to do. Twisting the bottom to turn it on, he gently rested it against the inside of her thigh. Candy jerked up, and James jerked away, afraid he'd somehow hurt her.

"It's all for you, baby." Steel rasped and eased her back in the chair. He scooted forward in his chair so her head rested against his chest.

"I-I'm scared." Her voice shook and James felt what little hard-on he had start to fade. He didn't want to scare her. She blinked and looked at James. "Are you both g-going to...um...you know?"

"We're just exploring right now, finding out what feels good and what doesn't. If anything we do makes you uncomfortable, or scares you, you just say so and we'll stop." James rested his hand on her knee, smiled at her. When she smiled in return, and even licked her sultry lips, his wilting cock reversed direction.

Steel kissed her jaw and nuzzled into her neck. Candy closed her eyes and rested her head back against his chest. "I-I'm scared now," she protested, though not an ounce of conviction sounded in her tone. Steel slid his gloved hand beneath her teddy and ran it over her still protruding nipples. Whimpering, she shifted in the chair, sliding forward and opening her legs if ever so slightly.

"Why don't I believe you?" Steel teased. He flicked his gaze to James, nodded for him to bring the vibrator back up as he nipped at Candy's earlobe. "Relax, baby. Let us play with you."

"O-okay."

"Close your eyes." As Steel continued to caress her breasts with the vibra-mitt, James brought the vibrator up to her thigh, gently easing it closer and closer to the center of her slick core. He felt the smoldering heat from

her weeping cunt, smelled her desire, and had to swallow to stop himself from drooling all over her.

Dropping down to his knees, completely captivated by the cream saturating her pussy lips, he ran the vibrator along her curls and around her outer lips.

She jerked her hips and settled back down. Glancing up at her, loving the way her color had intensified to a gorgeous crimson, James then shifted his gaze to Steel. He watched everything James did intently, a hint of a flush starting in his own cheeks. His eyes darkened to a deep gray as he pulled the teddy up to fully expose Candy's pussy.

She was simply beautiful. Juices flooded her cunt. James leaned closer, dying to taste her sweet cream. He rubbed the vibrator up and down her outer lips before opening her inner lips with his fingers.

Oh, dear God. Her perfectly pink lips were even more stunning than he'd imagined. Circling her clit with the vibrator, knowing by watching the way Steel ate her last night she loved the sensation, he wasn't disappointed. She bucked her hips, sliding further down the chair to open her legs fully.

Testing her, he dipped the vibrator through the blistering fluid surrounding her glistening channel and back out, drawing a deep groan from Candy. He did it again and, again, fucking her with the vibrator. She let out a breathy moan.

He couldn't stand it. He had to taste her. Slowly pushing the vibrator in and out of her cunt, he leaned in and ran his tongue up one lip and down the other.

"Oh, James." Candy hummed. James buried his lips into hers when she purred his name, the sound so sweet in his ears he instantly grew fully, and painfully, hard. He flicked his tongue against her clit and she cried out. "Ah!"

"What about me?" Steel growled against her ear and pinched her nipple.

"Y-you aren't the one eating my pussy and driving me crazy."

"How about this?" Steel brought his ungloved hand down to her pussy and went right for her clit. "I know exactly how to make you come for me."

James pulled back and watched as Steel pinched her clit between his two fingers. Leaning back in, James flicked his tongue against the swollen flesh as Steel held it firmly between his vibrating fingers.

"Holy Jesus!" She cried out and kicked her legs out. Steel chuckled and

wiggled his fingers to pull more of her sensitive nerves to the surface. James spotted her clitoris, red and engorged as it protruded out, and dove down. He covered it with his lips and flicked his tongue in time with the thrusting of the vibrator. "Oh. My. God!"

Her sweet nectar gushed out as she came, her entire body rigid and arched. James pulled out the vibrator and greedily lapped up her juices, drunk from the taste of her. Steel used his fingers to keep her orgasm at its peak, and another wave of juices flowed down her channel and into James' mouth.

Candy continued to buck and cry out as she came, and neither James nor Steel slowed in their intensity. Finally, as the walls of her pussy slowed in their pulsing around his tongue, as her screams of pleasure dulled to whimpers, James gave her one final lick before pulling back. Steel slowly lifted his hand away from her gleaming cunt and continued to caress her breasts, her shoulders and neck.

"How was that, baby?" Steel asked her.

Candy shuddered, her eyes still closed, her head still resting against Steel's chest. "I've never had two men do that to me before."

"There's more," James pointed out. "If you liked that, then you'll really like what I have planned next."

* * * *

Mia felt as limp as a wet noodle, but when James said that she sat up straight in the chair. More? She'd never come so hard in her life and knew it would take her a while to recover. She didn't know if she could take more, yet didn't so much as mutter a protest as Wayde lifted her out of the chair and led her over to the bed.

"You better keep your eyes shut," he said in her ear.

"What?" She looked up at him as his eyes widened at her, then flicked his gaze toward James as he grabbed the duffel bag and moved toward the bed. "Why? What is it?"

"One of your contacts popped out. You have one brown eye and one green eye. That's why I told you to close your eyes." He reached over and covered her eyes as James joined them on the bed. "I say we blindfold her,"

she heard Wayne say.

"Blindfold?" The tone of James' voice told her he liked the idea. She knew she shouldn't like the idea as well. She should say no. Protest, at least. It was like she had no self-control. But the idea of being blindfolded as two men did erotic things to her body had her cunt tingling and spasming in anticipation.

Besides, it would keep her eyes covered in case she forgot to keep them closed. "I like it," she stated, her voice barely above a quiver.

"I'm sure you have one in that bag." Wayne shifted on the bed, moving and pulling Mia into a sitting position. "I'll do it," he offered. She kept her eyes closed and tried to slow her breathing as she felt something smooth and soft cover them. He tied it off behind her and rested his hands on her shoulders. "Tight enough?"

She still felt like she should say something in protest. This shouldn't be exciting her, being blindfolded and about to be loved by two men. Even her breaths were pulling in and out of her lungs in rushed gasps, she was so ready to come right now.

"Steel, I say we undress sweet Candy and then play a game."

"A game?" Wayne stiffened next to her. She didn't have to see it to feel it. "What sort of game?"

James laughed and it eased the nerves that had started to swirl in her stomach. He had the most charming laugh. It was warmly inviting and friendly, just like the rest of him. "A guessing game. One of us will do something to her and if she guesses which one it is, then he has to do whatever she requests."

"And if I guess wrong?"

"Then he gets to do whatever he wants."

Oh God. That shouldn't send shivers of fervent passion straight to the folds of her pussy. She tried to breathe normally, but just the thought of what they were about to do had jolts of sexual anticipation shocking her senses. Her cunt gushed, hungry for attention.

"Who's first?" Mia asked, then smiled when she heard a rustling, felt the bed shift back and forth and knew they were both undressing. She really wanted to see what it looked like to have both men naked and sharing her bed, eager to please her. It made her feel like royalty.

She didn't know who, but someone lifted her teddy up over her head so

she, too, lay naked. Well, she thought with a frown, at least she imagined they were naked. Fighting the urge to lift the blindfold enough for a peek, she eased back and rested her head on a pillow, every sense on overdrive as she waiting for the game to begin.

This should be easy. She already knew Wayde's touch, knew his body intimately. James' touch felt foreign to her, which flooded her body with a different kind of excitement. Still, she knew she'd be able to tell them apart.

A hand touched her nipple, rolled it in between two fingers. When he pinched it, she knew. "Steel."

"Very good," he said. "What would you like me to do?"

"That hurt," she lied. "Kiss it and make it feel better."

"As you wish." The mattress shifted and she felt the wetness of his mouth cover her hard nipple. He suckled and licked, and she felt the electric bolts shoot through her body, centering in her already heated and wet pussy, drenching her even more. He pulled back with a final kiss.

Okay, so far so good. Of course the next one to touch her would be James. She felt a gentle kiss against her pussy lips, followed by a sweet lick that sent a shudder ripping through her. "James."

"She's good," James stated. "Your request?"

"My other nipple feels left out."

James laughed and without hesitation covered her other nipple, gently nipping at it and swirling his tongue around it until it was so hard, the ache he created had her biting her lip.

Although this was easy, it was torture. Sweet torture. He pulled back and Mia waited for the next touch, fully expecting Wayde's hands on her. When she felt hands lift her by her hips and spread her legs, she wiggled to welcome him into her aching folds.

Something pressed against her opening. Smooth, hard, and vibrating. Oh shit. Without the feel of their hands or lips, she wouldn't be able to tell. The vibrator moved in and out of her hole, then up and down the inside of her lips. "S-Steel?"

"No," James answered with a devilish chuckle. "And now it's my turn to do something to you."

"But—" was all she got out before she felt his hot mouth cover her aching cunt. Sucking in a breath, she bunched her hands into fists, digging into the sheet underneath her. He was relentless as he flicked his tongue

against her tight clit. He pulled back just as the waves started to grow deep inside her womb. She wanted to cry out, to reach out to him and pull him back between her legs, but before she took a breath, a mouth came down on her midriff, licking and teasing her just above her mound.

Since the last one was James, this one had to be Wayde. "Steel."

"Wrong again," James stated and went back down on her, picking up where he left off. Her clit pulsed in his mouth, danced as he flicked it over and over. Her waves started to build.

And then he stopped.

"No!" This time she did get out a protest before a mouth came down, feathering kisses along her side before closing around a nipple and swirling his tongue until she moaned. Knowing James liked to swirl his tongue, she knew it had to be him. They weren't going to trick her twice. "James."

"Sorry," Wayde drawled and lifted his mouth from her aching nipple. "Let's see. What should I do to you?"

Oh, she knew what she wanted him to do. Her body shuddered and jerked with ardent need to have him bury his cock so deep inside her she'd feel it hit the top of her womb. "Please."

"Are you begging?"

Jerk. "You know what I want."

"Ah," he mocked. "But it isn't your turn. How about a little warmth? My cock is cold and could use a blanket."

Oh yes. "Absolutely. I thought—" She felt the head of his cock touch her lips and, before she knew what she was doing, she wrapped them around it and pulled the head into her mouth. Tasting pre-cum, the salty-sweetness made her mouth water and she sucked to pull more of him inside. She swirled her tongue around the tip and lifted her head.

"Ah Jesus," he rasped and pushed another inch inside before pulling out entirely. "Son-of-a-bitch. I didn't want to pull out."

"Then come back," she murmured and licked her lips.

This time she felt a hand cover her mound, a thick finger dip in between her lips. He moved it around her clit before thrusting it deep inside her. "Um..." She had no idea, but she wanted him to do it again. "I don't know. Again?" The chuckle was unmistakable. "James."

"Right." James said. "*Now* it's your turn."

She knew what she needed, but she also knew how big he was. Could

she take him? She wanted to find out. Eagerly. "Fuck me." Did she really just say that? It made her feel so wanton, so naughty. It felt good to let go, if only for one night.

"Uh," James stuttered. "Are you sure you wouldn't rather have me do something else?"

What did he have against her? She opened her mouth to say something when Wayne spoke up. "You heard the lady, Pearce. Give her a little taste."

Nothing happened. No motion on the bed, no voices, no feel of anything against her, where she needed it most. Taking a breath to say something, she finally felt his large, throbbing cock rub against her inner lips, coating the head with her slick juices. When he pressed it against her opening, pushed past the barrier, she felt the burn as he stretched her farther than she could have imagined her body would stretch. She sucked in a breath.

Dear Jesus, it was even bigger than she originally thought. Another inch in and her body erupted in pain. He really was going to split her in two. She couldn't take him. He eased in another inch and she felt the walls of her pussy clamp down, urging him in further even though the burning between her legs caused her hips to buck.

The motion pushed him in another inch. *Nonono*. She wanted to cry out, to scream as he slid in deeper. When he stopped, she felt his dick twitch and bucked again, pulling him in further. And then he stopped moving and she wanted to scream for an entirely different reason.

"Oh sweet Candy," James growled. "My God, you have me so close. Just don't move. Please." She felt his dick twitch again. He pulled out and back in, stretching her to capacity. The walls of her channel quivered. He stopped again. "Oh, Jesus."

She felt fingers on her clit, didn't know who had started to rub her there, and didn't care. James moved slowly, carefully sliding in and out, driving her waves higher and higher. Gripping the sheets, she moved her hips to match his as the fingers circled her swollen clit.

The waves grew, intensified. Erotic fireworks started to erupt behind her lids as she teetered on the cusp of her orgasm. James thrust and quickly pulled out. Mia screamed as the void filled her soul.

"Turn around, baby." Wayne grabbed her hips and flipped her around, onto her knees. He buried his gloriously hard cock deep inside her vagina, felt his hips slam against her backside. "Fuck, yeah. You feel so good."

He was ruthless as he pumped into her. The fingers on her clit matched his thrusts and had her thrashing toward her release. A final flick of her clit, a final pump piston-drove her into a violent release and she screamed as the hot semen jetted from the tip of his cock. She bucked wildly, rocking against him, riding her orgasm and milking him of his life.

She hadn't quite recovered when she felt blistering liquid jet onto her backside, covering her cheeks. James hollered out his own release and leaned over, rubbing his dick against her cheeks, spreading his thick seed across her flesh.

Collapsing from the strength of her orgasm, she stretched out on the bed and gasped for air. Did she really just have sex with two men? Her core throbbed between her legs, answering her questions that she did, indeed, just have sex with two men. Amazing sex, at that.

"Damn," Wayne muttered and stretched out next to her. "That's a first for me."

"Me, too." Mia smiled, loving how sated her body felt. She heard James walking away from the bed, then water running. He came back a minute later and she felt something warm against her rear. "What—"

"I'm washing you," James stated gently. "Seems I made a mess here." The three of them laughed. After he finished washing off his semen, she felt another warm cloth between her legs as one of them washed her pussy and the inside of her thighs. "Thank you."

She turned her head toward James as he stretched out on her other side. The feel of having the warmth of a man on either side of her made her feel safe, secure. These two men showed her the benefits of having them both at the same time. She'd never so much as dated two men at the same time.

Reaching out blindly, she rested her hand on James' cheek. He turned toward it and kissed her palm. He made her feel so feminine, so special as he gently loved her, scared he'd hurt her. Her heart warmed toward him.

With her other hand she reached out for Wayne, entwined her fingers with his. He gave her hand a squeeze, and she squeezed it in return. The feelings he drew from her were so different than James, so carnal and passionate. His fierce need to protect her, to love her, almost scared her. She'd never had a man willing to kill another man for her. Yet she knew, without a doubt, Wayne would do exactly that if anyone tried to hurt her.

Mia recognized the warmth enveloping her heart. She'd been in love

before. She knew the instant she drifted into the depths of Wayde's steely gray eyes she'd lost her heart, her very soul to him.

The feelings growing for James were different. She didn't love him, but did care for him, and could see herself easily falling in love with him if they kept this up. She wondered how that would work, if the heart would even allow it.

Could a woman love two men at once?

Chapter 12

"Are you sure she's coming?" Wayde checked his watch for the umpteenth time. He was tired as hell and just wanted to take Mia back to his place, curl up against her warm body and slip off to sleep. They'd been waiting here for over an hour.

"I know she is," Mia answered as she chewed on her thumbnail. She kept glancing up and down the street, no doubt expecting the woman she called Blondie to suddenly appear. "She said she'd be here."

"Maybe she changed her mind."

"You didn't see the look in her eyes, Wayde. She's coming." She looked at him and the certainty shined in those pretty green eyes, melting away any doubt from his mind.

"Alright," he caved and accepted the fact he'd have another sleepless night, helpless whenever she looked at him like that. They stood there, waited in silence for almost another hour. The darkness started to fade as the light of the next day took over. "Sweetheart, she's not coming."

"I don't understand," she stated, her tone landing somewhere between disappointment and confusion. "Just a few more minutes? Please?"

Knowing he couldn't now, nor would he ever be able to defy her, he nodded and shoved his hands deeper in his pockets to ward off the chill. October in Seattle sucked. Not only did the gray settle in for the winter, the rain did as well. The constant drizzle depressed the shit out of him and seeped into his bones, drawing a shiver from him.

He drew in a sharp breath and took a step closer to her. He couldn't help himself. Whenever he was around her, he just couldn't get close enough. Even buried between her thighs, deep inside her blistering heat wasn't close enough. He needed to be closer. Wrapping her in his arms, he held her as they waited.

Daylight started to invade their privacy, along with the people on their

way to work. The city had woken up once again. "Mia?"

Watching her lower her eyes, hearing that heavy sigh as she let it out, just about broke him. His heart jerked and ached, sharing in her sadness. If he knew what this Blondie looked like, he'd track her down and drag her in, just so she knew how much she'd hurt Mia by standing her up.

But deep down, Wayne knew better. From the way Mia described how she wanted to leave the club, he knew the woman really did want to leave. She would have met up with them if she could have. Something, or *someone*, stopped her from coming.

"She's not coming," Mia finally admitted, her voice full of remorse. Her eyes flooded with tears. Thick, painful tears that tore at his essence. He could only imagine how much they affected her if they affected him this much.

"Don't cry, baby." He rubbed her arms, fighting the urge to kiss her tears away. Jesus Christ, what was happening to him? A month ago he'd watched grown men cry at Nelson's funeral and it didn't affect him this much. He'd witnessed complete and utter devastation and kept his emotions in check.

But when Mia cried, he wanted to kill the person responsible. One snuffle, one goddamn tear and it broke him. He didn't want her to cry. He felt like he should do something, *anything* to comfort her, to dry her tears.

Why in the hell would it affect him this much, dig deep into his black heart and twist until he, too, wanted to cry? Mia wasn't anything to him. An assignment, nothing more. An assignment he had the pleasure of burying himself in every night. An assignment that coursed through his veins, filled his senses.

An assignment he feared, he loathed, and, goddamn it, he was starting to fall in love with. "Let me take you to work."

She shook her head and pulled back her tears. Damn if he didn't respect the hell out of her for that. "I'll be fine. My car is around the corner. I should get to work." Walking away, she kept her head high, her posture determined.

He ran his fingers through his hair as he watched her, contemplating what to do. He wanted to go after her, pull her into his arms and kiss her pain away. He needed to touch her, taste her, and convince himself he wouldn't die without her. "Mia?"

She turned back, lifted her dark brows as he listened. When he didn't say more, she pushed. "What is it?"

Ah hell. What was he doing? *Walk away, Davis. Let her go.* Ignoring the warnings whispering in his ear, he went on. "Stay with me today." Her eyes widened and she took a step forward. The gesture had him hurry the rest of his words out. "Call in sick. We'll both play hooky and spend the day *under the covers.*"

Slowly, painfully, she shook her head. "I can't."

Swallowing down the rest of his pathetic plea, he nodded. Apparently work was higher on her priority list than spending a day wrapped in his arms. The bitterness consumed him, swirled like a fury around his heart. If she wanted to keep their relationship confined to the club, then fine. He spun on his booted heel and called back around his shoulder. "I guess I'll see you tonight."

"Wayde?"

He froze in his tracks, turned back to her. Those gut wrenching tears were back, pulling at his heart, tearing him up. "Why are you crying?" Her tears fell, melting down her beautiful cheeks, eating into his armor like acid. "Goddamn it, Mia. Talk to me."

Her lower lip trembled and he lost it. He took the few steps needed to consume the distance between them and pulled her into his arms. She fought for control. He felt it. "Baby, don't cry. Please. Don't cry."

"T-take me home," she said in a small voice. The word had his insides in a pinch. The thought that they may have a home together someday warmed his icy heart. No matter how much he tried to fight it, the idea perched itself in his brain, controlled his thoughts.

He took her to his apartment and even tucked her into his bed, unable to resist the urge to slip in next to her. He spooned up behind her and pulled her to him, held her close, and waited until her breathing deepened before finding his own sleep.

Gurgling woke him from a deep sleep. He jumped out of the bed and had his service pistol in his hand before he blinked again. Jerking around at the noise, he blew out a nervous breath before replacing his pistol in the jacket on the nightstand next to his bed.

Goddamn coffee pot. Wayde threw on some shorts and a t-shirt, then padded out to the kitchen. When he spotted Mia sitting at the round kitchen table, nibbling on her lower lip as she tapped a pencil against the table, looking sexy-as-sin in one of his t-shirts, his heart melted.

"Hey," he offered, his voice thick with an emotion he couldn't define. Clearing his throat, he motioned at the coffee cup she had her slender fingers wrapped around. "Anymore of that?"

"It sucks," she admitted as she pointed at the pot. He grabbed a cup off the hook above the sink and poured a steaming cup, took a sip. It didn't suck. On the contrary, it had to be one of the best cups of coffee he'd ever had. He took another sip.

"This tastes great. What is that I taste? Cinnamon?"

"And vanilla." She didn't even look up from the paper folded in her hand and, for some odd reason, it bugged the shit out of him. He couldn't take his eyes off her. "It sucks."

"I think it tastes great."

Blinking up from the paper, she threw him a bewildered look that was cuter than hell. "Huh?" His dick twitched, his breath hitched, and his heart did an awkward flip in his chest.

"The coffee? It's great."

She shook her head, flashed that pretty smile at him that had him ready to fall on bended knee right there and then. His dick twitched and woke up. "No. Seventeen across. I need six letters for 'it sucks.' Starts with a 'V.'"

A crossword puzzle on a Friday morning in nothing but a t-shirt? Could she be any sexier? "Vacuum."

Her smile broadened as she wrote it in, and his cock grew in his shorts. Jesus, he had no control when it came to her. He wanted to take her back into the bedroom and plunge his cock deep inside her cunt, lose himself in her soul. They'd make love for the rest of the morning, fuck each other into a coma, and fall back asleep wrapped in each other's arms. "Perfect!"

"Yes," he agreed as he joined her at the table. "It is."

She gave him a double take, her brow furrowing in curiosity as he continued to stare at her. "What?"

"You're gorgeous."

"Hmm. Well, you aren't so bad yourself." She took a drink of her coffee and set her cup back down on the table as she focused on the puzzle. "Four letters for a strong emotion. Starts with an 'L.'"

"Love," he answered and quickly took a drink to hide any giveaways on his face.

Shaking her head, she went back to tapping the pencil. "Doesn't fit."

"Excuse me?"

"It needs to end in a 'T' to fit."

His gut jerked and coiled. "Lust."

"Ah hah! That's it."

He flinched at her exclamation, and thoughtfully watched her as she filled in the blanks. She was completely oblivious to the turmoil boiling within him. Was it lust he felt for her? Or love? He couldn't get enough of her, wanted to bury himself deep inside her more than he wanted his next breath. But he also wanted to protect her, to possess her. Did all of that equate to lust?

Or love?

In all his thirty-three years, he'd never been in love. Sure, he'd come close, but his job had always gotten in the way. Just when he thought he was ready to say those three little words, something would happen to drive her away.

He studied Mia as she continued to focus on the crossword. Would his job drive her away, too? Would his need to right all the wrongs of the world come between them, just as it had done with all his past relationships?

Somehow, he doubted it, yet deep down feared that very thing. Mia's passion to find her sister and to get those women out of The Emerald Club rivaled his passion for his job. It just might even surpass it. Damn if his admiration for the curvaceous beauty didn't hike up a few stripes.

He'd only known her a few days. How in the hell had she gotten under his skin? He felt her dancing inside him like a nymph, mystical and beautiful, and just a touch of danger if crossed. Those pretty green eyes consumed him, robbed him of all sensible thought. How did she do it?

Son-of-a-bitch. He may just be in love with her. Under the circumstances, he didn't know if that helped their cause or placed them in even deeper shit than they were already in.

He needed to do something to occupy his mind, so he'd stop allowing his thoughts to swirl around Mia and only Mia. "Talk to me about your sister. Give me a feel for her."

Dropping the paper from her hands, she looked at him, those eyes wide and full of hope. He hated reality, despised it. But it was what it was. Every day they didn't find Aimee lessened the chance of them ever finding her. At least alive. He could lie to her, give her false hope and be there to pick up

the pieces when reality slammed into her like a tornado of truth.

"You want to talk about Aimee?"

"I need to know who she was—I mean *is*," he corrected quickly when the hurt sparked in her eyes. "Tell me more about her."

Drawing in a breath, she started. "Aimee is only twenty-two. She barely knows how to tie her shoe, let alone how to tell when she's in serious trouble."

Wayde somehow doubted that, but let her believe what ever she wanted to believe. He knew she *needed* to believe in something to preserve her little sister's innocence. "Have you two always been close?"

She nodded. "Our mom died when Aimee was only nine. I was fifteen, so I dropped out of high school, got my GED and a full-time job."

"At fifteen?" He tried to hide the shock in his tone, but couldn't. At fifteen he'd been preoccupied with *pestering* his little sister, not supporting her. Not for the first time, his admiration for Mia shot through the stratosphere.

She looked at him before darting her gaze down to her cup as she ran her finger along the rim. "Two weeks before I turned sixteen," she added in a vacant voice. Her expression twisted at the memory. "Aimee was too young to understand. I did the best I could, and somehow proved to child protection I could care for my baby sister." She laughed, an emptiness echoing in the tone. "Apparently not."

Wayde reached over and covered her hand with his. She lifted her troubled gaze to him. The pain he saw storming in her green eyes had him swirling in anger. When those goddamn tears shined in her eyes, his control broke. "Don't you dare blame yourself, do you hear me?" Those fucking tears filled her beautiful eyes, and invaded his heart, shattering him. "Goddamn it, Mia. Look at me."

When she blinked up at him, the tears streamed down her cheeks. He reached over and ran his thumb under her eye, sweeping away her sadness. He'd never met a woman who looked anywhere close to pretty as she cried. Yet Mia looked so damn good it ate at his heart and destroyed his senses.

"I let her down, Wayde," she admitted, the regret in her voice tearing a hole right through him. "And I broke my promise to our mother. I promised her I'd take care of Aimee." She pulled in a staggered breath. "I promised nothing would happen to her. Or me."

She buried her face in her hands just as a heart-wrenching sob tore through her, through him. "Come here," he said and pulled her to him, holding her as she let out all her fears, her pain, her guilt. "You are doing everything you can to find her, baby. And we *will* find her. If it takes until my dying breath, I promise you that."

And he meant it.

Chapter 13

"I love you," Mia whispered.

Her reflection stared back at her, just as baffled as Wayde would be if she admitted such a declaration. How could she love him? She barely knew him. They'd shared a few heated moments, but nothing enough to signify love.

Right?

Washing her face for a third time, she threw the rag into the sink. Her eyes blazed back at her, judging her, disapproving of her. *How hard is it to declare your feelings?* Easy for a stupid reflection to ask.

With an uncertain breath, she opened the bathroom door and stepped out. Wayde had his nose buried behind his laptop and didn't even look up as she approached the table and took a seat across from him.

The way the light flickered in those gray orbs sent mesmerizing shocks rocking through her entire system. It took her more than a few seconds to recover before she had the ability to speak. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," he said and shut the laptop. Her heart pinched when the top snapped closed. He still didn't trust her enough to talk to her about the case.

"Why won't you talk to me?"

"Mia," he stated with impatience. When he looked at her, he softened his hardened features, as well as his tone. He might as well have told her he'd found Aimee's body for what that deep, hooded look conveyed. "You know I can't."

How could he say such a thing? "You can't? Or you won't?"

"Mia—"

"She's alive, Wayde! And every minute we sit here..."

He gave her a knowing look that froze her next words. His eyes were soft, kind, full of perceptive sorrow. "Sweetheart, it's been almost a month since you reported her missing."

Her brow furrowed against the news, so much that it hurt. She bit the inside of her lip and had to look away. That look in his dark eyes told her what she didn't want to hear yet deep down already knew. As each day passed and no word from Aimee, the less likely the chance they'd find her alive.

If at all.

She wanted to shake her head, wanted to scream at him for being so damn calm. Instead, she nodded miserably. It wasn't fair. Aimee didn't do anything wrong. A bit misguided with her decisions maybe, but she had a heart of gold and saw the good in everyone. She would have never thought working at The Emerald Club would be so dangerous.

Mia thought of Guy, and of Blondie's burns. Anger twisted inside her, fisting her middle, making her breath escape in short gasps. That poor excuse of a man used drugs to keep the women in line. If that didn't work, he then resorted to scare tactics and torture. She'd never hated anyone as much as she hated Guy at that moment.

Clenching her teeth, fury burning like acid inside her, she promised in a hushed tone, "I'm going to find a way to get him, Wayde."

He looked at her, a dark cloud of emotions pooling in his eyes. "Who?" he asked, though Mia had a suspicion he knew exactly who she meant.

Rage and grief powered her responses. "I'll kill him, you know. If I get the chance, I will kill him for what he's done."

Mixed feelings surged through her as he drew in a deep breath and pushed back from the table. Weariness shadowed his handsome features as he continued to watch her. "I'd like nothing more than to see Guy in an early grave. Hell, I'd like to personally put him there. But I'm a government agent."

"I'm not."

"Jesus, Mia. I understand how you're feeling right now, but making threats like that, or worse, *following through* with those threats, will not help you find your sister."

"You have a sister, right?"

She tensed when he flashed those smoky gray eyes at her, intense and immediate fury blazing in them. "That's different." Lifting her brow, she simply looked at him. "Don't you dare turn this around."

"Leah, I think you said her name was. If someone hurt your sister—"

"Goddamn it, Mia."

"And you found out who it was—"

"Shut up."

"Wouldn't you want to—"

"I'd kill the son-of-a-bitch with my bare hands," he admitted, his teeth bared. Staring at her with a dark frown, clearly pissed she'd driven him into a vow she didn't doubt for a minute he'd follow through with, she felt like a rat. He obviously cared deeply for his sister and for Mia to use that to somehow justify her actions wasn't fair.

"I'm sorry."

"No, you're not," he barked and pushed away from the table. "You got exactly what you wanted. Does it make you feel better knowing I'd just as soon kill him than bring his ass in? But I can't. *You* can't. I need to know you understand that, that you won't go and do something stupid like go after him on your own. If he hurt you, he'd never be safe from me." A tormented look furrowed his brows, as if his newest admission bothered him to the core.

Mia watched the storm gathering in his gaze as her heart warmed to his words. A heaviness settled in the room. It wasn't just the hard look in his eyes, or the ache she saw sparking in them. She spoke in a much stronger voice than she felt, but knew he needed to hear her strength. "He won't hurt me, Wayde. I won't let him."

"He's dangerous, Mia. If he got to you... If I lost you..." She went to him, touched her hand to his cheek. Looking up into his steely eyes, she felt the heat from his passion lift off his skin and sink into her heart.

"I'm right here, baby." She wondered if the pet name had as much of an impact on him as it did her. Every time he used the word another part of her defense crumbled, opening her heart to him. Desire liquefied her core, drenching her from the inside out. Without warning he grabbed her and smashed his lips down on hers, demanding the feel of her tongue against his as he parted her lips and thrust it inside her mouth.

Mia's world melted away along with any coherent thought. This man knew how to deliver a kiss worthy of electric shock treatment. Little jolts of energy pulsed through her body, down to the lips of her throbbing pussy. A moan of desperation and hunger escaped her mouth into his.

The noise seemed to fuel an unbridled passion in him, and he flooded her with it in his kiss. This wasn't an easy kiss or a gentle kiss. And she

didn't want any of that. This kiss melted the polar ice caps, halted the rotation of the earth, and centered all that heat and energy between her legs. The blistering liquid coated her cunt for his taking, rendering her helpless to him and his need, to him driving her to her own. Her nipples were already aching for his touch, the warmth of his mouth.

As his lips consumed hers, his tongue taking sweet pleasure in her mouth with the same thrusts her body ached for, she barely felt his hand slip under her t-shirt. When his hand closed around her breast, focusing on her hard bud, she threw her head back and cried out from the pleasure.

Wayde took advantage of her position and threw the t-shirt up over her head, baring her breasts to the cool nip in the air, and to him. Her nipples protested to the cold, pinching her and coiling pulses of erotic stimulus like a snake around her womb.

His mouth covered the tip of her breast, pulling her nipple into his mouth and flicking it with his tongue. Ah, Jesus. She really loved it when he did that. With each flick, each tease, her knees weakened and wobbled a little more.

He brought his mouth back up to hers. Fumbling, neither willing to break their kiss, they eased their way into the bedroom and onto the bed. "Oh baby," he whispered, his breath hot and wet against her ear. Another gush of juices flooded her cunt, drenching her in anticipation of having his hard cock thrust deep inside her.

He pulled back and rolled to his side, leaving Mia whimpering. That wicked twinkle in his devilish eyes shined with a fury. Looking down at her, he reached over and ran his finger along her jaw line. "I—" He stopped, and so did her heart. Was he about to say what she thought he was about to say?

"I love you," she whispered and waited, watching him to judge his reaction. He froze, his eyes blazing with something she couldn't read. It was dark, carnal, and awakened her body with both fear and a hunger unlike she'd ever known.

"Oh, sweet Mia," he rasped and captured her lips with his. Weaving his fingers in her hair, he held her to him as he completely devoured her with his mouth. It felt so dominant, so out of her control. She gasped when his hand covered her mound. "My God, your pussy is so hot, so wet. I can't wait to bury my cock inside that sweet cunt of yours."

Okay. That shouldn't turn her on, but *OhMyGod* she was about to come

right there, just from his words. She was consumed by him, by everything about him. He feathered kisses down her neck and nipped at her flesh.

Reaching down, he pulled her panties off, exposing her completely. As he brought his hands back up, a finger found her wet slit and circled around her throbbing opening before settling in on her clit. Her want for him ate up her other senses. It drove her to take her next breath, just to remain conscious enough to take another.

"I have something for you," he mentioned and pulled back. She blinked up at him, not able to focus on anything but her need for release. He leaned over the bed and pulled a black velvet pouch from his side drawer. Releasing the tie, he yanked the cover off to reveal a flesh-colored, cone-shaped rubber sex toy and sent her heart in her throat. The wire leading out of the end and down to a switch in his other hand held her attention.

He flicked his thumb and the little tapered toy started to vibrate. This time her vagina throbbed, eagerly waiting for him to apply the toy to her clit. "Wow," she breathed.

"It's a butt plug."

That little tidbit replaced her arousal with concern. She'd never been taken there before. Surely he didn't expect that...that...*thing* to penetrate her virginal hole? "A what?"

Hunger and lust filled his eyes, darkening them. He offered her a crooked grin as he twirled it in his fingers. "Turn around."

She shook her head. "No way." No way would anyone so much as put his finger up her ass. *Exit only, baby.*

The desire had him flushed, had the enormous bulge in his shorts pulsing with need. It distracted her enough that she didn't see the lubricant in his hand until he drizzled it all over her aching vagina. "What—"

"Shh," he stated softly, gently spreading the slippery substance all over her thighs, her pussy lips, dipping his finger lower to probe her forbidden hole. "Relax."

Was he serious? How was she supposed to relax when he planned to stick something that size into her backside? She didn't know what scared her more, him playing around back there, or the fact it aroused her more than she could have ever imagined. "Wayde..."

"Baby, Pearce wants to take you here." He probed her back entrance, stroking it tenderly. "We need to stretch you, to prepare you so it won't

hurt."

"Are you kidding me?" Of course it would hurt. She snapped her legs closed. James was big enough to stretch her to capacity using the conventional entrance. If he tried to take her in her forbidden entrance, she'd definitely split in two. "No."

Even as she protested, he gently eased a finger inside. Her body burned in protest, yet caught fire with a fierce desire for him to penetrate her with more. It was just so wrong. Her body heated to the feeling of his finger stretching her, widening her for more. He pulled out, replaced it with two, massaging her, spreading her.

"Turn over," he ordered in a hushed whisper. His voice sounded strained as he pulled her up to her knees, leaned her back so she was wide open to him. "Gorgeous."

She expected his fingers again. Instead, she felt something cool and wicked invade her slippery hole, piercing her and stretching her without mercy, without restraint. "Wayde, I can't..."

When he increased the vibrations, her concern melted to erotic pleasure bordering pain. How could something so wrong feel so damn good? "Do you like that, baby?"

"More," she whimpered. He pushed the toy further into her canal. When it sank inside her anus and her opening closed around it, her entire body erupted in a sweet, carnal heat that had her clawing at the bed, digging her fingers into the sheet for something to pull her away from this dark ecstasy.

The bliss was so intense, so unbelievably primal, she growled. She actually *growled*, and even though the sound came from her, she found it so sexually hypnotic she lost herself in it. The pleasure ripping through her controlled her and left no room for anything else.

Her need for release had her panting rapidly, dizzy from the pleasure, distressed from the pain. She didn't know which one to follow. It confused her how she could be enjoying this so much it had her on the verge of coming. It was wrong, forbidden.

And, oh so satisfying. The feeling of being so heavily filled by the vibrating toy had her pussy dripping, gushing with her own juices. Every inch of her spasmed when the toy started to vibrate in pulses. "Oh, my God."

"Sweet Jesus," he rasped just before she felt his tongue lap at her cream. His tongue swirled around her entry, greedily sucking her clean. She

screamed when his tongue darted out and flicked over her swollen, extended clit.

"I can't stand it, Wayde. I...can't..." *speaks*. This prohibited pleasure coursing through her was too much. She couldn't breathe. Her legs started to jerk in time to the pulsing of the vibrations in her rear.

"Let me feel it, baby," he groaned as he continued to race his tongue across her clit, across every inch of her wet lips. "Let me thrust my cock inside your pussy and feel you vibrate around me."

She felt the smooth head of his thick cock press up against her opening and she wrestled against his entry.

"Easy, baby."

"Wayde, I can't..." Even as she protested, she pushed her hips to him, aching for his taking. He eased in and every muscle between her hips and thighs flew into convulsions. "Ah! What... I don't... Ah!"

"Holy shit, Mia. You're squeezing me... Jesus... It feels so damn good."

He inched his way in, burning her, stretching her, completing her. A fresh wave of desire drenched her, coated him as he slid in deeper. "Fuck me. This is...*amazing*."

He started to move, slowly as he rocked up against her, his slick, hot erection moving in and out of her at a steady pace. Her overly stretched muscles tightened, pulling him in deeper. He touched virginal nerves and threw her into a tailspin of erotic pleasure, the blistering rapture so close to pain she screamed and threw her head back.

Wayde pumped into her, filling her with his flesh, his thrusts becoming faster and harder. He reached up and threaded his fingers in her hair, holding her head back. Dear God, she loved the sheer dominance of having him fuck her from behind, the vibrator in her ass, him holding her in place.

"Come for me. I want to feel you milk my dick, baby. Come for me. Don't hold back." He pumped hard, fast. Her entire world darkened, her need for release driving her higher and higher. Sparks of light flickered in her vision, the fireworks bursting in explosions of colorful radiance as he pushed her over the edge with a final, deep thrust.

The blinding passion consuming her erupted as shards of her very soul shattered into a million directions. She couldn't make sense of this orgasm, so raw, so powerful, it had her kicking and screaming from its intensity.

Laughing, crying, unable to decipher between the two, Mia bunched her

hands into fists and screamed again when Wayde slammed into her and hollered out his release. "Ah, Jesus! That's it! Mia! Mia!"

He pumped and rocked until every jet of his life spurted from the end of his dick and into her cunt. She swore she felt it invade her and loved the way it lubricated the walls of her pussy.

Pulling his semi-hard dick out of her quivering, sated vagina, Wayde eased the vibrating plug from Mia's back hole. Flipping it off, he let it roll out of his hands and land with a thud on the floor. He rolled over and collapsed onto the bed, and blinked over at her. Gasping, his face covered in his own sweat, he'd never looked sexier than at that moment.

"Is that what it will feel like with both you and James inside me at the same time?" She eased down and straightened out next to him. He brought his arm out and pulled her to him, curling her next to him. She reached over and weaved her fingers through his chest hair.

He chuckled and she smiled at the way it reverberated through her, forcing a sweet shiver to wash across her hypersensitive skin. "I can't vibrate," he pointed out in jest.

"You know what I mean." He laughed again when she pinched his nipple. "Hey! You want me to do that to you?"

"Try it, big boy."

"Oh yeah?" He jerked and pulled her up to a straddling position above him, her legs on either side of his hips. She felt his cock hardening and pressing against the folds of her pussy. For having just been fully and thoroughly loved by this man, she thought her body would be satisfied for a while.

Apparently not. Her thick juices flowed, coating her cunt, covering his now steely hard flesh. "Ha. I've got you where I want you."

"But it's not where I want to be," he retorted with a wicked grin. With a single thrust he plunged his thick cock into her pussy and let out a long sigh. "Ahhh. That's better."

"I agree."

Chapter 14

James sat back in his chair as he examined the food on the table. Last night the food provided them all with nutrients, giving them the strength they all needed to last the night. Tonight it would serve an entirely different purpose. He smiled.

Picking up the cucumber, he examined it in his hand. He gripped it, squeezed it, stroked it. It felt close to his size. Satisfied, he set it back down and grabbed the bowl of cherries. Bing cherries, to be exact. They were plump, sweet, and had his mouth already watering at the thought of what he planned to do with them.

He replaced the bowl of cherries and shifted his attention to the strawberries. They weren't on his agenda to be used as sex toys, so he took the bowl and walked it over to the champagne. He may want to dip some of the strawberries into Candy's sweet pussy, using the fruit to soak up her delicious nectar before eating the strawberry, and then eating her. Sitting back down at the table, he glanced over the feast, wondering what to examine next.

The grapes were still in the freezer. He didn't want them to thaw out, so he decided to move on to something else. The Bailey's Irish Cream would serve its purpose soon enough, and once you've licked it off one woman, you pretty much know what it will taste like.

Sitting back again, he sighed and deliberated that thought. When it came to Candy, he somehow doubted even the most routine sex act would turn out to be typical. Tasting her elixir, that incredible cream she generated with a simple touch, already had him semi-hard at the memory, and at the thought of tasting it again tonight.

Christ, it had been years since he'd fallen this hard for one of his sex mates. Sure, he loved all of them in a certain way, but never fell in love with any of them. It was a rule he lived by. Love simply wasn't allowed in

ménage relationships.

That's why he had the "no kissing" rule. Kissing stirred up all kinds of personal feelings. Kissing gave off a false sense of emotion. Kissing could lead people to believe in love. Nothing good ever came from the result of a kiss.

Trouble was, he could feel himself falling in love with Candy and it scared the hell out of him. Men like him didn't fall in love. They engaged in whatever fetish-of-the-month they had and moved on when that fetish no longer served its purpose.

Candy had him intrigued. Steel too, for that matter. Their chemistry was like TNT and nitroglycerin, shaken up and served H-O-T. He'd never been with a couple so captivating, so deeply a part of each other they knew what the other wanted without so much as a whisper to their partner. He'd been with partners who'd been together for years and still didn't share as deep a connection.

How ironic that they didn't even know it.

Did the sweet courtesan know she was in love with an agent? Did the agent know James provided the financial backing for The Emerald Club? Was that why he stuck around? Or did Candy really have that strong of a pull over him? And how did James fit into it all?

He knew. He'd always known. This relationship, as with all his others, would be temporary. He wouldn't allow himself the chance to fall in love. He'd never allow himself to be consumed by another person, by just the thought of that person. It didn't matter whether he wanted it or not.

A knock pulled him out of his chair. Opening the door, he smiled and nodded as Steel walked into the room. He glanced around as he always did, taking special interest in his surroundings. A cautious man, James noted. Another thing he appreciated about Steel. Learning of his profession only solidified his respect for the man. He never did ask the PI to find the reason why the SBI was at the club. He didn't know if he really wanted to know the reason why. Sometimes ignorance really was bliss.

"Where's Candy?" James asked as he shut the door.

"She'll be here," he answered and took a casual stroll around the room. Turning around, he rested those steely gray eyes on James. It made sense why they chose Steel as his name. He wondered how much longer they'd be able to keep up with their façade before they broke and told James their real

names. Until then, he'd respect their wishes and call them by the names they gave him. "She's probably backstage getting ready."

"It's my understanding she isn't required to check in with that barbarian once she's under sponsorship," James pointed out, troubled she still felt the need to go backstage and make herself up to look like the others. He'd already made it clear he didn't want to see her in those ridiculously tight leather getups Guy made them wear.

"Not a big fan of Guy, either?"

"You saw the way he handled her last night. I haven't wanted to kick someone's ass since college, but I wanted to last night. If I wasn't such a pansy ass, I would have thrown the first punch."

Steel walked over to the table and snapped his brow into a frown. "She wanted to see one of the courtesans. What's all this?"

"This," he said and joined him at the table, "is tonight's feast. Last night we had roast duck for dinner and Candy for dessert. Tonight we'll skip dinner."

Flashing a crooked grin, Steel nodded appreciatively. "Nice. Not that I didn't like the food, don't get me wrong. But the dessert was definitely better."

He decided to throw a test of Steel's tolerance out as bait. After all, what James wanted to do with the cucumber alone could end up in a fistfight if Steel didn't approve. "A tight pussy like that? Who wouldn't want to skip dinner to fuck her? My God, she had me so—"

"That's enough, Pearce," Steel cut him off, his voice low in warning. "She is a woman, flesh and blood, and not just some sweet piece of ass. I'd appreciate you remembering that."

"Of course," James said, submitting gracefully, very pleased with the answer. Just as he suspected, Steel was deeply in love with Candy. He didn't even know it. That hard determination darkened his eyes, convincing James of the man's true devotion. "Can I ask you a question?"

He narrowed his eyes cautiously. "You can always ask a question. Doesn't mean I'll answer."

Spoken like a man with something to hide. James could respect that, having a few skeletons in his closet as well. "What will you and Candy do once this is all over?"

Steel froze, as did his expression. He watched him, studied him for what

seemed like an eternity. He then pasted a forced grin on his face. "I guess we'll just have to wait and see when you drop your sponsorship."

"Actually, I meant when whatever you two have planned is over."

"What makes you think we have anything planned?" His voice hardened, grew in its quiet intensity. The edge of a warning sliced into the air. "Unless you know something I don't, Pearce."

Ah. The old *answer a question with a question* technique. The ultimate evasive answer. So they were at the club for reasons other than to have a *fucking* good time. Judging by the way he reacted at the question, whatever brought them to The Emerald Club didn't please him any. Quite the opposite.

No doubt about it. The man was here on assignment.

He seemed tense, more than usual, and irritated as hell. James decided to move back to the topic that held both their interest. Reaching over, he picked up the cucumber. "Does Candy have any allergies to fruit? Vegetables?"

"Just what, *exactly*, do you plan to do with that?" Even though he tried to sound exasperated, his underlying tone conveyed an entirely different message. A hunger glittered in his eyes, thickened his voice.

James smiled. "It isn't for you," he mused. "We didn't get the chance to use the butt plug on her last night. I was thinking—"

"I actually wanted to talk to you about that," Steel interrupted. He took the cucumber from James and set it back on the table. "Candy isn't just some whore, Pearce. In fact, she's never done anything like this before."

He already knew that based on her reaction the first night the three of them were together. Still, the fact Steel vehemently defended her honor had him intrigued and he pushed the issue. "She's a courtesan in a gentlemen's club, Steel. She had to have known what she'd signed on for when she walked out on that stage to be bid on."

"She didn't want to," he admitted, his response clipped and terse.

"Then why did she?"

"It's her business."

"When I pay twenty five thousand dollars for a week of the exclusive pleasure of her company, it becomes *my* business."

Steel blinked at him. "A week? How'd you manage that? I spend ten grand for one night."

James grabbed a cherry from the bowl on the table, squeezed it to confirm its plumpness. "The owner of the club cut me a deal."

The intense look in his eyes scared the hell out of James. Those eyes were calm, yet he didn't doubt for a minute the man was as lethal as a mountain lion if crossed. "The owner?" He then relaxed his look, his entire posture, which had sharpened with his attention.

Interesting. James had spent most of his adult life perfecting how to read a person. He didn't work his way up to the president and CEO of a very successful commercial development firm by ignoring details. And every detail, every reaction he observed from Steel screamed protection.

"Why are you after him? What did he do?"

Steel's gaze flew at James. "What makes you think I'm after him?"

"Easy," James defended, his hands up. Steel eased his hardened gaze, but didn't look away. He stared at him in deafening silence, waiting for the answer. "Listen, Steel. We all have our own reasons for coming to this club. I enjoy the sexual freedom and anonymity The Emerald Club offers. If you're here to nail the owner for offering all of that, then I'm afraid I'll have to break our agreement. I don't want any part in bringing down a man who is only guilty of providing a service."

"A *service*?" Steel's tone seethed with disdain. He bunched his fists and straightened his shoulders. "You call selling women off into prostitution a service? He's nothing more than a fucking pimp."

"What happened?" James asked, his voice soft, concerned. No way would Steel be this pissed if this weren't personal. "What did he do?"

He took a breath to say something when a knock at the door broke through the silence. "That would be Candy."

James shook his head. Talk about bad timing. He knew Steel was about to reveal something big when Candy's knock interrupted him, brought him back to his well-guarded senses. He walked over and opened the door, and sucked in a breath.

Dear God, she was stunning in a flowing white satin nightie that stopped at the middle of her creamy thigh. The sheer robe didn't cover anything, but it certainly enhanced her already beautiful features. "Come in," James offered with a sweep of his hand.

Smiling, those pouty lips pulling into a sexy grin, she gave him a sultry look as she sauntered passed him and into the room. He turned and shut the

door, and hid his smile when Steel's intensely guarded gaze landed on her and never left. "Everything okay?"

"Guy is an asshole," she pointed out the obvious. "He wouldn't even let me backstage tonight to see her. He said she was first on stage since I now have sponsorship, and had to finish getting ready."

"So, she is here?"

She shrugged, nodded. "That's what he said."

"But you didn't see her?"

James remained silent and tried to push into the shadows as much as possible. Obviously these two had something planned, and the less he made himself known in the room, the more he'd find out.

"No," she answered. "I asked him to give Blondie my number and wrote it down for her."

"Jesus Christ," Steel growled and ran an angry hand through his black hair. "Which number?"

"My home number. Why?" She crinkled her pretty brow at him.

James knew why. More than likely Guy would take the number and shove it in his pocket for future reference.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to do a reverse search on numbers," Steel snapped, spoken like a true man sworn to serve and protect. "Guy now has your number. He can find you outside the club."

"She can stay with one of us," James offered. They froze and turned to him when he spoke, both obviously stunned at his idea. He brought up his hand when Candy took a breath to protest. "It's either that or go back home."

"She'll stay with me," Steel insisted, his tone leaving nothing up for debate. "That way I can keep an eye on her." He looked at her, and James saw the way his steely eyes darkened with lust.

"Really?" Candy sank down in a chair at the table, her beautiful eyes blinking rapidly. Her eyes. They were different than before. He gave her a closer look. Were they green? Not just any green, but as green as the leaves on all his favorite trees during the hottest months of summer.

Weren't they brown before? He took a breath to say something, but stopped when Candy's eyes misted, causing those lovely olive orbs to sparkle. "You want me to stay with you?"

Steel nodded, the corners of his mouth curling up into a slight grin. James smiled inwardly, loving the sparks and heat these two generated. The

air crackled from it and he felt it clear to his quickly hardening cock.

"Ok," she agreed.

"Ok?" Steel repeated.

Smiling, she nodded. "Ok."

"Ok." He nodded once, swallowed visibly, and then nodded again. James had to lower his gaze from them before he ruined their moment by saying something. This was obviously a big step for them in their relationship and one he didn't need to step into the middle of. It was enough to know he'd given them a little push to move them in the right direction.

She grabbed the cucumber, held it up. "Do I even want to know?"

This time he didn't bother to hide his smile. "That," James explained, "is for you, my dear. Along with everything you see on the table."

Her eyes traced over all the food. "I'm not *that* hungry."

"*You* won't be eating the food," Steel pointed out.

With wide eyes, Candy looked at him. "You mean... I'm going to... You're going to... With all that?"

"Not all at once."

"But..." She looked down at all the food on the table and reached for a cherry. "What are you going to do with this?"

Steel licked his lips.

"Allow me," James jumped in. "The cherries are for your cherry, Candy."

She looked at him, clearly baffled. "Huh?"

Good Lord, she was beautiful when she looked at him like that, her brow crinkled in confusion. He went to her and knelt down in front of her as she sat back in the chair. Holding her gaze, he took the cherry from her delicate fingers and placed it in his mouth. Once he had it nice and wet, he pulled it out and lowered it down between her legs. She flinched when he lifted the nightie and ran the cherry down the front of her panties.

Pulling the fabric aside to expose her already glistening pussy, he rolled the cherry around her clit until her legs relaxed and she let out a long sigh. She closed her eyes and rested her head back. "That feels good."

"It gets better," James promised and pushed the cherry into her entrance. She tensed, but didn't protest. "Hand me another cherry, Steel." One by one they filled her entrance with sweet Bing cherries until none were left in the bowl. "Now stand up. Walk around."

"Won't they fall out?"

James shook his head. "Tighten your muscles around them. Hold them in. Trust me, from what I've been told you've never experienced anything quite like it."

Unsure, Candy glanced at Steel. He nodded and held out his hand to help her up. She sat forward and stopped abruptly. "Whoa."

"What?" Steel stopped as well.

"Nothing," she stated, though the rose in her cheeks told an entirely different story. Standing, her knees wobbled and she sucked in a breath. "Ah, Jesus."

"Walk around," James urged.

She did. With every step her breathing grew more labored as the color in her cheeks intensified. She made it over to the bed and practically collapsed. "I can't take it. It feels too good."

"Nature's Ben-Wa Balls. Candy, sweetheart. Lay back and open your legs. It's time to take them out." She didn't lay back, but did part her legs. James knelt down in front of Candy and motioned for Steel to join him. "Now it's our turn to enjoy them," he explained and leaned in, pulled her panties aside and covered her glistening cunt with his lips and sucked, pulling a cherry out of her hole and into his mouth. He leaned back and bit into the sweet fruit, her delicious nectar coating a perfect addition to the already mouthwatering cherry. Spitting the seed into his hand, he smiled at Steel as he licked his lips. "Now, that's how you eat a cherry."

Not wasting any time, Steel leaned in and followed James' lead, sucking on her pussy and pulling a cherry into his mouth. He chewed and swallowed, spitting the seed into his hand. James took another cherry, this time rolling it around on her swollen clit with his tongue.

"Oh!" she whimpered and arched her back. Steel went back in for seconds, sucking two cherries into his mouth and playing with them around the walls of her pussy. He pulled them into his mouth and went back to her entrance, stabbing her with his tongue. "Oh God!"

The man definitely knew how she liked to be eaten. With the cherries still in his mouth, Steel went back up to her clit and concentrated his attention where she liked it most. The cherries circled round and round, while his tongue lapped up her juices. Moving his head, he had the cherries and his tongue all rolling around her tight clit, causing Candy to writhe and

grab at the covers as her moaning increased.

She suddenly arched her back and cried out, and James watched as her delicious cunt flooded with her own juices. Steel drank greedily, sucking and licking to consume every last drop.

"Save some for me," James said and pushed Steel aside to take a cherry into his mouth. He first ran his tongue up and down the inside of her lips, loving the taste of her. Forget the food. He could eat her pussy all day and never need anything else.

But this wasn't about him. It was about her. He sucked the last cherry out of her pussy and bit down without pulling back, allowing the juices of the fruit to mix with hers. He then licked her clean, completely drunk on the taste of her hot cream mixed with the juice of the cherry.

Candy was limp by the time James came up from between her legs. Her eyes were unfocused, her brow covered in sweat. "W-What else have you got?"

He smiled, first at her, then at Steel. "I think it's time for the cucumber."

Chapter 15

Mia barely heard what James said. She'd never had cherries inside her pussy. The sensation of having them sucked back out damn near had her coming. But then Wayde rolled two around her aching clit and she was a goner.

She felt one of them remove her clothes, though she didn't have the strength to even open her eyes to see which one and frankly didn't care. Still reeling from her orgasm, she simply lay there naked and waited for the next course.

Something cold and hard nudged at her entrance. Just when her body was about to open and allow it inside, someone pulled it back. "What—" Her protest was silenced when she felt something cold and sticky being drizzled across her breasts.

"What is that?"

"Honey," Wayde answered a split second before she felt a mouth, hot and moist, covered her now hard nipple. Another mouth covered her other nipple. She lost herself in the amazing feeling of having both nipples sucked on at the same time. One man flicked her hard bud and she bucked at the way it sent shockwaves through her body. The other flicked her other hard bud and she bucked again.

Then they both flicked at the same time and she arched her back as she cried out, the tight coil of pleasure squeezing her womb and centering deep in her pussy. She felt her juices start to flow and knew they'd have her coming again in no time at all.

Something cool landed in her belly button, overflowed and ran down between the folds of her pussy. "I'll get that," Wayde offered. Mia giggled at his eagerness to clean up his mess.

"You did that on purpose," she stated in a weak voice. The way James

made sweet lip-love to her breast had her panting. "What is it?"

"Bailey's," James answered and licked around her nipples, cleaning her of the honey while Wayde moved between her thighs and started to lick at the trail of Irish Cream between her belly button and vagina.

When she felt Wayde's tongue brush against her sensitive clit, she sucked in a breath with an audible gasp. He didn't seem to be concentrating on her where she needed it most, instead he licked her up and down, cleaning her. It felt highly erotic.

Mia blinked her eyes open when she heard the door to the mini-fridge close. James had stripped down to his white button up shirt and boxers. He had a bowl of something in his hand and as he approached the bed, popped a frozen grape into his mouth.

This ought to be interesting.

"Here," he said and offered the bowl to Wayde, who'd stripped down to his boxers. Accepting the bowl, he glanced at it and snapped his brow into a frown. "Trust me. This'll be better than the cherries."

Better than the cherries? Oh dear God. Was that even possible? Wayde didn't even question it and threw one of the frozen treats into his mouth. He then leaned into her and covered her aching nipple with his cold mouth.

Mia jerked from the sensation of cool moisture surrounding her sensitive flesh. He rolled the frozen grape around her areola, pulling hot and cold and wet and... She couldn't think straight.

James joined in, rolling his frozen grape over the folds of her pussy. When the coolness of the frozen grape melted away, he replaced it with a new one, and the sensations started all over again.

Wayde switched to the other nipple after he ate his grape and replaced it with a fresh, frozen one. His hands were everywhere above her navel, and James' hands were everywhere below. She'd never felt so pampered, so much like a queen as having two men love her at the same time.

When James thrust a thick finger deep inside her slick cunt, she cried out. Wayde licked and rolled the grape up to her neck. "I want to be the one to fuck you from behind, baby."

His comment forced her to freeze rigid. Was she ready for something like that? After earlier, when Wayde had the vibrating butt plug tucked securely inside her forbidden hole, she'd never come so hard. Would it feel that good having the real thing inside her? And just where would James

stick his enormous cock?

Could she take them both at the same time? Did she even want to?

Hell yes, she did.

James massaged her clit with a new grape, the cold from the frozen fruit felt so amazing she whimpered. It heated up and he pulled away to eat it, then closed over her sensitive bundle with his lips. At first the chill sent a wash of goose bumps pebbling across her skin, but soon his mouth heated to a fiery temperature and she whimpered again.

The way James fucked her cunt with his tongue had her so close. "Stop!" she yelled, and they both did. It wasn't fair for them to have all the fun with the fruit while she just lay there and take it. "You," she said and pointed at James. "Strip and lay down on the bed."

He widened his blazing blue eyes at her request, but said nothing as he grinned and eagerly did as instructed. She moved to her knees and turned back to Wayde. He stared at James on the bed, a tortured look on his face. When he brought his gaze to her, she offered him a playful wink that melted the stern look holding his features tight, causing his eyes to glitter hungrily.

"Hand me the grapes."

Wayde grabbed the bowl and thrust it in her hands, spilling a few on the bed. "I'll get them," he said and dove on the bed beneath her, spreading her legs with his shoulders. The way he bounced onto the mattress had them all bouncing with him, frozen grapes and all. All three broke into laughter.

Mia tried to position herself over James' midsection, but with the way the mattress bounced, coupled with Wayde's shoulders keeping her legs spread wide, she lost her balance and rolled on top of him. Her lips came dangerously close to his, so close she could feel the warm moisture of his breath mix with hers.

Losing her smile, she blinked and swallowed. He lifted his chin, his hungry eyes never leaving hers, and feathered a kiss across her lips. Licking the taste of him from her lips, she let out a shaky breath, uncertain what to do. Her heart flipped around in her chest as the warmth spread throughout her body. He'd already made it clear on the no kissing rule, yet just broke it. Well, if you could call their lips barely touching for a split second a kiss.

Leaning in, lost in the depths of his brilliant blue eyes, Mia brushed her lips over his again. She closed her eyes and darted her tongue out, dancing it across his bottom lip. He parted his lips and met her tongue with his, gently

testing the kiss. As their connection deepened, James reached up and cupped her face, kissing her the way she imagined he'd always wanted to.

Good Lord did this man have a flood of emotions in his kiss. She tasted sadness, giddiness, and even longing on his lips. Eagerly kissing him with equal passion, her cunt surged and her juices flowed. She straddled him to rub her throbbing pussy against his thick cock, but before she could lower herself down, Wayde was behind her, his fingers exploring her juicy vagina.

"Jesus, baby. Your pussy is sopping wet." He dipped his finger inside her and back out, mixing and spreading her juices all around her cunt and along her virginal hole. She whimpered into James mouth and sucked on his tongue when Wayde slipped a finger into her backside. "You like that?"

"Uh huh," she agreed and bit down on James lip when Wayde pushed two fingers inside her tight hole, scissoring them to loosen her for his cock.

"Oh, Candy." James kissed her hard and deep, dancing her tongue with his and hungrily consuming her. He moved to her chin and sucked in a breath when she latched on to his earlobe and bit down. The way Wayde fucked her ass with his fingers felt so damn good it made her clench her teeth against the carnal pleasure.

James lifted his hips and she felt the tip of his thick cock nudge against her pussy. Wayde continued to probe her backside with his fingers. She moved just right to have James push the head of his penis inside her cunt, while at the same time having Wayde penetrate her with his fingers. The sensation of being pierced by both men at the same time had her senses skyrocketing.

James withdrew and Mia widened her eyes at him. "Your eyes," he rasped. "They are stunning."

"Thank you—"

"And green," he added, his tone one of surprise. Wayde stopped probing and removed his fingers. Her hole protested from the void. But that was the least of her worries. With everything going on, she'd forgotten to get a replacement pair of brown contacts. She almost forgot the wig, but Wayde reminded her as she ran out of his place to get to the club on time.

"What else are you hiding from me, my sweet Candy?" As he asked, he nipped at her lips and had her nipping his in return. She didn't see a reason to hide anything from him. After all, he'd been just as intimate with her as Wayde. If she didn't trust him now, she never would. She pushed on his

chest to sit up, straddling him. Reaching up, she grabbed her wig.

"Candy," Wayde said behind her, placing his hands on her shoulders. "Don't."

"It's okay," she assured him and pulled the wig off. After removing the net holding her long brown waves in place, her hair cascaded down over her shoulders. Bringing her gaze back to James, she held her breath and waited for his reaction.

"My God," James whispered. She felt his enormous cock swell to a frightening thickness beneath her. Apparently he approved of the change, at least parts of him. "Candy—"

"Mia," she corrected. James smiled wide, his eyes dancing up at her. "My name is Mia Andrews."

"Baby," Wayde warned from behind her.

James reached up and placed his hands on her hips, rolling his to press his now rock hard penis up against her. He rubbed his rigid flesh against the swollen, wet folds of her pussy, coating his cock with her juices. "Mia," James murmured, continuing to rock beneath her, and rocking her with his hands on her hips. "Sweet Mia. Let me make love to you. Let us both love you together."

She felt Wayde's steely hard-on press against the small of her back and gave a shudder. Having the feel of James' cock below her, and Wayde's cock behind her, caused her body to prickle with goose bumps. Her cunt drenched James, her nipples puckered to hard little pebbles.

"Are you ready for this?" Wayde licked and whispered kisses across her neck. He found the tender spot behind her ear and started to feast. "I won't let us hurt you, baby."

She knew that. If it felt half as good as her and Wayde's earlier lovemaking when he had vibrated her to pure heated ecstasy, then she also knew it wouldn't hurt. The only pain she felt was her urgent need for release. The way James rubbed the smooth tip of his cock against her throbbing flesh had her grasping for control.

Her answer was a cry out of pleasure when James moved his hips and pushed his cock past her opening, filling her so full she whimpered at the feeling. He was so big, so thick it burned as her body stretched to take him inside her.

The burn melted away to white hot pleasure as he started to slowly

stroke his cock inside her. In and out. In and out. So slow, so excruciating in the sensations that shot through her pussy she cried out and fell forward on his chest. He didn't break his torturous pace as he fucked her. With the new angle, his engorged cock pumped in and out of her cunt and rubbed up against her aching clit, and her body shuddered. The walls of her pussy tightened and she knew another orgasm was coming.

And fast.

It climbed higher and higher. The coil of intense pleasure squeezed her womb and fisted James' juicy cock, sucking him in deeper. She couldn't move, only lay there as he increased his thrusts, fucking her to the edge and crashing over, her orgasm shattering her body into a thousand shards. Throwing her head back, she screamed at its strength.

She squeezed her eyes closed and saw little lights in every color dance in the darkness behind her lids. James rocked faster and faster, his thick cock pushing so deep inside her she cried out again.

"Oh Jesus," James groaned, his voice scratchy in his arousal. "I'm coming. Holy..." He arched his back, lifting her right off the bed, shouting out her name as he jetted his hot seed inside her. "Shit," he finished his thought and blinked as he shook his head. "Holy shit."

"Can you go again?" Wayne asked from behind her.

"Yes." Both James and Mia answered in unison. Wayne nipped at her shoulder, scraping his teeth across her overly sensitive flesh and pulling a delicious shudder from her.

"Oh, my God," James rasped. "When you do that, your entire body shivers. I can feel it deep inside the walls of your pussy." Wayne playfully bit her harder and she shuddered again. This time James did as well. "Sweet Jesus."

Wayne's hand moved down her spine, pausing only briefly to caress the small of her back before creeping lower, spreading her cheeks with his fingers. He rubbed her back hole gently, circling his finger around and around, teasing her.

"You have such a tight pussy," James moaned and rocked his hips, burying his rigid cock deep inside her. The feeling of having him so far inside her, while Wayne played with her other hole had her entire body stimulated to the point of shaking in the intensity of her arousal.

Wayne drizzled what she assumed to be some sort of lubricant all over

her cheeks and in between. He climbed directly behind her and she felt him rub up against her back, his hard penis lying perfectly between her cheeks. He moved slowly, rubbing the lubricant all over her backside, making sure she was nice and coated.

"Relax," he told her as he eased her down to lay flat on James' chest.

She tried, but until this morning she'd been a virgin with her back entrance. Now, she not only had an enormous cock slowly plunging in and out of her, she was about to have another gorgeous cock take her at the same time.

Her body stiffened and she tried to sit back up. Maybe she wasn't ready for this.

"Relax, baby." Wayde eased her back down. James moved his hips, easing in and out and forcing the fear from her mind. He held her up on her knees, spreading her cheeks wide for Wayde's entry.

"I'm scared," she whispered.

Both the men froze. "Do you want us to stop?" James studied her eyes, his gaze deep and penetrating.

The idea of them stopping scared her even more. Shaking her head, she took a breath and slowly let it out. "Just go slow."

She felt Wayde's fingers circling her hole once again. He slowly pushed a finger through her opening so slow it tortured her with its gentleness. She didn't want it *that* slow. She pushed back against him for deeper penetration.

"More," she moaned.

Wayde pulled out and replaced it with two fingers, scissoring his fingers to stretch her again. "Damn, baby. You keep moving like that and I won't be able to go slow."

"I don't want slow," she admitted, whimpering at how gently he caressed her hole. "I want you inside me. I need you. Now!"

He rubbed his dick between her cheeks just as James thrust deep. She cried out and started panting. Wayde slid the tip of his cock up and down over her back hole, teasing her. When she felt the blunt, smooth tip press against her forbidden opening, she pushed back, pulling him inside her in a single thrust.

The burn took over her other senses. She screamed and grabbed at whatever she could, desperate to hold onto something. Sinking down on James, she felt Wayde pull out. She lifted, sliding up James' enormous pole,

and Wayde pumped deep inside her ass, filling her like she'd never been filled.

Each man took his turn fucking her, James thrusting as Wayde pulled out, then Wayde thrusting as James lifted her up his shaft. It was too much for her to take, yet not enough. She wanted more. She wanted them both deep inside her, filling her at the same time.

As Wayde started to push deep inside her, she sank down on James, and threw her head back with a deep moan. Being so full of cock, so pleased by two men, she could no longer move. Collapsing in a fit of rapture-induced convulsions, she begged for them to give her more. "Please! Fuck me! Both of you!"

Wayde increased his pace, and James matched it. They both piston-drove her, fucking her in unison, entering her until they were so deeply buried inside her she swore she felt them in her heart.

And she did. Dear God, she did.

Wayde slapped his lean body against her backside, jacketing his cock completely in her flesh while James lifted his hips, driving into her with his stiff cock without mercy.

"Faster," she whimpered and rocked her hips, so close to release she started to see little lights in her vision again. She dug her nails into James' chest as the first of her orgasm slammed into her, rendering her incapable of coherent thought. "Ah! Yes!"

She gave herself over to the power of her climax as it took control, overloading her senses and bringing her to tears. She rode the waves as she rode her men to their release. "Ah Jesus, Mia. I'm not going to make it. You're beautiful cunt is so fucking tight!" When James hollered and stiffened, she felt his cock engorge and shoot hot spurts of semen deep in her pussy, mixing their juices together.

She barely pulled in a breath when Wayde's orgasm had his fingers digging into her hips, his thrusts long and deep. He grunted and growled as he came, jetting his own hot life and filling her backside with his sweet cum. James reached up and flicked her clit with his thumb, throwing her into another climax just as strong as the last one.

Mia collapsed onto James, unable to catch her breath. Her body felt limp, like every bone shattered from the intensity of her orgasms. She rested her head on his shoulder and tensed when she felt Wayde pull out of her ass.

Okay, that hurt. Why would it hurt now when it obviously didn't hurt when he was slamming his dick inside her ass?

Her legs wobbled and she melted flat against James, completely sated. He wrapped his arms around her and she snuggled into him with a content sigh.

"I'll get something to wash you," Wayde offered and disappeared into the bathroom. She closed her eyes and was almost asleep, losing herself in the warmth of James chest and the sound of his pounding heart when Wayde sank down on the bed. "Come here, baby."

She heard the jealousy in his tone. Clearly he didn't like her snuggling with James. Right now she couldn't move if she tried.

When she didn't move, he gently picked her up and laid her down, her feet toward James and her face close to him. He went about the task of washing the honey from her breasts, the remainder of the Irish Cream from her navel, and all the rest of the juices she'd accumulated since arriving in the room tonight.

After he wiped himself off with another washcloth, he tossed one to James and stretched out next to her, his head at her feet.

She'd never had so many feelings coursing through her body all at once. Lust. Fear. Unbridled passion. Desperation.

Love.

How could she feel love for two men at the same time? It was a different love for each of them, but love nonetheless. With James, she felt the tenderness in his heart through his touch. With Wayde, she sensed his fervent passion for her whenever he looked at her, felt the fire boiling inside him. It scared her, intrigued her.

She knew the time would come where she'd have to make a choice. Would she choose safety over passion? A giant teddy bear or a lion? Deep down she already knew the answer, knew it was the right thing to do.

In time, she prayed he'd understand. That they'd both understand.

In time.

Chapter 16

She didn't want this night to end, not yet. They only had a few hours left before the sun came up, and with it, reality. Mia lay there staring at the ceiling, listening to the deep breaths of her men as both lay on either side of her, their heads opposite hers.

Without a thought, she reached over and felt for Wayde. Not trying, but succeeding anyway, her fingers circled around his penis. He stirred and scooted closer.

"Apparently you aren't tired?" he asked and reached over, resting his hand on her thigh and slowly inching it up toward the vee between her legs.

"Shh," she said. "You'll wake James."

"Too late," James stated. "What are you two up to?"

"Nothing," Mia lied and reached for him, fisting his penis in her other hand. Wayde had already started to harden in her hand. When James' large cock started to grow, she smiled. Holding her two men in her hands, she never felt more in control.

She started to stroke them at the same time. James hand came over and smoothed up her thigh. Wayde's hand inched higher on her other thigh. They reached the lips of her pussy at the same time and both stilled. The entire world stopped for all of them as the two men paused. She waited to see what they'd do. Would Wayde push James away? Would James be willing to step back if Wayde ordered him to?

After their emotional kiss, Mia felt a connection to James and knew she wouldn't be able to walk away from him after this ended. She wouldn't be able to walk away from Wayde, either. The past twenty-four hours had changed everything. She'd fallen in love with Wayde this morning at his apartment, and now she'd fallen in love with James tonight in this room.

She held her breath as she waited to see what the men did next. Wayde

moved first by spreading her already drenched pussy lips and ran his finger up and down her inner folds. James moved her lip aside on his side and did the same motion.

"Top or bottom?" James asked. Mia was about to protest, knowing she wasn't strong enough for another go around like that, when Wayde spoke up.

"Top. You fuck her hole, I'll finger her clit."

Oh. That's what he meant. She could deal with that.

Squeezing their cocks, she stroked and caressed them until they were both like steel rods in her hands. Wayde's fingers swirled around her swollen, tender clit, warming her entire body. James thrust his thick finger deep into her entrance, pulled it out and thrust two in. She rocked her hips against the pressure of Wayde's fingers. James fell into her rhythm and fucked her with his fingers in perfect motion.

She stroked faster, matching their strokes on her. James moaned and moved his hips back and forth, and she stroked faster. Wayde groaned and flicked her clit faster and she knew they were all close.

They brought her higher, tighter. The coil demanding release surrounded her womb, squeezing her entire body. She clenched her hands and stroked faster.

"Oh Jesus, Mia." James fucked his fingers into her cunt faster. Faster. Deeper. Wayde flicked her and she jerked. "I'm coming. Jesus Fuck! I'm coming!"

"Fuck me!" Wayde hollered and gave her the final flick she needed to give into her pleasure, her orgasm ripping through her. James and Wayde both came with her, and all three cried out in unison.

She rocked and rocked against Wayde's fingers, against James' fingers. She stroked them until they both fell to semi-hard, their life spent and along with it their energy.

"I think," Mia finally said after her soul floated back to her body, "that we just may end up putting one or all of us in comas if we don't learn to control ourselves."

"I've spent all of my life in complete and miserable control," James countered. "For one of the first times ever I'm not in complete control and I like it." He rolled over and propped up on his elbow. "How about you, Steel? Do you have a problem with our current situation?"

Mia lifted her head enough to watch Wayde cross his hands behind his

head and stare up at the ceiling. His smoky eyes clouded over as his expression stilled, hardened. He didn't answer, and he didn't have to.

* * * *

"Mia? You awake?" Wayde asked as he studied a heart-shaped stain on the ceiling. He couldn't sleep, not that he would at The Emerald Club. Until he found Nelson's killer and those responsible for the disappearance of all those women, he wouldn't have a good night's sleep. Even curled up next to Mia, buried in her very essence, the guilt of him lying here fucking around, *literally*, ate at him. What if his director barged into the room right now, raided The Emerald Club. He grimaced at the thought.

She didn't answer, and judging by her deep breaths, she wasn't going to. He let out a heavy sigh and looked for another stain to stare at. His fingers tightened together as he settled in for another sleepless night. But like hell was he going to leave her here alone with Pearce. The man was too good looking, and too damn charming. After the way he kissed Mia, and the way she responded to his kiss, he didn't dare leave the two of them alone.

What happened to the 'no kissing' rule? He wanted to throw Mia off Pearce, demand the son-of-a-bitch tell him just what the hell he thought he was doing kissing her like that when he insisted on Wayde not her kissing their first night together.

He hated being jealous. He *fucking* hated it. He didn't have any rights to Mia. If she wanted to kiss Pearce, she had every right. It didn't stop his gut from clenching at the sight, or lessen his want to tear Pearce's fucking dick off and beat him with it.

Trouble was, he liked Pearce. He actually liked the guy, which said something. Wayde didn't like too many people, and didn't even trust half of those he liked. Yet he liked *and* trusted Pearce. Goddamn it.

Wayde was here to do a job, not lust after the sweet siren lying next to him, and certainly not to share her with another man. Another sigh dragged from his lungs, and he growled in the back of his throat.

"What's eating you, Steel?"

Christ. He really didn't feel like opening up to Pearce right now. He'd

almost made that mistake tonight before Mia's perfectly timed knock on the door slammed into his senses, reminding him the reason why they were doing this. His gaze moved back to the first stain. "Nothing."

This time Pearce sighed. He sat up and dressed, walked over to the table and took a seat. Rubbing his eyes, he sighed again and stared out the window into the darkness of the Seattle night.

If he didn't know any better, he'd say something weighed on Pearce's mind as heavily as Wayde's. He eased out of the bed, careful not to wake his sleeping angel, and threw on his clothes. After pulling the comforter up and tucking it around Mia, he joined Pearce at the table.

Pearce kept his gaze out the windows as he spoke. "Earlier, before Mia joined us, you were about to tell me why you were after the owner."

Shit. He didn't want to go into it again. "Pearce—"

"I need to know why."

"I'm not going to tell you that."

"So you are after him?"

Goddamn the perceptive son-of-a-bitch. "Drop it."

Pearce hardened his jaw, but kept his gaze facing the window, seemingly staring at the lights on the Space Needle. "I know who you really are." He turned and met his eyes. "Wayde Davis, Special Agent for the SBI."

Son-of-a-fucking-bitch. He glanced back at Mia, then at the contents around the bed. He could use the lamp to bash Pearce over the head if he tried to overpower him. If Guy barged into the room, Wayde would get a two-for-one deal.

"Your secret is safe with me," Pearce pointed out and brought his gaze back out the window. His expression changed, saddened. It baffled the hell out of Wayde. Why would the fact he's an agent have Pearce depressed? It wasn't like he was there to bust him.

He had a much bigger fish to fry. "You know the owner, don't you?"

"Yes."

Wayde's heart rate picked up. He jerked a glance to the man who may possibly hold the key to the owner, the man Wayde had been after for close to a year. "Who is he? Give me a name."

Pearce promptly tightened his lips. His tone was low, serious. "If you want me to give you the name, knowing full and well you may end up

arresting him before this time tomorrow, I need a little something in return."

Wayde looked at him. Knowing he wasn't in any position to bargain against Pearce, he nodded tersely. "What do you want?"

"Honesty."

Sighing deeply, hating this assignment now, he knew he needed to finally give Pearce the truth. "Fine. You already know my name. You already know I'm a special agent with the SBI. What you don't know is that I've been undercover at The Emerald Club for nine months."

Pearce nodded in understanding. "Busting the prostitution ring?"

"That, and the wave of missing women who's last appearance all seem to be at the club scene."

That caught his attention. He furrowed his brow as he looked back up at Wayde. "Missing? What do you mean?"

"Missing. As it disappeared."

"From this club?"

Wayde nodded. "From this club and others."

"Oh," Pearce answered and turned back to the window. Goddamn his resolve. "If you think those missing women are here in this room, then you aren't that good of an agent, special or not."

Wayde narrowed his eyes, stared at him point blank, heat and anger bubbling inside him. "What are you playing at?"

"Forgive me, but I've only seen you with your eyes on Mia."

"Hey," he defended, pissed as hell Pearce questioned his methods. It didn't matter how much the truth in his statement pierced into Wayde's armor. "I'm protecting her."

"Don't bullshit me," Pearce fired back, equally as pissed. "You're *fucking* her. You aren't even *using* protection."

Before Wayde realized what he'd done, he pulled back and slammed his fist into Pearce's lip, knocking him out of his chair and left him sprawled out on the ground. Wayde shook out his hand, leveling his gaze on him as Pearce licked the blood from his rapidly swelling lip. "Don't you judge me. Don't you *dare* fucking judge me, Pearce. I'm busting my ass to find who's behind this."

Even in his position, Pearce didn't back down. Wayde ignored the admiration he felt for him. "Then get an *agent* on the inside, a female who could get behind the scenes. Stop using Mia to do your dirty work."

"We had someone on the inside," he rasped harshly, bitterness enveloping his tone. Mia whimpered in her sleep and stirred. Not wanting her to see them fighting over her, he growled as he lowered his voice. "My partner. Somehow they figured her as an agent. The bastards killed her, mutilated her body and threw her in the dumpster behind the club like she was everyday trash. Like she wasn't even human." He felt the burn in his eyes as the damn emotions tried to surface. Wayde refused to break, even now. Still, he turned away so Pearce wouldn't pick up on this sign of weakness.

"Who would do that?" Pearce whispered, clearly shocked at the news.

"The man you're trying to protect," he answered with hostility dripping from his words. Wayde casually leaned forward in the chair. He had zip ties in his back pocket since his cuffs would have screamed agent. His weapon was locked in the glove box of his SUV, but that didn't worry him. He knew he'd be able to overtake Pearce if it came to that.

Holy Christ, he didn't want it to come to that. The thought that this man, his friend and partner with Mia, could have anything to do with the missing women made his entire body tense, left his gut churning.

"It isn't what you think, Wayde."

Jesus, he hoped not. "Then tell me so I can understand."

Pearce sighed heavily. "I've invested a great deal of money in this club."

Ah shit. Exactly what Wayde didn't want him to say, yet knew he would. Every fiber of his being flinched at the news. Disappointment raced through his veins, settling into his gut. "*You're* the owner?"

Closing his eyes, Pearce shook his head. "Not on paper."

"Yeah," Wayde snapped, gritting his teeth. "Like that makes a fucking difference at this point."

"But you don't understand. If you just let me explain—"

"That's enough," he cut in and reached behind him to pull out the zip ties. He held them up and nodded at Pearce. "Hold out your hands."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm taking your ass in. James Pearce, you're under arrest." Pearce laughed. The son-of-a-bitch actually started to laugh, which sent Wayde's blood pressure skyward. "Something funny?"

"That's the first time I've ever heard you call me by my first name." He held his arms out and waited. Wayde reached over and grabbed his wrists.

And hesitated.

Goddamn it. He didn't want to do this. His gut pinched and churned. He'd made hundreds of arrests and never had any issues with it. Sure, some of them had been tougher than others. The ten-year-old who shot his uncle for molesting his little sister was the toughest arrest he'd ever done.

Until now.

Pearce didn't look away. No, damn it. He just sat there, watching Wayde, waiting to see what he'd do. When Wayde didn't wrap the zip ties around his wrists, Pearce frowned. "What are you waiting for?"

What *was* he waiting for? He had every right to drag his ass in, if for no other reason than at least to hold him for questioning. It would make the press happy they finally had a suspect to focus on instead of blaming the SBI for their lack of results.

Wayde brought the zip ties up and wrapped them around Pearce's wrists. Why wouldn't the son-of-a-bitch say something? His silence made Wayde feel even more like a pile of shit for arresting him. When the silence became too much, Wayde tensed and riveted his eyes to Pearce. "Why won't you say anything?"

Pearce let out a long sigh as his expression turned somber. "Because I have the right to remain silent."

Great. Now he felt even worse. Regret, dark and thick like oil, knotted in his chest. "Goddamn it, Pearce."

"What do you expect me to say? Thank you for arresting me? I appreciate you exposing me, as well as everyone in not only this club but all the others I have connections to?"

"Someone has to get busted for this."

"I understand."

Wayde zipped the ties tight to his wrists and then to each other. Pearce lowered his hands and, with them, his shoulders. He gave a slight shake of his head. Wayde read the disappointment in his body language.

Tell me about it.

"What?" Wayde wanted to pull his tongue out and force him to speak. "What the fuck am I supposed to do? I'm an agent. I'm the goddamn good guy here." So why then did he feel like the bad guy?

He gave a hollow laugh. "I guess that makes *me* the bad guy." His gaze darted over to Mia, still sleeping soundly on the bed, curled into a little ball.

"What about her? What are you going to say to her when she wakes up and sees that you put me behind bars instead of the obvious alternative?"

Wayde shook his head, fighting against the lift in the gloom coiling in his stomach. "I'm not just letting you walk."

"I'm not asking you to. I have money. A lot of money. Let me help."

"I know you aren't stupid, Pearce. Bribing me is—"

"*Not* what I'm doing," Pearce finished for him. "I can help. I'll find the man or men responsible for the missing women. I'll find whoever killed your partner. I'll hire as many people as it takes."

"Yeah? And what do you get out of this?"

He held up his zip tied wrists. "I'll give you the owner," Pearce offered in a low voice. "The *real* owner. If he has anything to do with the disappearances of those women, I'll hand you his ass on a platter. Just please, don't expose me. I could lose everything."

Wayde tried to ignore the way his heart raced at the thought of finally finding the owner and shutting the whole club down, hauling his ass in for the death of Nelson and the disappearance of all those women. "Is that all? Or is there something else you want?"

Pearce leaned back in his chair, swallowed hard. Why did Wayde have a sneaking feeling he wasn't going to like what Pearce wanted in return? "Mia."

Not just no, but *fuck* no. The world slowed. Silence settled between them. His blood started to boil as the rage filled his veins. He couldn't give up the one good thing that had finally happened to him, even if it meant taking down the man responsible for Nelson's murder. He just couldn't.

What kind of agent did that make him? Personal gain over public safety? Or the other way around?

Jesus Christ, talk about a sucker punch. If he *didn't* agree to Pearce's deal, he'd lose the one chance he had at taking down the owner. If he *did*, he'd lose Mia.

Duty sucked. Damn Pearce for forcing this decision on him.

And damn him for choosing one over the other.

Chapter 17

"Virgil Vincent."

Wayde paused, the knife resting on the zip tie. James twisted his wrists, anxious to be free of the restraints. Sure, he'd been restrained before, but it had always been sexual, and never by an agent. Well, at least not by a male agent.

"And where can I find Virgil?" He sliced through the zip ties and set the knife back on the table. His steely eyes rested on James as he waited for the answer. The storm brewing in those smoky orbs signaled danger. He didn't know whether Wayde directed that rage at him, or the owner. Both, maybe?

Who could blame him? James didn't know what the hell he was thinking asking Wayde to make a choice like that. He didn't want to be tied down to a single woman, even if that woman had mesmerizing green eyes and the sweetest pussy he'd ever tasted.

In his defense, he honestly didn't think Wayde would choose his duty over his destiny. He thought, by using Mia as the bargaining tool, no way would Wayde agree to it. What kind of friend would force that choice on someone? And what kind of man would throw his happiness away like that, just to get his hands on a man who may not even be responsible for the disappearance of those women?

James rested his weary gaze on Wayde. This had to be tearing him apart. The man loved Mia. Clearly. Completely. Unconditionally. She felt the same. He'd bet everything in his Swiss bank account on it. So why would he choose duty over love?

The answer hit him so hard it almost knocked him right out of his chair. Of course! Wayde surrendered everything to Mia, in the belief she'd come back to him no matter what temptations James could offer her.

He had to admire the man's blind faith. It had to be one of the stupidest

things he'd ever witnessed. But he couldn't deny the respect and admiration he felt for Wayde. The man's faith gave him faith.

"Let me make a call."

Wayde chuckled without humor. His steely eyes hardened as he studied the floor. "I want to trust you, Pearce. I really do."

"Then why don't you?"

Another harsh laugh escaped his unyielding, expressionless face. He brought his gaze up. "You said so yourself. You're the bad guy. Agents who trust the wrong guy end up in the ground. Or a dumpster."

James stared at him, giving him a look of determination and conviction he felt clear to his soul. "I'm sorry about your partner, Wayde. I won't stop until I find out who did it."

Wayde offered him a disbelieving, patronizing smile. "Thanks, but no thanks. Whoever killed my partner is out there, taking women and doing God only knows what. Mia is already risking her life asking around backstage. If you start sniffing around, that would be one more life on my conscience. I'm having a hard enough time keeping Mia safe."

"Wayde," Pearce stated in a low voice.

"No," he stopped him. "You don't understand. Mia's life is in danger every damn day she steps foot in this club. Hell, every goddamn *day*. Period. My partner is dead because of this shit, and Mia may be next."

"Enough," Pearce tried to cut him off.

"She thinks her sister is still alive, Pearce." Wayde shook his head and lowered his eyes as he folded his hands in front of him. "I know in my gut she isn't, but I'm too much of a chicken shit to tell her."

"Stop." Pearce put his hand up.

Wayde shook his head, ignoring Pearce's protests. "I have to find whoever is taking these women before Mia is next and ends up like her sister. I—I don't think I could take it if she became a statistic."

"Jesus Christ, Wayde." Pearce pinched his lips and widened his eyes at him. When Wayde narrowed his in return, shaking his head that he didn't understand Pearce's objection, Pearce flicked his gaze over Wayde's shoulder, toward the bed.

Wayde whipped around and muttered, "Oh shit."

Mia sat there staring at him, the color completely gone from her pretty face, stark and vivid fear quivering in her wide eyes.

* * * *

Mia stretched as she opened her eyes. It felt so good to finally have a full night's sleep. Hold it. Sitting up, she blinked and looked around the room. A dark wood dresser with a monstrous mirror rested up against the wall housing the door. The other three walls weren't walls at all, but windows. Glancing down, she pulled up the unfamiliar gold down comforter and frowned as panic started to swell inside her.

Where in the hell was she? Reality slowly crept back into her brain, reminding her why her eyes felt swollen and itchy. After crying her eyes out over Wayde lying to her about his partner, her sister, and God only knew what else, she'd finally grabbed on the only article of clothing she'd entered the room in and left with James.

Throwing the covers off, she jumped out of the larger-than-life bed and smacked her bare feet on shiny hardwood floors. Wayde's apartment had hardwood floors, but not like this. Besides, this room had to be as big as Wayde's entire living room. And three out of four walls of his bedroom weren't windows overlooking a beautiful view of the water.

That only left one other man in her life who'd want to take her home.

"James?" she called out. No answer. Searching the room for something to cover her in her tiny little white nightie she had on last night, she found a giant blue terrycloth robe in the walk-in closet next to the adjoining bathroom and slipped it on.

She peeked into the bathroom, noticed it was bigger than the entire kitchen in her tiny house. Two sinks, too. A luxury her and Aimee didn't have.

Aimee.

The news Wayde delivered about him believing her sister was already dead and how his partner died slammed back into her brain, and she swayed. The dark pain of his betrayal rooted itself deep in her heart. He never did believe Aimee was still alive. He used her own naïve, desperate belief against her. The cold, callus son-of-a-bitch. "James?"

"Mia?"

She whipped around to the door and almost ran over to him. Almost. Wayne stood there in a dark shirt and jeans, looking so damn good it tore at the pieces he left of her heart. She swallowed down the burning tears threatening to surface, the painful pull in her chest at the sight of him. "What do you want?"

"Is everything okay? I heard you calling."

Huffing, she folded her arms under her breasts and turned away from him. No, everything wasn't okay. It was the exact opposite of okay, as if he didn't already know that. "Not for you."

"Baby, please. This isn't easy for me, either."

"Oh yeah," she replied, her tone dripping with sarcasm. "I can see this is incredibly hard on you."

"Mia, don't take this out on him."

She whipped around to see James standing in the doorway of the bathroom, freshly showered. His playful blond hair had already dried and started to fall into those incredibly blue eyes.

Unbelievable. They were ganging up on her. Again. Her anger raged to the surface and she riveted her gaze on him. "Don't tell me you're in on this, too."

"Please listen to him. I don't want you two fighting." He pleaded at her with his eyes. If she didn't already have a soft spot for those eyes, she would have told him to go to Hell.

She thrust out her chin and danced from foot to foot, deliberating her options. So far it didn't look good for her. She could either plow down a man who'd never been anything but wonderful to her, or go up against a man who lied to her and broke her heart, and would no doubt take her down without a second thought.

"Listen to me," Wayne said gently and stepped into the room. She refused to allow the rich sound of his baritone affect her. It didn't. Not in the least. "I didn't tell you about my partner because I didn't want you to think Aimee may have suffered the same fate."

"Why try to hide it?" she snarled. "You already think my sister is dead. Why bother lying to me?"

He took another careful step toward her. "I was only trying to protect you, baby."

"Only trying to use me is more like it," she muttered, not bothering to

hide the hurt and bitterness in her voice. God, this was killing her. *He* was killing her. "You got what you wanted. I worked your case for you, blindly believing you when you said you wouldn't stop until you found Aimee. Have you even uttered one word of truth since I first met you?"

Her words landed on him, hurt him. She saw the pain they inflicted in his darkening eyes. He looked down, but didn't deny a damn word she said. Beaten, she shook her head and turned from him.

"Baby," he said softly. God, just the way he said that word drove steel daggers into every nerve. She closed her eyes, waited. *Tell me it'll be okay. That you're sorry.* She needed to hear some sort of apology from him, some sign of regret at what he'd done. Instead, his next words shattered what was left of her heart. "We still need to find the man or men who took your sister and those other women."

A single tear rolled down her cheek and she angrily wiped it away. Of course he'd say something about the job. It was always the job. Who cares what he did, or what he was doing to her now. None of that mattered. Only the job mattered to this man.

Her resolve broke and the rage that had been clouded by her grief boiled over. "Haven't you had your fun? Did you get enough out of me to make your case? Or do you n-need me to l-lie on my b-back and o-open my l-legs—"

"Mia," James warned, cutting her off. Good thing. She couldn't even attempt to go on, the epiphany of what she'd done sinking in, sinking her entire being. Just as she'd feared, everything she'd done under her cover as a courtesan was for nothing. "That's not fair. You have no idea what he's gone through."

She turned on him, the hurt and anger mixing together. It didn't matter who she lashed out at, just as long as she lashed out. "How can you defend him? He lied to me! He's been using me! Using both of us!"

Wayde's growl caught in her ears. "I've been protecting you, damn it!"

Turning her venom on the man she wanted to chew up and spit out, she released all the hurt inside her. "Protecting me? You've been fucking me, Wayde! And in turn, you fucked yourself."

"Baby—"

"Don't you dare," she bit at him. "After what you've done, you'll never get to call me baby again, you son-of-a-bitch."

She tried not to notice how her words cut into him. His shoulders visibly sank. "I'm sorry you feel that way. I was only doing what I thought was right."

There it was. He said sorry. And damn if those words didn't spin around in her brain, confusing her. She wanted to be pissed, but the words and the way he'd said them affected her. Still, she had to stay angry. She just had to.

"Hah!" She folded her arms in front of her and tried to spin away from each of them. After dancing back and forth, she finally turned toward the windows. "You wouldn't know the right thing if it bit you on your tight ass."

"Mia," James started in again.

Looking at him, she eyed the wound on his lip. "He beat you up!"

"One punch." James brought his finger up in illustration.

"And I said I was sorry," Wayde added.

"I deserved it," James said. They exchanged looks and both nodded in agreement.

"Shut up! Both of you!" Mia grabbed her head, tried to make sense of it all. Knowing she'd never be able to sort it all out, she turned to Wayde and rested her gaze on him. Just looking at him hurt clear to her core.

His eyes pleaded with her. His beautiful soul shined in those dark orbs, connecting with hers through their eye contact. She loved him, loved him more than anything. Why did love have to hurt so much?

Despite her pain, she couldn't deny the fact he'd sacrificed so much for her. Her heart warmed to the thought of him touching her, kissing her pain away. Damn it.

Damn her betraying emotions. Those eyes, those amazing smoky eyes penetrated her senses, weakened her defenses. "What else haven't you told me, Wayde?"

Wayde drew in a deep breath and held it. When he let it out, she saw his carefully guarded defenses cloud his eyes, and knew he didn't plan to tell her anymore. That hurt more than anything else, the fact he didn't trust her enough to tell her the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

So help him God.

Turning to James, she asked, "Do you have any clothes I can borrow to get home?"

Wayde tensed. "You are not going to your house."

"Watch me," she fired back, her eyes burning as she glared at him.

"I took the luxury of having all your possessions delivered to Wayde's building," James answered.

Mia dropped her jaw and looked at him incredulously. "You *what*? You had no right. Why would you—"

"There are a few outfits in the closet inside the bathroom," James interjected, cutting off her tirade once more. "After last night, I didn't know what you'd be in the mood for."

"Aside from tearing me apart," Wayde stated.

"You don't need an outfit for that," James added, bemused.

Mia doubled her fists and shook them in the air as she screamed at her... *What*? She didn't even know what to call them. Her boyfriends, as in plural? Lovers? This was all so wrong. As if she didn't already have enough to freak out about, her conscience decided to suddenly take a trip on the righteous side. "I can't do this. I need to go."

"Take a shower, baby." Wayde took another careful step toward her. "You'll feel better."

She glared at him. Folding her arms, she huffed. "I don't think so."

"It has two showerheads," James offered as if that little tidbit would somehow make a shit bit of difference. "One above your head and one..." He paused and dropped his gaze to the vee between her legs. "Below."

Okay, that shouldn't have her intrigued, not after the night she'd had, and definitely not in the mood she was in. Still, a little shower below, relaxing her, massaging her, just might be what she needed. Wayde had already showed her the calming, tranquil effects of an orgasm. Heat smacked her cheeks.

Mia stole a glance at Wayde and narrowed her eyes at him when she saw him grin wickedly. "I know exactly what you need," he stated.

"No," she refused and put her hands out as he approached.

"You need to relax." Those hard-muscled legs ate up the distance between them. That hunger glittering in those steely gray eyes had her own juices starting to pool. Damn it.

"No, I don't."

"You are rather uptight right now, Mia." James leaned against the doorframe leading to the bathroom, a sinful gleam in his eye.

"You stay out of this," she threw back.

"And I know exactly what you need to relax." Wayde grabbed her

around the waist and pulled her against him. She knew she should at least try to struggle, but the feel of his ripped body against hers had her panting in anticipation.

"Wayde, don't you dare." She was pissed, damn it. And she wanted to stay that way. Even so, she felt her guard crumble as she looked up in those dark eyes.

"Start the shower, Pearce."

"You got it." James disappeared inside the bathroom. She heard the start of the water spray and stiffened. If they got her into the shower, started exploring her body with their hands, their mouths, or anything else, she would be a goner.

"Stop it," she protested, though without an ounce of conviction. When his lips came down onto her neck, heating her skin wherever he feathered his scorching kisses, she shuddered and went limp in his arms. "S-Stop."

He nipped at her flesh, scraping his teeth across her shoulder. She whimpered at the way it sent jolts of sexually charged surges straight to her wet pussy.

"Are you two coming?" James sounded from somewhere in the bathroom.

"Not yet," Wayde rasped in her ear as he feasted on her tender spot. "But soon."

"Wayde," she whispered. "Damn it. You don't play fair."

"Relax, baby. I know your body." He ran his finger up from the side of her hip to her ribcage. Untying the robe, he slid it off her shoulders and dropped it to the floor. He then cupped one of her breasts through the silky fabric of her nightie and pinched her already hard nipple. "I know what your body needs right now."

"N-No," she tried to protest, but it came out more as a plea for him to do the exact opposite. "I want to stay mad at you."

He easily walked her toward the door leading to the bathroom. One hand held her chin so he had free range on her neck, while the other hand flattened out on her tummy and started to move down. He bunched the fabric of her nightie up to expose her now drenched pussy. When his fingers dipped into her curls, parted her lips and dove straight for her clit, her legs were powerless to do anything other than move as Wayde directed them. She felt like a puppet, allowing him to lead her around by an invisible string

he tightened around her with every flick of her clit.

"You need to come," Wayde explained, completely ignoring her pathetic attempts at protesting. "Let us relax you."

"I don't want to relax. Ah!" Her knees buckled when he pinched her clit between his fingers. "And I don't need either of you to... Ah!" He pinched her again. "Stop that!"

"What? This?" He pinched her again and again she buckled. "Hmm. It seems you're having trouble standing, baby. Maybe I'll just have to prop you up with something."

That sounded so wicked. She knew she shouldn't be enjoying this, this forced foreplay. But oh, how she was. Her body responded to the verbal titillation by completely soaking her cunt, tingling her entry to welcome her men to play.

Damn her body for betraying her like this. She wanted more. At the thought of having them both bring her to climax under duress, even if her duress would last a second at best, she regained some sense of control and stood under her own power. Pushing away from him, she spiked her brow. "The hell you say."

Lust darkened the hunger in his eyes, thickened his tone. "Take off your clothes, Mia."

"Make me."

His sexy lips curled slightly, twitching at her words, her tone of defiance. They'd never played the *Me Tarzan You Jane* before, and she never thought she'd be into that sort of thing, but she sure as hell was now. She wanted to be dominated, dominated by both her men. She needed it more than she needed her next breath.

Wayde licked his lips and held his lower lip between his teeth. That playful glint in his eyes sparkled mischievously and she knew he was only moments away from pouncing like a lion about to attack his prey.

"Yes," James hissed from inside the shower. He opened the enormous glass door and poked his head out. "Let's make her." The look of ardent desire flooding his handsome eyes caused her breath to hitch.

Mia took a step back, knowing the movement would trigger Wayde's attack. She was right. Screaming, she kicked and punched as he grabbed her and literally ripped her nightie from her frame.

Oh God, that was erotic. She bit her lip to stop a throaty moan from

escaping.

"Get in the shower," James ordered. Instead of following their instructions—she was not going to make this easy on them—she turned and took a step in the opposite direction.

"I'm not just some submissive woman you two can order around," she explained, trying to make sense of why her body responded so eagerly to the thought of them both dominating her. Maybe if she fought the dark and primal heat swirling inside her womb, she'd convince herself.

"Don't make me ask again," James said evenly. When she looked at him, it gave Wayde the edge to pick her up and set her inside the enormous shower with James. She fought and tried to step back out, but James wrapped his arms around her and held her in place. The sprays of water felt cold against her bare skin as they bounced off James and landed on her, running down her front and washing her with goose bumps, hardening her nipples more.

He stepped aside and the full spray of the steaming water beat down on her, warming her. She stopped struggling and let out a sigh. "Thank you."

"You looked cold," he explained.

She felt another hard body behind her and whipped around. Wayde stood there, gloriously naked, his sun-kissed bronze skin beautiful as the water built up and cascaded down his well-defined frame. "Are you through fighting us?"

"I haven't even started," she countered. When he arched his ebony brow at her, she saw that shimmer in his eyes and wondered just what he planned to do to her. So many ideas whirled around in her brain she couldn't make sense of a single one.

Wayde nodded to James behind her and he jerked her against his chest, slamming her slippery body against his. The sprays of water turned icy cold again as he blocked her from receiving the heat from the showerhead. The goose bumps returned with a vengeance.

"I'm c-cold."

"Not for long," Wayde stated and grabbed the other showerhead off the wall behind him. A flexible metal hose connected it to the wall. He twisted the water on and immediately Mia felt the warmth of the spray as he ran it back and forth over her breasts. "Better?"

"I'm still not giving in to you two."

Wayde's chuckle rumbled in the air. James' chuckle joined his. Their tone sent a chill washing up her spine and it had nothing to do with the temperature of the water. "We'll see about that," Wayde said.

He brought the showerhead down to her feet, tickling the tops with the spray. She fought not to laugh, not to enjoy it. He then moved the showerhead lazily up her legs. When he reached the crux between her legs, she slammed her knees together.

"Open your legs, Mia." Wayde ordered.

"No," she bit back, enjoying the hell out of this erotic foreplay.

"Pearce, open her legs."

To her surprise and delicious shock James used his own legs to open hers. She felt his erection pressing up against the small of her back and squirmed, not knowing whether she wanted to get away from it or closer to it.

"I'm not giving in," she reminded them and stubbornly thrust out her chin. When Wayde directed the showerhead up and sprayed her face, she screamed out in alarm. "What the—"

"Shush." James buried his face into her neck and slowly rocked his hips, rubbing his cock against her. "Just relax."

"Like hell I will." Now she was getting mad. Not only were neither of them listening to her, Wayde sprayed her in the face again. "Damn it Wa—" She coughed when he directed the third spray right into her mouth.

"You wouldn't happen to have a gag, would you?" Wayde asked James.

"Several, actually."

"No wa—" Damn it! Another direct hit right in the mouth.

"Unless you want to be sprayed again, or gagged, I'd suggest you stop protesting." Wayde really got into this *Tarzan* role. And she liked it.

"You will only be allowed to make noises as a result of what we do to you," James added. "No more protests. Is that understood?"

Ah Jesus, this was so naughty and out of her control. She loved it. Still, she wouldn't give into them so easily, whipping around she buried her face in James' chest. Let's see him spray her now. "Fuck you both. I'll say what I want when I wa—" Wayde had the showerhead between her legs and sprayed up, catching not only her mouth but forcing the water up her nose. She coughed.

Spinning around, she landed a heated glare on the man in control of the

showerhead. He arched his brow in challenge and even lifted the showerhead to really show her who was boss. "Again?"

"Is that the best you can do?" She challenged him right back.

The slap on her rear forced a gasp out of her. "Behave," James said, as if that explained why he just spanked her.

"Or what?"

"Or I spank you again."

"Do it again and I'll scream."

James laughed thickly. "Promise?"

Okay, not only did that scare her a little, but it sent shivers of erotic pulses straight to her pussy, which scared her more. She knew she should fight them harder, but this fighting-as-foreplay had her so turned on she really was ready to give in to them.

She jerked when he grabbed her to force her back against him. "Mia," Pearce warned. "I'm not kidding. Behave, or I'll spank your sweet little ass."

"Try it," she whispered, so excited she almost came right there when his hand came down and delivered a stinging slap against her rear. Dear Jesus that felt good. It shouldn't feel that good, should it? Being spanked was supposed to be a punishment, not a sexually charged action. "Damn you, James!"

She screamed when the spray from the showerhead Wayne had on her breasts turned icy cold. Her nipples puckered painfully and she gasped at the freezing temperature. She pushed back against James to get away from the cold, even tried to crawl up his frame and stiffened when she realized she had nowhere to go, and could do nothing but take her punishment.

This didn't feel nearly as good as the spanking.

The water again turned warm and finally loosened her muscles, left her panting. It felt like she'd just run uphill while underwater. "Wh-Why did you do t-that?"

"Spraying your face didn't shut you up," Wayne explained. "And I seriously doubt a gag would work, and it wouldn't nearly be as much fun. I figured the cold water would not only keep you quiet, it would put you back in position."

Oh, he was so going to pay for this. They both were.

"Are you ready to relax now?" James held her tightly against him, his enormous cock harder than she'd ever remembered feeling it. She wanted it

inside her, filling her completely.

She nodded, not trusting her voice.

Wayde directed the warm spray on her cunt. It massaged against her lips and felt amazing. She sighed and leaned back against James. "Hand me the soap, Pearce. It's time to lather her up."

Oh yes. Wayde ran the soap over her tummy, caressed her breasts and nipples with the slippery little bar. Once he had her front completely covered in soap, he rubbed the bar between her legs, lathering up her already slippery lips. His fingers dipped between her lips and mixed the soap with her own juices.

James had another bar and slid it up and down her lower back. He ran his fingers between her cheeks, thoroughly slicking her up for whatever he had planned.

The way Wayde kept flicking her clit with his thumb had her knees wobbling. She kept losing her footing and slipping down. Because both her and James were covered in slippery soap, he couldn't keep her still.

"Hold her up," Wayde ordered.

"I'm trying. She's so slick."

Wayde stabbed a finger deep inside her and she cried out. "Oh yeah. She is very slick. Here." He handed James the showerhead and turned Mia so her back was to him. "I'll hold her up."

Before Mia blinked her eyes open, Wayde picked her up and thrust his rigid cock deep inside her quivering pussy. She cried out from the shock and pleasure of his deep invasion. "Oh Wayde!"

"Use the showerhead," he told James. "Make her come. That's what she needs."

The spray hit her lips and she sucked in a breath. "Spread your lips for me, Mia." She was helpless to do anything but obey and reached down, spreading her lips wide open for him. The spray massaged directly on her clit and she threw her head back.

Wayde still hadn't moved. He kept her in place with his hard cock skewering her, but didn't pump, glide, slide. *Anything*. And she wanted him to. She desperately needed him to fuck her hard and fast.

"Move inside me," she pleaded.

"I will."

"What are you waiting for?"

"I want to feel you come. You get so fucking tight, baby. And, dear God, I'm so close as it is."

He had to go and say something like that. The water beat down on her clit, vibrating her, tightening her nub of nerves. The drive for her to meet her release had her rocking against the stream, moving Wayde in and out of her.

It started deep inside her womb, making everything fade as her focus centered on the feeling growing inside her. Pleasure, ardent and dark as midnight, consumed her as she raced toward her release.

"Fuck, Mia!" Wayde jerked and pumped into her, exploding inside her like a fountain. "Jesus God. I feel you squeezing me... I feel every inch of your pussy around me, baby."

Her vagina spasmed as her climax built, tightening within her. She needed it to break, to release her from this sweet, erotic torture. Wayde pulled out and turned her around so she now faced him, her back to James. She cried out in protest. She was so close.

The smooth, huge tip of James' cock pressed against her opening, gliding inside and filling her with his engorged flesh. Wayde directed the spray on her clit, opening her lips with his hand. Good thing, too. She had to hold onto the walls as James thrust into her, hard, slamming so deep inside her she screamed from the intensity of it. He hit nerves she didn't even know she had.

He drove hard, unrelenting, and the sensation sent Mia into a fit of convulsions as her orgasm crashed down on her, setting her on fire, burning her where she stood. Her soul escaped her body and she clawed at the walls to grab onto something. Finding nothing, she fell forward into Wayde's arms and dug her nails into his chest.

The orgasm continued to rip through her as James plunged hard, driving him toward his own climax. She wanted to cry but no sound emerged. Instead she bit down on her lower lip and tasted blood. Grabbing Wayde's shoulders, she held on tight as James buried his enormous cock deep inside her. The pain felt so good, it confused her, scared her. He slammed into her cunt with one final thrust and hollered in his own release.

She held onto Wayde for dear life. Her soul still hadn't returned to her body and after the way James just fucked her, she didn't think she'd be able to walk. Panting, unable to focus, she stood there and waited for the rotation of the earth to start once again.

"I—" James's voice was thick. He withdrew and brought his hand up to her shoulder. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

Hell yes, he hurt her. But it was a good hurt, a hurt that had the walls of her pussy quivering in the aftermath. "I'll be fine."

Wayde's arms came up and enveloped her, pulling her closer. She really did feel like crying, but it had nothing to do with the pain from James pumping his cock so deeply inside her, or from their fight earlier. Emotions crushed her chest, deep seeded emotions that had her so confused she wanted to scream.

She was in love. Not just in love. She was in love with two men.

Chapter 18

"You sure you want to do this?" Wayde asked after folding back into the driver's seat of his jeep and putting it in drive. After escorting Mia to work, they were now on the way to the SBI field office.

He had to hand it to Pearce. The man had brass balls for what he was about to do. Turning himself in to help them catch the owner insured he'd be exposed. It could cost him everything.

"I can't sit back and continue to support The Emerald Club if it is merely a front for something much darker and more sinister than I ever imagined."

"Good answer." They drove in silence. Wayde tried to sort everything out in his head. They'd start with a private meeting in Browning's office. If he didn't arrest Pearce on the spot, then they'd go from there.

"One-William-Fifty-Six. What's your twenty?"

Odd. Wayde reached for his mic as his call sign came over the radio, snapping his brow in confusion as he recognized his director's voice. Browning never used the radio to call his agents. He pulled the mic to his lips and took a breath to respond. Pearce's voice stopped him.

"Who is that?"

"The director," he answered and drew another breath. He was just about to key his mic when Pearce grabbed his wrist, jerked it down and damn near pulled them off the road. "Pearce, what the fuck—"

"Don't answer," Pearce ordered, his voice shaky.

Wayde turned to lay into him, and stopped. Pearce's face had drained of all color. His eyes were wide, scared. As he turned and stared at Wayde, his breath grew to shallow gasps. "What the hell is going on, Wayde? Are you two in on this together?"

In on what? What the hell kind of reaction was that? He read people fairly well, and the look on his face, the body language all screamed raw and

primitive fear. "What is it?"

"I thought you told me you didn't know him!"

Realization started to creep up his spine like a slithering snake. "Who?"

Pearce narrowed his eyes, pinning him with an uneasy look. "You really don't know?"

"Know what? What the fuck are you talking about? What's got you so wound up?"

"That voice," he said and nodded toward the radio.

"What about it?" His neck hairs prickled as his heart rate spiked. "Have you heard it before?"

Pearce nodded and wiped the beads of sweat off his brow with the back of his unsteady hand. "You asked for me to give you the owner. It seems you didn't need me at all. Wayde Davis, meet Virgil Vincent."

Oh no. Oh *fuck* no. Wayde's gut pinched. He took the last corner and stopped before pulling into the field office's parking lot, whipping around and getting in Pearce's face before the man had a chance to blink. This was his worst fear, and deep down he already knew the truth but didn't want to accept it. Now, with Pearce looking at him with those goddamn wide eyes, the epiphany crashed down around him and robbed him of breath.

It came down to this. Who did he trust? Pearce, who he knew almost nothing about, yet shared so much with. Or Browning, who he'd known for close to ten years and shared absolutely nothing with. Who had more to lose? Shaking his head, he decided to go out on a limb. "You better be one thousand percent sure on this. If you have any doubt..." He trailed off, unable to grasp the fact the shit was about to hit the fan. He was about to accuse a field office director with the SBI of not only running a prostitution ring, but for the murder of one of his own agents.

Pearce had better be more than sure on this. If not, Wayde could end up losing his badge. Fuck that. If they were wrong, he'd be ruining an innocent man's life with the false accusation.

They sat there in silence, both turning and staring up at the building in front of them. "Is he bald?"

Goddamn it. "There are a lot of agents who shave their head."

"Big bushy eyebrows?"

"Pearce—"

"Smokes those skinny cigars that makes his breath smell like ass?"

Son-of-a-bitch. The comprehension slammed into him, forcing the saliva from his mouth. He tried to swallow but the fucking lump in his throat had him on the verge of choking.

His director. Virgil Vincent. The owner of The Emerald Club.

"One-William-Fifty-Six. Come in."

He brought the mic up. Even with the knowledge of his director as not just the bad guy, but the baddest of the bad guys, he still had to follow protocol. Ignoring a radio call and he'd end up with half the agency racing to the location on the GPS installed on all the agent's rigs.

"Don't do it, Wayde."

"I have to answer," he explained. "All our rigs are outfitted with lo-jacks. If I don't answer, we're both in a shitload of trouble. I could be suspended."

"And if you do answer," Pearce countered. "You'd better be prepared to lose more than that, my friend."

"How so?"

"There are cameras in all the lower rooms. You've taken Mia to one of those rooms. Do you know what they do with the feed from the cameras?" Wayde shook his head, dreading the answer. "They sell it out on the black market. Do you have any idea how much people pay to watch others have sex?"

He whipped his gaze to Pearce. "I have a pretty good idea."

Pearce nodded in understanding and even smiled sheepishly. "Yeah, I guess you do. Although the DVDs go for quite a bit less than what I paid."

Wayde deliberated what to do. Answer and do his best to convince the director he still didn't know about the man's involvement. Not answer and confirm he knows.

Decision made. He brought the mic to his lips. "One-William-Fifty-Six." Pearce muttered something and shook his head. Wayde ignored him and pulled back into traffic, turning the opposite way of the office. Until he sorted everything out, had a solid plan in place, he didn't want to be anywhere near his director.

"What's your twenty?"

"I'm off-duty." Pearce looked at him. Wayde shrugged. It wasn't a lie. Besides, he was making it up as he went along.

"Request land line."

Shit. Wayde glanced down at his cell phone sitting in one of his cup holders. "Yes, sir. One-William-Fifty-Six clear." Grabbing his phone, he dialed the director's line.

He answered on the first ring. "Where the hell are you, Davis?"

"My shift doesn't start for another—"

"There's been another body."

Wayde's blood stilled. Ah Jesus. His entire being screamed *Mia*. He just dropped her off, so she'd better still be at work, pushing paper after endless paper and not in some dumpster somewhere, the life snuffed out of those beautiful eyes. "What? When?"

"A bum just found her. Blonde. Mid-twenties."

Blonde? Relief washed over him. It only lasted a second before he tensed again. It had to be Blondie, the courtesan Mia nearly froze her ass off waiting for. The one who never showed.

Now he knew why.

* * * *

"How long has she been dead?" Wayde glanced down at the body of the woman and shook his head. Just like Nelson, this one had been mutilated and tossed into the dumpster. Whoever killed her wanted to send another message.

"Liver temp shows she's been dead about twelve to fourteen hours," the assistant medical examiner stated. A young kid, barely out of college Wayde gathered, with bright eyes and an eagerness to prove himself. *Just wait, kid. This job will harden you, suck that bright light right out of your soul.*

He thought about Mia, and the rest of the courtesans. Was it only a few days ago he thought the same thing about their profession? Sighing heavily, he made a note about time of death and brought his gaze back to the body. She had one arm above her head and he spotted marks in her armpits. "What are those? Burns?"

The assistant ME nodded. "They look like they hurt. Judging by the charring of the flesh and redness here," he said and ran his gloved finger around one of the wounds. "They were delivered antemortem. They were starting to heal, so they didn't happen perimortem."

Wayde swallowed down the disgust bubbling in his stomach, threatening to surface. Someone tortured her, and brutally. "They burned her a couple days before her death."

"It appears so. I'll know more when I get her back to the morgue. Right now, judging at the bruising on her neck, I'd say cause of death is asphyxia from strangulation. You can clearly see all ten imprints here." He pointed to her neck. "The thumbs cut off her air," he said and then turned her to show Wayde the back of her neck. "And all eight fingers bruised the hell out of her. Whoever did this definitely had the strength to crush her windpipe."

Nice. Gotta love the human urge for violence. What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger, or some bullshit. It didn't matter, not any longer. At least not to this poor woman.

"Thanks." Wayde slapped his notepad closed and lifted his gaze to study the surroundings. Grabbing his phone, he flipped it open and dialed the number Pearce gave him.

"This is James."

"Pearce," Wayde stated into the phone. "Did you pick her up?"

"Yeah," he answered. Wayde could hear Mia in the background, demanding for Pearce to hand her the phone. "Let me talk to her."

"Are you sure? I mean—"

"Now, Pearce." Wayde listened to a rustling on the other line.

"Wayde?"

The sound of her voice felt like a calming whisper through his entire body. Some of the tension left his shoulders. "Hey, baby. Are you okay?"

She drew in a ragged breath. "Who was it?"

Wayde pinched the skin between his eyes and leaned up against the brick wall behind him. The sound of the zipper as they closed Blondie in the body bag pulled his attention back to the dumpster. He couldn't tell her, not over the phone. He needed to be with her, holding her, comforting her. But, goddamn it, he had a job to do. "I don't—"

"It was Blondie, wasn't it? That's why she didn't meet me at Pioneer Square the other night." Her voice broke and a sob escaped into the phone. Wayde's entire being felt it, sobbed along with her. "Oh God, Wayde. He did this. Guy killed her and looked me right in the eye as he lied about it."

"She didn't have any ID on her. I can't be sure."

"Did she have burn marks under her arms?"

Wayde stiffened. "How did you know about those?"

Mia let out another sob. "Oh God. This is all my fault!"

"No," he said, trying to sound gentle. Fuck gentle. Pulling another body out of the dumpster pushed gentle right out the goddamn window. He hardened his tone, allowed it to convey the stress and anger agitating inside him. "Don't think like that. You didn't wrap your fingers around her throat and squeeze until she stopped breathing."

She gasped at his detailed description and he cursed inwardly. Why would he go and say something like that to her? What a dumbass. He suppressed his feelings once again. "Then who did, Wayde?" she whispered. "Who did this?"

Wayde knew who, and he planned to take the bastard down. Her question confused him, concerned him. Not more than ten seconds ago she told him she thought Guy had done it.

"You know the answer, Mia. It was Guy." *And his director.* He kept the last part to himself.

"I don't think so. He only has three fingers on his left hand and his right hand was all bandaged up when I saw him last night. I-It looked like his right pinkie was missing. I don't think he could have done this."

Standing straight, pushing away from the wall, her comment had his full attention. Intrigue swirled in his veins, heightened his senses. "You're sure?"

"Yes."

"I'll call you back." He flipped his phone shut and shoved it in his pocket. If Guy didn't do this that only left one person, and that man had the authority to get into the morgue, taint the evidence. He whipped around to the assistant ME. "Did you bag her hands?"

"Excuse me?" The kid looked up from his task of removing the body from the dumpster. He stepped back when Wayde approached the body, unzipping the bag. Just as he feared, the hands were exposed.

"Bag the hands. Could be trace under her nails."

The assistant ME didn't argue and instead hurried about the task of placing paper bags over each of her hands and zipping them tight. Once he did her hands, he looked up at Wayde. "Do you think they're too tight?"

"No." Wayde shook his head. He wanted to tell the kid it didn't matter anymore, that the woman no longer felt the pains binding her spirit to her body. Instead he turned and headed back to his jeep. "Make sure you have

the CSU do a full sweep of the body before anyone else. If there's anything left behind by her killer, I want to know about it."

"Yes, sir."

He paused and turned back to the assistant ME. "And kid?"

The kid's shoulders sank. He'd obviously been called that one too many times already. "Yes?"

"Good job. Thanks."

The smile on the kid's face gave Wayde hope. Maybe he'd stay lively and bright for a bit longer. Turning back around, Wayde unlocked his jeep and climbed into the driver's seat.

As he pulled out and headed toward Pearce's mansion on the water, he realized he didn't know where Pearce took Mia and grabbed his phone again. He was about to open it when it rang. It startled the shit out of him and he almost dropped it. Catching it before it fell underneath his seat never to be seen again, he flipped it open. "Davis."

"I've taken the liberties of having him followed." It was Pearce, and he was whispering. Wayde pressed the phone hard against his ear.

"Come again?"

"VV. You know who I'm talking about."

"You're having my director followed?" he asked incredulously. "You don't think he'd notice something like that?"

"I've also hacked into the SBI's lo-jack system so I can see where you are, along with VV."

"Why are you calling him VV?"

"I don't want—Hi Mia!" Pearce's voice jumped an octave and immediately changed in tone.

"Who are you talking to?" Wayde heard Mia ask.

"Uh, the power company."

"From your cell phone?" Mia obviously didn't believe him.

"Would you believe the phone company?"

"You're a terrible liar, James." Wayde rolled his eyes. He couldn't agree more.

"Okay, she walked back out of the room. Anyway, I called to let you know VV is following you. I can see his little blue dot blinking, following your little red dot."

Wayde tried to make sense of Pearce's nonsense. "Why would my

director be following me?"

"When I picked up Mia from that law office, just as we left an unmarked car pulled up, but you could easily tell they were cops. Two guys stepped out."

"It is a law office. They were probably giving depositions." Even as Wayde said it, he didn't believe it. "Cops do it all the time."

"If you say so," Pearce answered, his tone dismissive. "But I did overhear them mention Reed, Smythe, and Heathrow."

"They do have one of the leading defense attorney's in the state." Even if Dewey Smythe was a slimeball pervert.

"How would they know Mia's name?"

Wayde tensed, his knuckles white on the wheel as he grasped the phone. "What?"

"One of them said her name, and the other said something about the fourth floor."

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. They'd come after her. If Pearce hadn't have picked her up when he did, he just might have been called out to pull Mia's body from the next dumpster. The thought sent a shudder ripping through him.

"You just turned," Pearce pointed out and paused. "Oh, and he just turned, too."

No shit, Sherlock. "How did you tap into the lo-jack system?" Wayde asked as he looked up in his rearview mirror. Was that an unmarked, blue sedan three cars back? "And why?"

"I have unlimited resources. When someone I care about is in trouble, there's nothing I won't do to insure their safety."

Wayde ignored the skip in his chest at the admission Pearce so much as gave a shit about him. "I had my contacts do some digging. There's no record of a Ben Browning joining the SBI. Ever."

"What the hell?" Wayde glanced up in his mirror again. The blue sedan was now five cars back. Something else grabbed his attention. An inconspicuous silver car seemed to be pacing the blue sedan. "Tell your man to back off, Pearce. If I can see him, chances are the director can, too."

"They know what they're doing, Wayde."

Shaking his head, Wayde muttered one of his many favorite cuss words. "So if Ben Browning never joined, then what the hell name did the director

join under? And why didn't anyone else dig this up before now?"

"I can answer that, actually. My contact found the original file in the archived microfiche films buried in the basement of the Capital Building in Olympia."

Wayde knew he didn't want to know how Pearce got a man into the SBI's archived files, when the director didn't even have access. "And what did he find?"

"Your beloved director's name is legit." Wayde tensed at Pearce's words. The man was anything but beloved to Wayde now that he knew the kind of monster he'd turned out to be. It made him sick to his stomach how much Wayde had looked up to him. Jesus, he'd actually wanted to *be* like him.

Talk about a punch to the gut.

Pearce went on. "Virgil Vincent legally changed his name to Ben Browning in 1980 after his father left his mother for some prostitute. Because he was still a minor, the records were sealed."

How in the hell did Pearce get his hands on all this confidential information? Sealed files? Minor's records? At this point Wayde didn't give a flying fuck. Pearce was proving himself an even bigger asset than Wayde would have ever imagined.

It all started to slowly come into focus. Browning flipping out on him back in the office when Wayde mentioned the case. The way he knew about Wayde taking Mia to a room two nights in a row. There was no leak at the club.

His fucking director had a direct link. Wayde's entire body was numb from the realization. He'd been working for the bad guy all along. He cursed under his breath and shook his head, berating himself for not connecting the dots.

"So he decided to change his name and punish all the prostitutes he could to make up for dear old dad leaving. What better way to lure them in than an underground sex ring boasting huge returns to the whores?"

He felt more than heard Pearce flinch at his words. A deep sigh through the line told him Pearce wasn't happy at his findings. "I can't believe I've had a part in all of this."

"Unwittingly," Wayde corrected him.

"But a part, nonetheless. I'm truly sorry, Wayde. I never intended for any of this to happen. If I have to pay for what I've done, then I will. Just

nail this son-of-a-bitch before he hurts anyone else."

And that, in a nutshell, was why Wayde liked Pearce. Even respected him. He manned up, which was more than he could say for most of the men he'd ever come into contact with. "I intend to."

Wayde watched as the blue sedan switched lanes just as he did. The silver sedan switched soon after. Taking a quick right, he watched and felt his heart hit his shoes when the blue sedan squealed tires to follow. The silver sedan passed right by.

So much for Pearce's tail.

"Listen, Pearce. If VV knows about you, then you need to get out of your house."

"I'm not at my house."

That answer caught him off guard. "So where are you?"

"At your apartment building. It's..." he paused. "A fixer-upper."

"What?" Wayde jerked his wheel and almost hit a car parked on the side of the road. He redirected the wheel and let out a breath, ignoring the jibe at the condition of the building. "Why would you go there?"

"If VV or any of the goons he's got working for him even try to show, I have men who will be here in less than a minute."

"A bullet only takes a split second to kill, Pearce."

"Don't worry," Pearce reassured. It didn't make Wayde feel any better. "I have it under control."

"You don't know these people."

"Obviously, neither do you."

Okay, he deserved that. It still stung, and really pissed him off. "How'd you get in?"

"I have people."

"Of course you do."

"Wayde?" Pearce's voice sounded different. Strained. Nervous.

Shit. "What? What is it?"

Pearce let out a sigh. "Never mind. I thought I heard something. Mia just... Sweetheart? What is it? Wait—What?!? Who are—" A gunshot cut their conversation short.

Jesus and Christ. That's why the director tailed him close, making sure he remained obvious enough to keep Wayde's attention on him and not on getting back to Pearce and Mia. Wayde gunned it, racing toward the

apartment building. The blue sedan stayed right on his tail. He could just make out the bushy brows and baldhead of the man behind the wheel, smoking one of his God-awful Swisher Sweets.

VV.

It helped to refer to him as VV. Referring to him as his director, calling him Browning as everyone called him, hurt too goddamn much. This man, his fucking director, his *friend*, was like a mentor to him. He'd been his director ever since Wayde joined the SBI. Hell, he'd even signed off on his application for a promotion to special agent.

Knowing he'd abused his power and killed innocent women as some sort of sick vengeance against what his father had done just about broke him. Instead, Wayde bottled that rage and betrayal, stored it along with his adrenaline. He had a feeling he'd need it to save Mia and Pearce from whoever just broke into the building.

Save them. Broke in. *Shit*. He stomped on the gas. Reaching for his service pistol, he pulled it out and flipped off the safety. If VV forced a shootout right here on the streets of downtown Seattle, so be it. The asshole would have to kill Wayde before he'd allow anything to happen to Mia. Or to Pearce.

If they weren't already dead.

Wayde skidded to a stop as he pulled into the alleyway behind his apartment building. He knew this could be a trap, and more than likely would be. But if Mia was in any danger, he had to get to her. It wasn't fair of him to put this all on Pearce's shoulders. The man was an entrepreneur. He paid people to do these kinds of things for him. He was in way over his head.

They both were.

"Mia!" He took the stairs as fast as he could, dread and fear weighing down his every move. "Mia!" A noise caught his attention and he spun around.

The tazer took him down instantly. He convulsed as he collapsed, powerless as his muscles spasmed, useless to do anything more than what they were doing. He looked up at the ugly mug of a greasy blond, with tattoos up and down his arms, and across his neck.

"N-n-no," he tried to protest as he spotted the man's gun. "D-d-d-don't."

The greasy blond lifted the gun, centered it on Wayde's forehead. As he

cocked it he said, "Say hello to your partner, pig." Staring up into the eyes of his killer, Wayde didn't say a word. He didn't move any more than his convulsing muscles allowed. He wanted this man to remember the look in his eyes when the asshole pulled the trigger, wanted to make sure if he didn't come back and haunt him, at least his look would.

Instead of shooting him, the man reached up and brought the gun down against Wayde's temple. At first there was a blinding light, followed by so much pain he wanted to scream.

And then nothing but darkness.

Chapter 19

Mia blinked her eyes open and tried to focus. Lying on her side, she lifted her head off the ground and blinked several times to force her eyes to adjust to the pitch black. Where was she? How did she get here? Why was it so dark?

"Hello?" She attempted to push herself up and stopped. Her wrists were bound, as were her ankles. Panic bubbled inside her. "Hello?"

"Quiet," a faint female voice answered. It sounded so small, like a child's voice. "If you make noise, he'll come back and punish us all."

Oh shit. That didn't sound promising. Rocking, she pushed herself up and bumped into something. Or someone. "Hello?"

"Don't you listen?" Another female voice sounded in the darkness, this one definitely stronger than the first one. "Shut up already. And get off my leg."

Mia felt a shove and rolled back onto her side. Okay, so not only was she in complete darkness with other women who didn't seem all that thrilled having her join them, she was tied up and still had no idea how she got here.

"Where am I?" She kept her voice barely above a whisper.

"Welcome to Hell," the stronger voice stated.

"Stop that, Amber." The small voice sounded a bit louder as she ordered the other one. "Can't you tell she's scared?"

"Good," Amber threw back. "Being scared may keep you sane. It's when you are no longer scared that you have to worry."

"Scared of what?" Mia asked.

"Of who," Amber corrected.

Who? Well, her situation definitely hadn't improved. She squeezed her eyes shut to force the fog from her brain and thought about how she got here. James brought her to Wayde's apartment. He was on the phone with

someone and lying to cover it up. She turned to do something, what, she couldn't remember, when she felt the cold and clammy hand cover her mouth.

She pushed her brain to remember what happened after that. A stillness washed over her as an image slammed into her brain. A gun. James. *Blood*.

Oh God. So much blood. Whoever took her shot him first. Was he dead? If not, what were they doing to him? And what about Wayde? Did they have him, too?

The panic rioting in her charged to a fury. If they were able to take down someone like Wayde, she didn't stand a chance of escape.

A giggle fell passed her lips. Escape? Why would she even think that? There were God only knew how many women in this darkness, probably tied up just like her. And now she was one of them. Were they the missing women? How long had they been here? Would they even know? Dare she ask?

"She's already gone bye-bye," Amber stated after hearing Mia laugh.

Mia thought of her baby sister. Would Aimee be among any of these women? Was that why she couldn't find her? "H-How many of you are there?"

"At last count, there were eight." Another voice spoke up.

"Nine, including you." Mia heard yet another voice.

"I've heard Amber," Mia said. "And three others. What are your names?"

"There's me," Amber answered. "And Sybil. She's the one you talked to first." Amber paused. "Karen. Misty. Lora. Delaney. Julie. Samantha was here for about a day, but Dickhead up there came and took her this morning. She hasn't come back."

Mia did the math in her head. "That's only seven. You said there were eight."

"The one in the corner never talks. None of us has ever heard her speak."

"Did you all come from The Emerald Club?"

"I did. So did Julie. Samantha never got the chance to tell us before he took her again. The rest came from different clubs around the area." Amber spoke up.

"I came from Club E in Vancouver," Sybil stated in her tiny voice.

"How did everyone else end up here?" Mia asked.

No one answered. Mia took a breath to ask again when she heard what the rest of them must have heard. Footsteps. Heavy, and growing louder.

Suddenly a door opened above them, revealing a long wood staircase. A familiar baldhead poked inside, silhouetted by the light behind him. "New bitch. You be next. Get your sweet ass ready."

Guy. That son-of-a-bitch. Mia sank back and tried to hide in the darkness. He tromped down the stairs, reached in and seemed to know exactly where to find her. She screamed as he grabbed her by the hair and pulled her up. It felt like he pulled her hair right out of her scalp.

"Now, you cunt. Get your ass out dere and open your fucking legs. I been waiting for dis. You gonna get what's coming to you, bitch."

Oh dear Jesus. He was going to rape her. She looked back into the area where the women all cowered together. With the light from the open door above them, she could just make out their frightened faces. They all looked so tiny and gaunt, helpless and scared as hell.

"Help me," she pleaded to the other women as Guy dragged her up the set of very hard stairs. "Please!"

None of the women so much as looked at her. She cried out when Guy tightened his grip and pulled her up the remaining stairs, her body thumping and bruising as it banged against the wood. Splinters broke off and imbedded into her flesh and she cried out again.

"Shut da fuck up, bitch. You be deserving dis since I first had to deal wit you." He threw her against the wall and turned to close the door. She did a quick cursory glance around, realized they were in a kitchen. A small round table sat in the middle of the room, with an opening to another room to her left. On the other side of the room she saw something that gave her hope.

Another door, this one leading outside. Escape. If she could just get outside, she'd scream as loud as she could. Someone would have to hear her.

The sound of Guy locking the door leading down to the rest of the women pulled her attention to him. He turned to her, lust and violence darkening his soulless eyes. He held up his bandage-covered right hand. As he slowly unwrapped the gauze, his glare never left her face. He slowly started toward her. "See dis? I have you to tank for it."

Her eyes widened, her heart painfully stopped at the sight. When he unwrapped the final gauze, she saw the wound in place of where his pinkie

should be. Dear God. He really did lose a finger. "M-Me?"

"Da boss not be happy," he growled. "When he not be happy, he take my finger. Dat be two I lose so far over dis shit. Now I do da same ting to you. But first, I gotta fuck you da way you fucked me."

"Oh my God." She whimpered when he sneered and unbuttoned his pants. "No." Using the wall to push herself up, she hopped away from him. He easily reached out and yanked her backwards by the hair, throwing her on the floor. "No!"

"Keep screaming, bitch." He unzipped his pants.

She did. Over and over. Louder and louder. He reached down and grabbed the front of her shirt. With all the strength she had, she thrust her legs up and nailed him right in the balls, sending them clear into his throat.

This time it was Guy who screamed. He fell to his knees, covering his groin with his hands. Mia pushed away from him and pushed herself to her feet with the help of the wall. Not wasting any time, she hopped over to the door. Her heart lurched when she tried the doorknob.

It was locked by a deadbolt only a key could unlock. *OhNo! NoNoNo!* Turning back around, she scanned the counters for something to break the window. She could at least scream for help through the open window.

"You...bitch..." Guy barely moved as he lay there, writhing. Without the bandage protecting his wound, it ripped open and started to bleed. "Goddamn it."

Ignoring him as best she could, she hopped over to the counter. Grabbing the coffee pot, she hopped back over to the door and swung it at the window. Instead of the window breaking, the pot shattered, nicking her flesh and sending shards of glass everywhere.

"Get up, Guy."

Mia whipped around and almost tripped against the bindings holding her ankles together. A short bald man stood in the doorframe of the room, glaring down at Guy and completely ignoring her.

"Boss," Guy groaned. "Da bitch—"

"I'm not interested," the man interrupted. "I asked you to do a job. I can see I obviously overestimated your ability to comprehend a simple task." He then turned his dark gaze to Mia. "So you're the pussy Davis was willing to throw away his entire career over."

Was? As in past tense? Did that mean they killed Wayde? An all-

consuming pain enveloped her, made it impossible to breathe. She didn't speak, knowing anything she said would more than likely worsen her situation and not improve it.

"I'll take care of her, Boss."

"No," he said and put up his hand. "I can see you're quite busy making a mess of my kitchen. I'll have one of the others dispose of her. You take care of the rest of them. I want this place on fire within the hour. Make sure they can't get out. We don't want any evidence linking any of them back to me."

Fire? All those women! They're trapped in the basement, or cellar, or whatever that room was. They'd burn to death. Mia couldn't let that happen. If they killed Wayne, then it was up to her to save them.

"Wayne isn't the only one who knows." Knows what, she didn't know. She didn't even know what possessed her to say that in the first place.

The man narrowed his eyes at her. "Davis is a tightlipped son-of-a-bitch. He wouldn't share the details of a case with anyone."

"Carmichael knows," she blurted out, hoping the name meant something to him. By the way this man just stiffened and hardened his expression, apparently it did.

"Why the fuck would he say something to the goddamn DA?" The man cursed up a wild storm as he looked back into the other room, and then back into the kitchen. "How do I know you aren't lying?"

Mia smiled, inwardly, as she thought of Joy Carmichael. The woman scared the hell out of her, and apparently out of this guy, too. She felt a jolt of satisfaction being able to say the name of a person who obviously had this man second-guessing whatever plan he had for her and the rest of the women. "You don't."

"Shit. Guy? When you are finished bleeding all over the floor, pull yourself together and take care of those other women." He grabbed the bindings around Mia's wrists. "Come on. I'll find out if you're lying."

Hopping as fast as she could, she tried to keep up. Instead she twisted and fell. Every time he pulled her to her feet, she'd manage one hop before falling again.

"Jesus Christ," he muttered and pulled out a knife. Where'd that come from? Her heart started to palpitate when he brought it down. In a flash he sliced through the bindings on her ankles with surgical accuracy. She thought of Guy's missing pinkie and didn't have a doubt in her mind this

man had removed it. "Get up. Let's go."

She didn't want to lose any fingers, or anything else for that matter. When he barked his order, she jumped and stayed up with him as he dragged her through a living room and down a narrow hall. He pounded on a door.

A man with greasy blond hair opened it and nodded at the man. He pushed the door all the way open. Mia gasped.

There, sitting in a chair, sat Special Agent Wayde Davis, his face bloody and swollen. His hands were tied behind the chair, his head hanging down, his chin resting against his chest.

"Wayde!"

He whipped his head up at the sound of her voice. "No," he whispered through bloody lips. She broke free of the man's grip and ran to his side. Throwing her arms over his head, she hugged him tight and sobbed in relief. They didn't kill him.

Yet.

"Mia," he pressed his head against her. "Shh, baby. Don't cry."

"What did they do to you?"

The greasy man pulled her away from Wayde and wrapped her in his heavily tattooed arms. She struggled to get away from him and back over to Wayde. "Hey baby," he drooled in her ear. "How's about we have a little fun?"

"Get your hands off her!" Wayde jerked and pulled at his restraints, his murderous glare steadied on the man holding Mia.

"You don't like that, pig? Tough shit. I think your little lady and me is gonna have some fun right here in front of you."

"Wayde," Mia cried when the man put his greasy hands on her.

"How can you do this?" Wayde turned to the bald man. "She's not one of them! Leave her alone! Director Browning! Please!"

"Director Browning?" Mia centered her hatred on the little bald man as he closed the door. "You're his director? You're an agent?"

He shrugged at her. "There's a hell of a lot more money to be made on the other side."

"How could you? All those women?" She thrashed to break free, to dig this man's eyes out with her nails.

"Enough. Hold her still." He stated, walked over and crouched down in front of Wayde, stopping eye level. "Who else knows?"

"Knows what?"

"Don't fuck with me, Davis. Who did you talk to?"

"No one," Wayde answered and shook his head.

"Hmm." He stood back up and stepped away. "Lying isn't going to save her. Or you."

"I'm not lying. I swear, no one else knows."

The director nodded to the tattooed man and he forced Mia over to him. "Give me your hands," he ordered her. She bunched her fingers into a fist and kept her arms tight against her chest, her mind on which finger he planned to cut off first. The man holding her grabbed her bindings around her wrists and forced her hands forward. The man pulled her wedding finger out and held it firm. "You have lovely fingers. It would be a shame to lose one."

"Goddamn you," Wayde growled. "I told you. No one else knows!"

"Well then," he stated and caressed her fingers. "If you aren't lying, then she is. Either way, she will be punished for it. Whores don't need their ring finger."

"No," Mia cried and tried to fold her finger in. Fear took over, completely paralyzing her against anything but staring at him as he smiled at her. He held tight to her finger and brought out his knife. Hyperventilating, she watched in horror as he took the tip and easily cut into her finger. Shock had numbed her body. She didn't even feel the slice. Still, seeing the blood ooze from the new wound had her panicking in a whole new way. She started to jerk spasmodically in the tattooed man's arms, doing everything she could to get away. "Wayde!"

"Goddamn you, you fucking son-of-a-whore." He struggled and jerked back and forth in the chair. "I'll tell you! Leave her alone! I'll tell you!"

The bald man smiled triumphantly and lifted the knife back. He gave Mia a wink and let her finger go. She pulled her wrists to her chest, covering her finger with her hand. The blood trailed down her palm and arm in streaks of bright red. She felt like throwing up at the sight.

"I'm waiting."

"Pearce knows," Wayde admitted.

The director waved off his comment. "Who cares about him? It isn't like he'll be able to say anything now."

"You killed him?" Rage shadowed his features, gave his voice a rough

edge that sliced into the air. Mia felt the chill, and knew the others had to have felt it, too.

"A bullet to the brain does that," the man still holding Mia stated.

She squeezed her eyes against the news. No. *NoNoNo*. James couldn't be dead. Please God. Don't let it be true.

"Then you silenced the only other person who knew."

"I wish I could believe you," the director said. "I need to know who else knows. I've gone through painful detail making sure all the evidence points to you for Nelson's murder."

Wayde stiffened. "No. *Goddamn* you. No!"

"Oh yes," the director replied easily. "Let's see if I remember this correctly. After all, I'm going to have to testify to this." He raised his eyes to the ceiling as he counted off his statements on his fingers. "Nelson was closing in on the man responsible for the disappearance of those women. That's the truth, by the way, which is why I had to kill her. Anyway, she caught you *under the covers*, shall we say. You killed her when she threatened to turn your ass in for killing all those women, not to mention getting involved with one of the whores at the club." He turned and rested his eyes on Mia and smirked.

"No," she protested. "I wasn't even at the club when his partner was there."

"Who are they going to believe? A whore in an underground sex ring, or one of the directors of the SBI? Besides, you'll be dead, along with the rest of them. It'll just be my word against his."

"You can't do this!" Mia struggled against the man holding her.

"Watch me," he said to her. Turning back to Wayde, he continued. "I may spare some of the details and just have you killing all those women. Save you from some of the disgrace. What do you say, Davis?"

"Fuck you," Wayde answered.

The director sighed. "Maybe taking a finger isn't enough. How about Freddy and me gang rape your little whore, Davis? Right in front of you. Would that be enough incentive for you to talk?"

"You touch her, you die."

The director laughed. "You really do have brass balls. Tied to a chair, beat to shit, outnumbered, and you still think you have the upper hand. You dumb son-of-a-bitch. Don't you know it's against the law to threaten an

agent?"

"It isn't a threat," Wayde countered. "It's a promise."

"Okay, Davis. Have it your way. You've been a pain in my ass for years. I'm going to enjoy this." He brought his beady little gaze over to her, rested his eyes on her breasts. "Oh yeah, I'm really going to enjoy this."

Mia struggled against his approach. Freddy tightened his grip, all the while chuckling and growling in her ear. "He gets you first, then I'll tear that sweet cunt apart. Hell, maybe we'll take you at the same time. You whores like it that way, don't you?"

Her eyes stung as they watered. Taking a breath to scream, the air felt like it scorched her lungs. She coughed and drew in another breath, tasting smoke. The man loosened his grip as he, too, inhaled sharply.

"What the hell?" The director turned to open the door and stopped. Flattening his hand against the door, he muttered a cuss. "That goddamn idiot. He already set the house on fire. Guy!" He threw the door open. "What the—"

The gunshot sent him flying back, landing on the floor in front of all of them. Mia cried out in surprise and wiggled out of the tattooed man's arms, ran over to Wayde's side. Guy stepped into the room, the gun in his hand.

"You never be taking another finger from me." He pointed the gun and shot out the bald man's knee. The director hollered and reached for his knee. "Or order me to kill another bitch." He took out the other knee. Another pain-filled cry came out of the man now writhing around on the floor. He curled into a ball, holding his knees as close to his chest as possible. Mia screamed and buried her head against Wayde's shoulder, fear robbing her of the ability to do anything else.

"You son-of-a-bitch, Guy! What do you think you're doing?" The greasy blond barked. Guy turned the gun on him and the man lost his sudden burst of bravery. His hands up, he backed away.

"W-Wayde," she whimpered. "I'm scared."

"Shh," he whispered and pressed his chin to her head. "Stay low and quiet. Invisible." She nodded and cowered down further. She could do that.

"Throw your gun on da floor, kick it over."

"Bullshit," he bit back, but did as Guy said. Slowly, the man took out his gun and dropped it on the floor, kicked it over to Guy.

"Now get da fuck out of here," Guy ordered after picking the gun up and

shoving it in his pants.

The man hesitated, clearly stunned. "What—"

Guy straightened his arm. "Dere be no heroes here, you got dat? Get out now or stay and burn wit da rest."

Mia shuddered at the thought of them being trapped in the house as it burned to the ground. She wanted to protest, to beg Guy to not do this. Wayde must have sensed it and shook his head to stop her. "Stay behind me. Don't say a word. Don't even breathe."

Not a problem. Mia couldn't breathe right now anyway.

The greasy blond nodded and ran passed Guy, and out of the room. She peeked out from behind Wayde just as Guy centered the gun on them. "Now you. Get up."

"I can't," Wayde said. "In case you haven't noticed, I'm tied to the chair."

"Shut up. You," he ordered and motioned at Mia with the barrel of the gun. "Get up."

"Don't," Wayde told her.

"Get up now, or I put a bullet in your boyfriend." Mia slowly rose up behind Wayde and stared at Guy with all the rage and hatred she'd built up for the man since stepping foot in The Emerald Club. "Dere not be enough time for me to fuck you now, bitch."

That should have made her feel better. Still, standing on the wrong side of a gun, in a house on fire, with the one man who could save them all beat up and tied to a chair, and she somehow knew having this man touch her was the very least of her problems.

"It's over," Wayde spoke up. "Drop the gun. Take it with you. It doesn't matter anymore, Guy. You won."

"I say when it be over." Guy marched over and grabbed Mia by her wrist bindings. He jerked her away from Wayde.

"Wayde!"

"Leave her alone! Guy! Goddamn it!"

Mia had to think of something. If Guy threw her back in the cellar with the others, they would surely die. Even if Wayde broke loose, he'd never find them all in time. For all she knew, Guy started the fire in front of the door to the cellar, already dooming all those women to burn to death.

She had to do something. "Don't take me back into the cellar!" She

struggled against him as he pulled her toward the door. "You'll lock me in there with the other eight women! No!"

"Shut up, bitch." He dragged her out of the room and started toward the kitchen. She turned back to Wayne, who had his steely gaze fixed on her. He nodded once in understanding.

Smoke filled the hallway, burning Mia's eyes and nostrils. She tried to breathe and could only cough. She couldn't see. Guy had his arm folded in front of his face to protect him from the smoke. He lowered down and dragged Mia into the kitchen and over to the cellar door.

Her heart lurched when she heard their cries and pleads, begging to be let out so they wouldn't die. She turned to Guy and tried to say something, but he opened the door and pushed her inside. She didn't have a chance to find her footing and tumbled down the stairs. Every step slammed into her, exploding in pain. She felt a sharp piercing pain in her ankle as she landed at the foot of the stairs.

Turning back toward the door, dazed and shaken from her fall, she tried to focus on Guy as he sneered down at them. "Guy! Don't do this."

Amber added, "You'll kill us all if you leave us down here!"

The bastard widened his smile. "Dat be da idea, bitch. Gotta get rid of da evidence. You bitches be da evidence." With that, he slammed the door and locked it, leaving them all to die as the house burned all around them.

Chapter 20

Twisting his arm, Wayde tried to get his wrist out of the bindings for the umpteenth time. The rope tore into his skin, but he ignored the pain. It was nothing compared to what he'd feel if he lost Mia. Focusing on saving her, he continued to twist and pull. Blood coated his wrists, it ran down his hands, making everything slippery. He'd hoped making himself bleed would be enough to slip out of the restraints.

Goddamn, that greasy bastard knew how to tie a knot. He'd been working his bindings all during the man beating the shit out of him. Nothing seemed to be working. On top of being tied to a chair, the thick smoke billowed into the room, heating it up like a furnace and robbing the room of precious oxygen.

"D-Davis," Browning hissed, startling the shit out of Wayde. He was still alive? "Help...me..."

Yeah, like that was going to happen. He went back to working his bindings, not bothering to waste any air on answering the director. His *ex*-director. As soon as he got out of here and got everyone else to safety, his next stop would be the DA's office. Carmichael hated dirty agents and took a personal interest in their prosecution.

"D-Davis."

"Shut up," Wayde barked and twisted his wrists.

"Break...the...chair."

Wayde stopped pulling his arms and thought about that. If he broke the chair, he'd be able to get the hell out of here and save those women before they all burned to death. Physically weak from the beating, he knew it would take every ounce of strength he had left to break up a solid wood chair.

Drawing in a breath, he fought against the urge to cough. The smoke darkened the room, but Wayde didn't need to see to know what he needed to

do. He gave himself a mental countdown and jumped up, crouched down as the chair forced him on a ninety-degree angle. Running as fast he could, he slammed the chair against the wall. Instead of it breaking, the legs went through the sheetrock and stuck there.

Well, he thought as he now stood bent at an angle, a chair strapped to his back. His situation hadn't improved. Pulling out of the wall, he looked down at the hardwood floors. That just might work.

Without hesitation, he jumped up and turned, slamming against the floor. Ah, Jesus Christ, it felt like he broke his back with that one. But it did the job. The chair cracked. Awkwardly, in so much pain he saw little black dots in his vision, he got back up and slammed back down again.

This time one of the legs broke off. He continued to slam against the hardwood floor until one of the arms broke off, each and every collision with the floor sending another jolt of pain racing through his already battered body. As if they didn't beat him badly enough, he was now kicking his own ass.

Quickly he yanked his arm, still tied to the arm of the chair, and untied his hand from the arm still attached to the chair. Once he freed one hand, he untied the other.

Stretching his fingers, he turned back to the director. He'd need a gun and, since they took his, he'd have to borrow Browning's. Reaching inside his coat, Wayde pulled the pistol out of the shoulder holster.

He was about to stand when Browning's hand locked onto Wayde's arm. Looking down, he saw fear in the man's eyes.

Good.

"Don't leave me," he begged.

Wayde easily jerked out of his hold. "You did this to yourself."

"You're...an agent. You can't...just leave me...to die."

"You killed Nelson," Wayde reminded him. "You killed one of your own, and you would have killed me." Wayde saw regret flood the man's eyes. Too little, too late.

"I'll...make it...worth your time. I still have...Pearce's...money."

"Bribing an agent is against the law," he threw a version of the man's words back at him. He'd make sure he'd use the money to give Pearce a proper burial. The man had more money than God, but in the end it still wasn't enough. "Goodbye, VV."

Recognition of his initials flashed in the man's beady little eyes. "How did...you know?"

"Let's just say Pearce has a longer reach than even you."

Browning closed his eyes, realizing his fate. "Davis...I always...hated you."

"That's mutual," Wayde answered truthfully.

"Get...the fuck...out of...my face...you—"

Wayde didn't wait to listen to the rest of the man's statement. He crouched low and ran out of the room, down the hall in the direction Guy dragged Mia. Keeping his eye open for any sign of Guy, he quickly made his way into another room as the hallway opened up. It looked like a kitchen.

Oh shit. A kitchen engulfed in flames. They licked up the walls, completely surrounding him.

Wonder-fucking-ful. "Mia!" A noise caught his attention and he spun around. Was that coughing coming from behind that door? He ran over and tried the knob, but it was locked. "Mia!" he yelled at the door.

"Wayde?" Her muffled voice sounded from the other side, panic and fear quivering in her tone. He heard pounding and his heart started pounding in time. He had to get to her.

"Stand back, baby." He counted to five, praying it was enough time for her to get away from the door, and then fired off a shot, breaking the lock. He threw open the door and ran down the stairs. It was so dark in there he couldn't see a damn thing.

He didn't have to. He felt Mia before he turned and pulled her into his arms. She broke down and started sobbing. Deep down, he sobbed with her. Not wanting to, but knowing they all needed to get the hell out of the house before it came down on them, he broke their hold and quickly untied her wrists. "We have to get out of here."

"Help me," she said and went over to another girl. That's when Wayde's eyes adjusted enough to see them. At first he saw scrawny, pale legs. At least a dozen of them. And then tiny, thin bodies without any clothing to cover them. Frail arms tied to some type of pipe bolted to the wall. And then their faces. So many women tied up and held prisoner by his own fucking director. And Guy. It made him sick to his stomach thinking about what they'd been through.

Wayde hurried over and untied the women with Mia's help. "Let's go!" He motioned toward the stairs. To his shock, none of them moved. "Come on, ladies! Get moving!"

"Wayde, they can't." Mia grabbed a woman's arm and thrust her toward him. "Most of them have been down here so long they can barely walk. We have to help them."

He nodded and grabbed the girl to help her up the stairs. She struggled against his hold. "I'm trying to help you," he argued when she cried and pushed against him.

"Amber!" Mia yelled at her. "This is Wayde. He's an agent with the SBI."

"So was The Boss," she cried.

"Amber," Wayde said softly. She stopped struggling and looked up at him. He smiled down at her. "He can't hurt you anymore. And I'm not going to let anyone hurt you ever again."

She blinked, fresh tears in her enormous eyes. Nodding, she allowed him to help her up the stairs. Pulling her over to the door, he tried the door. It was locked too, of course.

"Stand back." He pushed her behind him and fired off another shot, breaking the lock. Opening the door, he grabbed Amber and pulled her outside to safety. People were starting to gather around outside as the dark, angry smoke billowed out of the windows and lifted into the sky. "Someone get blankets!"

Several people ran off toward what he assumed to be their houses. "I called 9-1-1," someone stated. Wayde nodded and set Amber down on the lawn. She refused to let him go. He looked back at her naked and frail body and nodded. Pulling his shirt off, he helped her throw it on. It wasn't much, but it was enough to give her some modesty until the neighbors returned with blankets.

Running back into the house, he almost collided with Mia as she practically carried a tiny woman out of the house. Wayde took her from him and set her down next to Amber. They hugged each other and were still wrapped in each other's arms as Wayde ran back inside.

One by one Wayde and Mia took turns carrying thin, frail women out of the house and setting them next to the others. "Is that all of them?" Wayde asked Mia.

She shook her head. "No. There's one more in the corner, but she won't let me touch her. I need your help." He nodded and they both ran back into the house, Mia leading the way. That's when he noticed her ankle. Twisted in a way an ankle was never meant to bend, he flinched when she stood on it. She was running on a broken bone.

He felt a newfound fury envelope him. That son-of-a-bitch Guy hurt her. Broke her beautiful, delicate ankle. He'd kill the bastard for that. Channeling his anger, he rushed in front of Mia, into the flaming kitchen and down the stairs. The smoke blinded him, suffocated him. Thick heat surrounded him, made it impossible to breathe. He coughed and circled the room, feeling around for this woman Mia said was down here.

"Hello? Is anyone in here?"

"She's over here," Mia said and hurried to the corner. "Ouch! Stop! I'm trying to help! Ouch!"

"Let me," Wayde said and pushed her out of the way. The woman screamed as he threw her over his shoulder and ran up the stairs. She beat on his back, kicked and scratched him like a damn cat.

"Oh my God," Mia cried. "Aimee!"

Aimee? As in her little sister Aimee? Holy shit. She was alive? Not just alive, but seriously beating the crap out of him as he rescued her. Apparently tempers ran in the family.

"Get away!" She screamed like a banshee and tried to kick loose. "Put me back. I won't do it! You'll have to kill me!"

"Aimee!" Mia grabbed for her.

"Don't touch me!"

Wayde raced outside and pulled in a lungful of fresh air. He ran over to the rest of the girls and set Aimee down next to them. She scurried away from him and darted her eyes nervously, taking in her surroundings. The poor thing was scared to death.

"Aimee?" Mia's voice shook as she knelt down next to the scared girl. Aimee looked up at Mia and shook her head, not an ounce of recognition in her frightened green eyes. Wayde grabbed a blanket and wrapped it around Mia. She threw it off and wrapped it around her little sister. She looked up at Mia, blinking several times. "It's me, Aimee. It's Mia."

Emotions flooded Aimee's eyes as recognition finally set in. "M-Mia?"

"It's me," she repeated and carefully reached to her. Aimee shrank away

from her touch. Mia scooted closer and tried again. This time, Aimee closed her eyes as Mia stroked her little sister's matted hair. "I'm here, sweetie. They'll never be able to hurt you again."

Her emotional dam broke and Aimee melted into her sister's arms. She sobbed and shook as she cried in Mia's arms. "Oh, Mia. Is it really you?"

Sirens wailed in the distance. Wayde lifted his gaze as fire trucks pulled up. He didn't want to leave her side, but duty called. He stood, gave Mia one more glance. She looked up at him, openly crying as she held onto her sister. He gave her a reassuring smile. He knew it would take time and a hell of a lot of therapy for Aimee to recover from this. He also knew Mia. If anyone could bring someone back from Hell, she could.

"Is anyone else in there?" A fireman yelled at Wayde.

He turned and looked back at the house, watched as the flames quickly consumed the structure. Shaking his head, he turned back to the man. "Two men escaped. They ran off. I didn't see where they went."

"Hey," another one stated. "Isn't this Director Browning's place?"

"It used to be," Wayde responded. The adrenaline faded and he started to feel each and every damn bruise he'd accumulated in the past twenty-four hours. The deepest bruise pinched his chest, made him sway. He collapsed down on the lawn, away from everyone else. He needed to be by himself as he thought of Pearce, of the man now dead because of him. His eyes burned. He blamed it on the smoke.

"Well, where the hell is he?" Wayde brought his head up as he recognized that gruff female voice. Carmichael spotted him and marched her chubby little legs over, stopped in front of him. "Is he dead?"

"Who?"

"Don't play stupid, Davis. Because I know you aren't."

"Yeah," Wayde said with a single nod, the realization of what he'd done making it hard to breathe. "He's dead."

"Did you kill him?"

Wayde let out a sigh as he looked over at the house. He could have dragged his director out of the house, could have saved him. His conscience ate at him. Did that make him dirty? Did not saving his own director make him just as bad? Would he, someday, give into the lure of the dark side and find himself above the law?

"Your hesitation does not give me confidence, Special Agent Davis."

Sure, *now* she got his title right. "Guy shot him."

"And?"

Darkness settled into him, one that hardened his emotions, his features. He'd left a man to die. Not just any man, but a director with the SBI. It didn't matter whether the guy was dirty or not. No one was above the law, including Wayne. By not going back for him, leaving him in there to burn, he made himself judge, jury, and executioner.

"I had the chance to pull him out." He continued to stare at the house as the firemen made quick work of putting the fire out. His guilt left him numb. "I didn't."

"Let me tell you something," she said and slapped his knee as she sank down next to him. "You can't save everyone. And," she paused and waited until he brought his gaze over to her. "Not everyone is worth saving."

That should have made him feel better, knowing the DA didn't blame him. It still didn't make a shit bit of difference. He blamed himself. It would take years with the SBI's shrink to get over this. Glancing back, he watched them continue to drench the house, even though the flames were no longer visible.

"IA wants to talk to you. I suggest you find a shirt."

He nodded. Of course Internal Affairs would step in. They always did when a crime involved an agent. He planned to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It didn't put him in the most favorable light, but he didn't have a choice. He'd probably lose his job over this case, but none of that mattered. Mia had her sister back, and he had funeral arrangements to make. After that, maybe he'd talk to whoever was next in line at Pearce's company, see if he could get a job in construction or whatever the hell he did.

"Is that why you came? To tell me to turn in my badge?"

"Why the hell would I do that?" Carmichael countered. "I'll be representing you when you talk with them."

He looked back at her, searching her eyes. "Why? You're the DA. You put people away, not defend them."

"I'm a lawyer, Davis. It is my job to make sure the guilty are punished, and the innocent aren't." She gave him a knowing look. "Got it?"

"Got it." It made him feel a little better knowing he had a pit bull like Carmichael on his side. Maybe he wouldn't be on the other side of the iron

bars after all.

"So there it is," she grunted as she stood back up and brushed off her backside. "You talk to no one about this. I want you in my office ASAP, Davis. We need to work on your statement before you meet with IA."

Wayde nodded, but didn't say anything. He'd need to find a shelter to take the women to if they didn't have family to go home to. He had to help Mia with Aimee. He had to go to the morgue and identify Pearce's body.

His gut tightened and he swallowed down his grief. "I'll be there as soon as I can. There are a few stops I have to make, first."

"That reminds me." She pulled an envelope out of her pocket and handed it to him. "This is for you." Wayde took the envelope and looked at it. It didn't have any writing on it and he gave Carmichael a puzzled look. "Don't look at me. I get a phone call from Browning saying he found evidence that you were responsible for the disappearance of all those women, and that you killed Nelson when she found out."

He tensed. *Goddamn* that man. "It isn't true. Not a damn word of it."

"You don't think I figured that much out? I already had the search warrant in hand for this place." She motioned at the charred skeletal remains of the house. "I'd have enough to put him on death row if I could just get inside and that son-of-a-bitch knew it."

"How did you know it was Browning?"

"I didn't. I get a call from that hardass Judge Williams, telling me to come pick up my search warrant for Browning's house, that a Mr. James Pearce hired some high-priced, fancy-ass attorney with evidence up the wazzu. Pearce says he knows you. Do I want to know how?"

"He *knew* me," Wayde corrected, that annoying constriction squeezing his throat. "He's dead."

Carmichael spiked her dark brow. "Could have fooled me."

Wayde stilled, looked at her. "How so?"

"Just read the damn note," she snapped and started to walk away. "Damn people think I work for the post office instead of the state. Wrong branch of the government, people." She continued to bitch until Wayde no longer heard her.

He glanced down at the envelope in his hands. Could it be? Ripping it open, he unfolded it and read:

Wayde,

This is my sworn statement to you. I provided the money for The Emerald Club. I knew it was an underground sex ring when I signed the check, but had no idea Virgil Vincent was using it as a front to kidnap women. I've found a trail of black market DVDs, all leading back to VV. He's been torturing and raping women, recording the act, and selling the DVDs in addition to the sex DVDs from the club. My sources are rounding up all of them as I write this. Once they have them all, they will be delivered to you at the SBI field office. If you haven't already killed VV, these DVDs will be the evidence you need to put him away for a very long time.

I'm not proud of being an unwitting participant in all of this, but as you can see I'm doing everything in my power to clean it up. By the time you read this, I'll be gone. I know you'll want to find me, to bring me in to stand trial. I also know the limited resources of the SBI, and know they won't waste time or dollars looking for someone like me. I'm not a danger to anyone but myself.

Take care of Mia, my friend. I love you both and wish you only the best, which is why you'll never see me again.

James

Wayde read the letter again, unsure whether Pearce wrote it before he was shot, or after. Maybe he'd written it as soon as he discovered Wayde was an agent. He didn't know. And that just about killed him.

Standing, he folded the letter and tucked it in his back pocket. The fire department had successfully put out the fire, it seemed, and were now pulling an occupied body bag away from the house. With a deep sigh, he walked back over to Mia as she rested against the bumper of an ambulance.

"Hi," he offered and sat down next to her, unsure what else to say. He turned behind them to see Aimee sleeping soundly on the gurney with two EMTs tending to her. They must have heavily sedated her to get her to lie that still. His chest still hurt where she pounded her tiny fists into him.

"Hi," she offered back. Wrapping her in his arms, it'd never felt so good to hold her. "They're taking Aimee to the hospital."

He glanced down at her swollen ankle, an air brace holding it securely in place until she could get it x-rayed. "Is it broken?"

She looked down at her ankle as well. "They think so. I barely felt it until we were all out of there."

"It's the adrenaline." He gave her a squeeze. "We did it, baby. We found your sister."

She nodded, a smile slowly curling her lips. "And took down the entire ring. Not bad, eh?"

They'd set out to do exactly that, so why did Wayde still feel this crushing weight on his chest? He should be thrilled as hell. Yet, he ached. His entire body ached from the inside out.

"James is really dead, isn't he?"

Just the mention of it felt like daggers twisting in his heart, his gut. "I don't know. I need to make a trip down to the..." he paused, not able to say morgue aloud. It made it sound so real, so final. "Let's go." He climbed into the back of the ambulance and sat down next to one of the EMTs, Mia following and sitting opposite him. Closing his eyes, he leaned back against the side. Someone shut the doors and they drove out, the sound of the diesel engine drowning out everything else.

Everything except his guilt over the death of James Lloyd Pearce.

Chapter 21

"I'm fine," he told the nurse for the fourth time. "You've poked and prodded me for the last hour. Would you just sign my release already?"

The older nurse gave him a stern look. He knew her from many of the other times he'd had to pay a visit to the ER. She always looked like she was about to break into some sort of lecture. She pursed her lips at him. "You're fine when I say you're fine, Agent Davis." She fussed over him, taking his blood pressure yet again. "Hmm," she said as she removed the cuff and slung the stethoscope over her neck. "BP is back to normal."

"See? I'm fine."

"I should check it one more time." She brought her hand up for his arm.

He moved out of her reach. "I have things to do. Sign the damn release form."

"Agent Davis," the nurse snapped when he stood and backed away from her. "Sit back down."

"No, damn it." When he barked at her, he saw the hurt in her eyes. Softening his voice, he explained. "I have to get to the morgue and identify," he swallowed before adding, "a body."

"The director's body has already been ID'd."

"No," he answered sadly, not bothering to fight back the sting in his eyes as they misted. "Someone else."

"I'm sorry to hear that," she stated without emotion. "Was he a friend?"

Wayde nodded, the grief threatening to consume him almost taking over. He pushed it back with a sharp inhale. "Yeah. A very close friend."

The nurse stopped trying to reach for him as she searched his eyes. With a single nod in understanding, she grabbed the clipboard and signed the release form. "Do you need someone to go with you?"

Just then Mia hobbled into the room on crutches and offered him the

most beautiful smile he'd ever seen. It brightened up every dark corner of his being. "I already have someone," he answered.

The nurse turned to see Mia standing there. "Are you meant to be with him?"

Mia's smile broadened and Wayne felt some of the weight lift. "Yes. I'm meant to be with him."

Wayne took the release form, thanking the nurse as they walked out of the room. Mia struggled with the crutches and Wayne had to hold her up to stop her from toppling over on several different instances. It reminded him of their first night together when she literally fell into his arms, unable to walk in those high heels. He smiled at the memory.

"You sure you want to do this?" They walked into the elevator and he pushed the button to the basement. "You don't have to."

"I need to," she stated in a shaky voice. He could tell she struggled to keep her emotions in check. "I have to see him one last time, Wayne."

He didn't think now was the time to argue with her. It wouldn't be James Pearce they saw lying on that metal table, a toe tag as his only form of identification, a paper blanket as his only cover. The man's spirit was now free, no longer confined to a body. It would be his body, but it wouldn't be him.

He deserved so much more than a toe tag and to share a refrigerator with all the other John Doe's. Wayne would make sure he had only the best of everything. Hell, he'd sell his apartment building if he had to. James Pearce would not be laid to rest in anything but the best. Without him, they would have never taken down the ring, and would have never found Aimee.

The elevator doors whooshed open and they both stood there, unable to move. Wayne broke free of his paralysis when the doors started to close again. Holding them open, he reached for Mia and helped her out of the elevator, and down the long dark hall.

"Which room is it?" She asked quietly, emotions thickening her voice.

"This way," he said, having walked this hall too many times to count. They walked down to the double doors and he stopped. "Are you ready?"

"We need to do this together."

Nodding, blowing out a deep breath, he pushed through the doors and helped Mia over to the window. She gave him a puzzled look. "This is where we'll ID him," he explained and pointed at the monitor above them to

the right. "They'll pull him out here and place the camera on his face." He turned to the window and waited.

"Are you ready?" Wayde recognized the young voice of the ME's assistant. He nodded and the light on the monitor came on.

"Wayde? Why are we in here? I want to be next to him." Mia looked at him. "This isn't right."

"It's how the family," he had to stop and swallow to keep his voice from cracking. "It's how it has to be."

"No," Mia protested. "No, damn it. I want to see him. Him! Not through some TV, but him. I want to see James."

God, this broke his heart seeing her this upset. It tore at him he couldn't honor her request. As an agent, he had the clearance to be in the refrigeration room, but Mia didn't.

"Here we go," the young voice stated.

Wayde closed his eyes. He couldn't do this. Seeing Pearce on that table, his once full-of-life body now still and gray would drop him. He'd lose it and didn't know if even Mia would be able to bring him back.

"Oh, my God," she whispered and let out a sob. The sound weakened his defenses and he felt the sting of tears invade his eyes. "Wayde."

He didn't dare say anything. If he did, his voice would break and Mia would see how weak he really was. Instead he pulled her to him and tried to hug her. She stiffened and he mimicked her reaction. Blinking his eyes open, he looked at her face. She'd paled and had her eyes fixed on the screen. But, instead of seeing endless sadness, he saw hope.

Whipping around, he glanced up at the monitor, fully expecting to see Pearce's body lying there. Instead, he didn't recognize the face. Holy shit. "It isn't him."

"Are you sure?" The assistant asked.

"That's the man who shot him," Mia said in obvious disbelief. "How is he the one dead when I saw him shoot James?"

* * * *

"I still don't understand," Mia said numbly. Her emotions were in absolute chaos. She didn't know how many more shocks to her system she

could take before she collapsed from stress. "It doesn't make any sense, Wayde. If James isn't dead, then where is he?"

"I don't know, baby." Wayde poured them fresh cups of coffee and rejoined her in the living room. Mia smiled as he walked in and sat down next to her. She then glanced up at the clock, noting how much time she had before they'd let her visit Aimee again.

"Two hours," Wayde pointed out, not bothering to look at the clock.

She smiled sheepishly. "Is it that obvious?"

"Sweetheart, you haven't stopped watching the clock since we got back from the hospital. I realize I may not be the best company, but—"

She stopped him by leaning in and slanting her mouth over his. The love she felt for this man took over all her senses, leaving her powerless except to follow her emotions. He parted her lips with his tongue and gently tasted her. Her heart jumped into palpitations, simply from his kiss.

A knock at the door broke them from their trance. Mia blinked at him. They weren't expecting anyone. Wayde's featured immediately tensed as he went rigid. "Stay here," he ordered and grabbed his gun out of its holster.

"Wayde?" She watched as he deftly moved toward the door. Guy and that greasy blond were still out there. What if one of them decided to pay them a visit? What if they all did at the same time? Would Wayde be able to fight them all off? Would she be able to defend herself if they overpowered him?

"Who is it?" Wayde asked, his back against a wall, his gun cocked and ready.

"I have a delivery for Steel and Candy," a familiar voice sounded from the other side of the door. Wayde darted his eyes to Mia, his mouth open in astonishment.

"James?" Mia whispered, her heart in her throat.

Wayde brought his finger up to stop her, shaking his head. She sank back down on the couch. It could be a trap, but who else knew of their nicknames?

"What does Candy like better? Fruit or vegetables?" Wayde shouted out.

"Fruit, of course. She liked the Bing Cherries the best," he answered. "Though I still think if we would have gotten the chance to use the cucumber, she may be swayed to the dark side of vegetables."

Wayde uncocked his gun and grabbed the doorknob. Mia almost fell off

the couch to hobble over and join him, breathless to see James again. Her ankle throbbed in protest, but she didn't care. She'd deal with it later.

He threw the door open and they both froze.

"Nice to see you, too." James stated with a shit-eating grin. He had the right side of his head completely covered in bandages, and the white of his right eye was red. Other than that, he looked as handsome as ever. Very large men in dark suits flanked him, neither wearing any form of expression. He must have seen them staring uneasily at the men. "Don't mind them. After what happened, I'll err on the side of caution. May I come in?"

They stepped apart and he entered the apartment. Mia cried out and threw her arms around him, still in a state of disbelief he really stood there between them. To her shock, Wayde laughed and joined in the hug.

"I-I can't breathe," James groaned. "Guys, seriously. I've suffered a head injury here. I'm pretty sure oxygen is vital to my recovery." The two men moved forward to pull Wayde and Mia off their boss. "No," James said to stop them. "You two stay here. I need to speak privately with my two friends here." With that, James closed the door on them and turned back to Wayde and Mia.

Mia laughed and cried at the same time, and couldn't stop herself from hugging him again, this time a little more gingerly. Wayde gave James a gentle slap on the back. "Goddamn, Pearce. You gave us both a scare."

"You?" he stated in mock astonishment. "I'm the one who got shot. Imagine how scared I was."

"How? I saw that man shoot you in the head." She glanced up at the bandages.

"I ducked. The bullet just grazed the side of my head. I took one look at the blood and passed out." He watched their reaction. Clearly, neither one of them believed the story. He held up his right hand. "Scout's honor."

Wayde laughed and shook his head. "Whatever you say. Come in. Stay a while."

"I wish I could," he said and put his hand up to stop Mia from leading him back to the couch. He looked down at the cast on her ankle. "What happened to you?"

"Guy pushed me down the stairs." She glanced over to see Wayde as he visibly tensed, as he always did whenever either of them mentioned the name. He was still out there somewhere, and Mia knew Wayde wouldn't rest

until he found him.

James furrowed his brow. "And how's Aimee?"

"How did you know about her?"

He gave her a knowing smile.

"She's okay. They say she has a level of posttraumatic stress disorder. The doctors are hopeful that, in time, she'll be back to herself."

"Here," he pulled a card out of his suit jacket. "This is the number for my personal doctor. He'll put you in touch with doctors who specialize in PTSD."

She took the card and stared at it, knowing she'd never be able to afford specialists. She'd have to sell her house to pay for the doctors as it was. "Thank you," she whispered, feeling utterly helpless.

"Of course," James went on. "I would cover all the bills."

Mia jerked her head up, shaking it. She wasn't a charity case. "No."

"Mia, my dear. It's my fault she has PTSD in the first place. It wouldn't be right if I didn't pay for it. I'm not offering you anything more than I'm offering to any of the other girls' families. My lawyers tell me it just might keep me from losing everything if any of them brings a lawsuit up against me."

"Are you making personal deliveries to all the other families as well?" Wayde asked.

James smiled. "No. This is my only stop before I leave."

"Leave?" Mia and Wayde exchanged looks. She saw he already knew James didn't plan on sticking around. "Where are you going? Why?"

"Seattle no longer holds my interest," he lied, and Mia knew it. "I won't know where I'm going until I get there."

"Will we ever see you again?"

He smiled, though the motion didn't reach his eyes, which had lost some of their shine at the question. He stole a glance at Wayde, who nodded in return. Mia watched them both closely, wondering just what they'd agreed to. "I may come back, after a time." He looked at Wayde again.

"I hear Arizona is nice this time of year," Wayde offered.

James shrugged. "We'll see. In the meantime, I have to ask a favor of you two." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a set of keys, dropped them in Wayde's hand.

"What's this?"

"Keys, my friend." James flashed a grin when Wayde's jaw hardened. "They're to my house on Lake Washington. With me leaving, I'll have to get rid of it. It's a terrible housing market right now. I'd have to practically give it away."

Wayde's eyes narrowed as he studied the keys in his hand. "I already have a place, Pearce."

"Actually, the construction crew starts on Monday. They require all tenants out. So you don't, in fact, have a place."

Looking at him, Wayde opened his mouth to speak but nothing came out. He snapped his jaw shut and continued to stare at him.

"I did bleed all over your floor," James explained. "It's only right I pay to have the place renovated."

"Pearce..."

"Wayde," he said and stopped his protest with his hand on Wayde's shoulder. "My friend, this is what I do. I'm into land development. You are sitting on a gold mine here. I can't turn my back on a profit."

Wayde's eyes lit up as it sank in. "I-I don't, I mean... I can't believe—" he took a deep breath. "Holy shit."

"We'll work out the details if I return."

"You mean *when* you return," Wayde corrected.

James' smile sent his eyes sparkling. "Of course. So, will you take that monstrosity of a house off my hands? As a favor, one friend to another?"

"You... You're giving us your house?"

"I've signed it over to both of you," he said and pulled out a thick envelope. "Here are the papers. You'll note they are signed over to a Mr. and Mrs. Wayde and Mia Davis. You have to show them proof of a valid marriage license when you sign the deed."

"I can't believe this," Mia muttered.

"Believe it," he answered her. "It is the least I can do after the mess I created." He bent his arm and glanced down at his wristwatch. "I've got a flight to catch."

"Don't you own the plane?" Wayde grinned at him.

"I suppose I do." He smiled in return and turned to leave. Snapping his fingers, he spun back around. "I almost forgot. There will be a man by the name of Davenport contacting you, Wayde. He's a fugitive retrieval expert."

Wayde looked at him. "A bounty hunter? Why would he need to talk to

me?"

"He told me he has one of your fugitives in custody, a man with tattoos all over his arms. He knows where the other one is, but may need your help in apprehending him."

The twinkle in Wayde's smoky gray eyes couldn't be denied. "Guy?"

James nodded. "I know how much you want to bring him in. It's my gift to you."

"You've already done so much," Wayde pointed out.

James' eyes misted, and Mia's swelled in response. "With that," he said and drew in a deep breath. "My friends, it's been fun."

"James?" Mia called to him, happiness and sadness swirling inside her. He turned to her and offered her a sad smile. She looked over at Wayde and sucked in a breath. He had tears in his eyes, too. Looking back at her, he nodded in approval, knowing what she needed to do next.

Stepping up to James, she tenderly cradled his head in her hands and kissed him. "I love you," she whispered against his lips. "I'll always love you."

His eyes softened and a single tear ran down his handsome cheek. He glanced between the two of them. "I love you, too. Both of you." With that, he turned and opened the door. "Let's go," he said to his bodyguards and walked away. He never looked back.

Wayde closed the door and looked at her. "Are you ready for this?"

"For what?" she asked.

"It seems we have to get married."

Her heart jumped to her throat and stayed there. "Is that what you want?"

"More than anything. Mia Andrews, I'm in love with you. Marry me."

"I-I... Of course I love... I-I am... I want..." Her stutter caused all of her words to seize on her tongue.

His crooked grin sent her insides into orbit. "Are you always so articulate?"

She laughed against her tears as he leaned in and kissed her. Melting against him, she knew she'd finally found everything she'd been looking for. A new lease on life. Her family back.

And true love.

THE END

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