



Raven Starr



Red Rose Publishing

Her Smile

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Dedication:

To all the people who dared to stop dreaming.

Don't ever stop believing in yourself.

Believe in love and believe you, just believe.

Without it we all stumble and fall.

I dedicate this book to my favorite supervisor, Reggie L.

Thank you for always believing me.

I want to Thank, Cheyenne, Jordan and AJ, my kids, for always believing in me and pushing me forward. Thanks guys! Love ya all

Raven Starr

Chapter One

Mark sat at the bar holding his shot glass tightly, afraid the barmaid might rip it from his grip. *I can't believe the damn bar is closing* he thought, glancing up at the TV over the bar. Crossing Jordan was on. Mark scanned the empty hotel lounge, and wondered again, what the hell he was doing with his life. Here he was, thirty-five year old man, away from home in a strange city with a closing bar, regretting his choices. He especially regretted the quality of this hotel.

"Damn bar," he muttered.

Deep inside, he knew it wasn't the closing bar, or the quality of the hotel that truly disturbed him. It was what awaited him tomorrow night, his so-called girlfriend, Eve.

Mark shook his head and sipped his Patron. He dreaded going back home to her, to her infernal questions of where he'd been, and what or presumably who he was doing now. The constant raving about the time he arrived home and why he wasn't loaded down with presents for her. All of her endless questions that he had no conceivable answer too. Then he would just dig into his wallet for yet another credit card for her to max out. *Ungrateful bitch.*

Mark put his head down and tried to focus on his main purpose at the moment, and that was getting falling down drunk. After his blistering forty-five minute set, he deserved a damned cold drink. *Well maybe more than one.*

“Oh man,” came an angelic voice from behind. Mark slowly raised his head, intrigued by the soft voice.

“Guess no drinks for me then, huh?”

Nonchalantly, he lifted his eyes, and in that moment, came face to face with the most beautiful creature he’d ever seen. Though he sat hunched over his drink, the beautiful stranger only came to his shoulders.

“Sorry,” mumbled the tired barmaid as she hastened her cleaning duties before more people showed up wanting a drink.

“It’s okay. Not your fault, right?”

The barmaid gave a weak smile and walked to the far end of the bar. “Sorry, the boss said we have to close early today. Something about changing the theme, but I told him it’s a bar in a crummy hotel why care.” The barmaid shrugged her shoulders and mumbled something else Mark couldn’t hear, nor did he want too.

“Oh well,” stated the beauty as she turned to leave Mark got a sudden urge to speak.

“No wait,” he swiveled around on the stool exposing his identity.

“Hey gorgeous,” she said and flashed him a perfect smile. At that moment, he felt all his pain and anguish diminish.

Mark returned her smile and gestured to the empty seat next to him.

“Such rudeness in the presence a beautiful lady I have forgotten my manners.”

He pushed away from the bar and stood up. Being over six feet he seemed to tower over her. If she felt intimidated, she was a master at hiding it.

“I’m Mark, nice to meet you.”

He held out his hand and hoped like hell it wasn’t sweaty. *Why am I so damned nervous?*

“I’m Kylie, nice to meet you, too.”

She slipped her hand into his and they fit together like two missing puzzle pieces. Touching her skin sent tiny, tingling vibrations through his hand that circulated throughout his entire body. He shivered. The feeling was so intense he gasped a little.

“You okay?” she asked getting closer to him.

Oh God, she smells so good.

Mark closed his eyes and inhaled Kylie’s sweet scent.

“You okay?” she asked again, concerned.

His eyes flashed open.

“Y-yes of course” he stuttered. “Long day, I guess.”

Kylie smiled again.

“Yea, I bet. You did a great job out there today, despite the heat and the chicks fainting, it was all good.”

“You were there?”

Mark felt honored that she stood out there in the blistering heat to watch him perform his love songs for forty-five minutes. It was the shortest set in history, he joked with his tour manager after the show.

“Well maybe just a bit.”

She measured out about an inch with her fingers on her left hand, her right hand still held his.

“I know this may sound forward, but would you like to go for a walk or something? Inside, outside, anywhere, your choice.”

Kylie furrowed her sculpted brow slightly.

“You don’t believe me, do you?” he cocked his head in a weird position and he hoped he didn’t look like a crazed parrot. Slowly a brilliant smile slid across her face.

“A walk it is then,” she stated letting go of his hands and stepping backward. He missed her closeness and touch instantly. Mark waved his arm in front of him as if clearing her path.

“After you.”

Kylie winked and gracefully walked past him. He watched her walk a few paces ahead, he took this time to totally check her out. She wore a red tank top that made her dark skin shimmer and come alive. The dark blue low riders accented her firm rear perfectly. Her black hair tied up in a ponytail accented her slender throat. *She's perfect.*

“Am I walking alone?” her sultry echoed softly in his ears.

“No...no, of course not.”

Mark jogged over to her and opened the door that lead outside. The sun was in its beginning stages of setting. Purple and pink hues mixed creating a whimsical vision of heaven.

“It's beautiful,” she whispered once he stood at her side. He leaned down, his nose mere inches from her hair.

“Not as beautiful as you.”

He had to suppress his dire need to stroke her. Something inside him screamed out for this woman. The flutters in his stomach reminded him of his first time on stage, how scared he had been, how scared he was of this intense feeling for this beautiful woman passing in the night.

Mark opened his eyes as she raised her head to stare at him.

“Your smile causes me to catch my breath, to realize that miracles can happen. Your smile makes me feel...”

He stopped afraid of what craziness would spring from his lips next, pushing them together tightly, almost pressing them into a stern line.

What the hell am I saying? I mean damnit I'm going home tomorrow. He would forget her face like all the countless other faces merged in his overly crowded memory warehouse. He would forget staring into those huge baby brown eyes, forget that wonderfully perfect smile, and forget the sweet way she smells when she's close to him. *Yea, who the hell am I kidding? I could never forget her smile.*

The cool night breeze blew gently against their hot skin, giving them the slightest relief from the days scorching heat.

"Come on."

Mark nodded to the entrance of Rock Woods Park.

They crossed the busy street and entered the park. White and deep purple pansies dotted the broken asphalt trail that led inside. They walked side by side in silence taking in what the park had to offer.

Mark watched Kylie as she stopped and stared at the strangest looking tree he had ever seen. The trunk was twisted and looked like it could be in agony. It was huge, but not nearly as tall as the others, plus it was off to the side. Its branches drooped over, nearly touching the ground, and the pungent sweet smell of the pink and white blossoms was overpowering.

"What a beautiful tree," Kylie said.

Mark gave her an inquisitive look.

"You think this monstrosity is beautiful?"

He shook his head.

"It's odd to say the least but far from being beautiful."

Mark saw the hurt look on Kylie's face and felt a pang of guilt knowing that he caused her sadness. Her soulful brown eyes cut into his soul.

"That's why it is beautiful. It stands apart from the others; daring to be different, despite all the ridicule and prejudice it might receive. Looking at something and judging it from appearance alone is wrong, don't ya think?"

Judging by appearances is how he lived his life, past and unfortunately present. Deciding on which fan to sleep with came with added skill. The girl had to be just right or at least look just right at the time. Or maybe it all depended on how much he had to drink before he even saw the girl in question. *Damn, am I really shallow or just horny?*

Mark stared at the tree again as another gentle breeze made the long branches swaying, like arms waving happily in the wind. Suddenly, he realized that because it was odd, it could still be inspiring and in its own way, that makes it beautiful.

“It is beautiful,” his voice came out in hushed tones.

“I didn’t see before but I see it now.”

“Good. I’m glad. It’s amazing to be able to see past one’s image to look within their soul. That’s where our journey begins.”

The happiness returned to Kylie face, restoring his faith in himself for making her happy. A few paces ahead Mark stopped to see Kylie unfastening her shoes. *What on earth?* Eyeing the plush green grass Mark fought his own urge to tear off his Armani shoes and let the grass tickle his size ten feet. Without reservations Kylie kicked off her shoes and pranced in the grass. Mark smiled.

They continued down the trail. Mark was very conscious that she didn’t have on any shoes and he wanted to make damn sure she didn’t hurt herself.

Cattails sprang up, reaching high over the other plants so they could lap up the fading sunlight. Minnows swam freely in the brook, darting and dodging the shadows cast on the surface of the water from passing park goers.

Before them lay a vast pond that covered the middle of the park, on one side a family of small brown ducks paddled away from the sprinklers that shot recycled water in a pretty pattern. With the fading sun, the droplets looked like diamonds falling to the earth.

Mark frowned as the realization set in, the sight of trash littering the sides of the bank made him grimace. They stood together, side by side in the shade of the grand trees while the scent of pine wafted to their noses. Mark inhaled deeply. The sound of Kylie's sweet giggle caressed his ear. He turned his head in her direction to witness a fat squirrel scramble up the trunk of a nearby tree, a big nut tucked tightly in its grip. He couldn't help chuckling. Just being close to her, he felt like a totally different man, a better man. His heart pounded so hard, he glanced over to see if she could hear it; if she did, he couldn't tell.

"Let's walk around pond. Okay?" Mark nudged Kylie playfully.

"Okay," she locked her arm around his as he graciously led the way.

The conversation flowed casually as if they were friends just reunited once more.

"So, you live around here?" Mark asked.

"Nope, just came to enjoy the festival and see the show."

"Your boyfriend lets you go traveling around alone?"

Kylie turned to gaze at him.

"That's smooth. Why don't ya just ask me what you wanna know?"

Mark's face flushed red.

"Busted, sorry, Ok...ok, do you have a boyfriend?"

"Nope," she replied.

"Wow, you're kidding, right?" He tried to conceal his delight.

"No, I'm not kidding. You don't believe me?" she shot him a sideways glance. Mark pointed his finger at her.

"You got me again. Why are you single?"

"I don't know. I'm a lot like that tree back there. I'm different so I guess that makes it harder to understand me." Kylie shrugged.

“Different?” Mark slowed down just a tad. “Like Michael Jackson, Thriller, different?”

He bulged out his eyes and screwed up his face, trying to imitate a zombie.

Kylie snickered.

“No, silly, I believe in love, strong and true. I believe that somewhere is my soul mate, my other half. The one man that will understand me who loves respects me and will grow with me. Love is a very strong emotion. I’ve never truly felt it but I’ve seen it, especially on the faces of my father and his wife. They showed me what love looks like.”

Mark heard the sadness creep into her voice as she spoke of her father. “But who knows, maybe what I thought was love might have been gas pains.”

Mark laughed at her attempt to lighten the conversation. Kylie’s giggled blended in so well it gave Mark inspiration for a new song.

“I love hearing you laugh.” She nuzzled her face against his arm.

“Ditto,” Mark whispered his voice barely audible. Mark plastered a smile on his face, because he knew he didn’t laugh at home or even smile. *This moment is the happiest I’ve ever been.* In the time, spent with this beauty he had found something he swore he’d lost. He found himself, his happiness, this was his moment. As the sun finally set, the air took on a slight chill. Gallantly, Mark stripped off his blazer and wrapped it around her exposed shoulders.

“Thank you,” she smiled and batted her long eyelashes at him.

He could look into her luscious brown eyes forever. Mark shook the ‘forever’ thought out of his head. In real life, he had Eve.

A morose feeling came over him; it was as if a dark ominous cloud of dread landed heavily on his shoulders at the vague thought of returning home. The touch of Kylie’s soft hand against his face snapped him back.

“Sorry,” he mumbled.

Kylie flashed him a sideways smile. "Maybe we should be getting back?"

"Yeah maybe," Mark put his arm around Kylie and started walking back to the hotel.

His mind raced in many different ways to smooth talk this woman to his room. He knew it could work, because he had used the same lines with other women before in his past; but Kylie was different. There was something unmistakable about her. She had a way of captivating his heart and his head at the same time. Both heads were intrigued, the one on his shoulders and the one in his pants. Of course being the man that he was, he wanted to see her naked, he wanted to know all of her intimate spots, but he didn't want them like this. In the lobby, they stood staring at each other.

"Well I guess this is goodbye." Mark tried to hide the sadness in his voice.

"I don't want it to be, but what I want..."

He couldn't continue, it was just too hard.

"It doesn't have to goodbye: goodbye means forever. We could leave it at see ya later and maybe our paths will cross again."

Before he had a chance to object, Kylie kissed the side of his lips, flashed her winning smile, and disappeared down the hall leaving him standing in the empty lobby touching the spot she kissed on his face.

Kylie was gone.

Mark walked to his hotel room, the plastic key card heavy in his hand.

Once inside the dismal room, he undressed tossing his clothes onto the shabby chair that held his overnight bag. Bare assed, he walked into the bathroom, yearning for a hot shower. Being on the road often had made him a hotel connoisseur. In the shower, as the hot water pounded on his back, he tried to purge Kylie's lovely face from his thoughts but instead all he could see was her smile. Her beautiful and innocent smile.

Out of the shower, he draped himself over the full size bed. Mark had trouble falling asleep. He tossed and turned as images of Eve's greedy face popped into his head soon to be replaced by Kylie's smile and joyous laughter. Two women, so totally opposite from each other, consumed his mind. When the annoying alarm buzzed, Mark arose exhausted, as if he'd been on tour for weeks with no sleep. He threw the covers back, sat up, and placed his feet flat on floor. His brown eyes burned and when he rubbed them, it only made matters worse. He glanced out the window to see a dreary, dank day.

Ominous grey clouds covered the skies. *Great, it's gonna rain.* With that notion floating through his mind, he got out of bed to start the day.

Mark dressed quicker than he thought as he donned his chic black sunglasses, trying to conceal his red, puffy eyes; it looked as if tears had coursed from his eyes all night. *I'm a man and men don't cry.* Since New Jersey wasn't far from his own home in Boston, he decided to drive. Mark opened his hotel room door and found a single red rose with a note attached to the metal doorknob. Confused he looked up and down the hallway to see if someone had placed it there by mistake. *Who would give me a rose?* Seeing no one, he grabbed the flower and held it to his nose, reading the note hanging from the stem: *May your journeys bring you to me again. See ya later.*

"Kylie," he whispered as he fought back the tears burning his eyes.

He did not want to show his sensitive side, fearing someone looking on might think he's a punk. And not the man he was. He casually walked up to the front desk and dropped off the plastic card. The young lady behind the counter smiled a wide, crooked smile. He could tell she'd just eaten something because the remnants of something green were stuck in her teeth. *Thank God for dark shades.*

Mark nodded and hurried out the door, still clinging to the rose in his hand. Standing in the parking lot staring at his black SUV, he regretted not ordering a driver.

“Yea, I’ve got a lot of regrets,” Mark murmured as he tossed his overnight bag into the backseat. Settling into the driver’s seat, he knew his first stop would be the nearest Dunkin Doughnuts for a large coffee.

Mark had a long drive ahead of him and what seemed to be even longer lifetime with Eve. “Jeez.” He started his SUV backed up and pulled, tucking his precious memories away as he gave the hotel one last look. Turning left into traffic, he headed to the first Dunkin Doughnuts.

Chapter Two

Mark pumped his stereo and sipped on his now halfway gone large light and sweet coffee. He savored the taste as he bopped his head to the loud music. The interstate seem to stretch on for miles and miles. *Endless fucking highway*. The bleak surroundings didn't help to keep his mind on the road, blurred groves of trees on his left broken up by the occasional passing car.

As the music droned, bewilderment and resentment arose as the miles brought him closer to his undesirable fate. He glanced out the window thinking he saw a tree that resembled Kylie's beautiful but odd-looking tree. *What enigma she is*. He turned his head to give the passing tree his total attention.

That was a big mistake. The blaring sound of an eighteen-wheeler's horn turned Mark's attention back to the road. He pulled the steering wheel hard to the right, swerving across the lanes and coming to a stop in the break down lane.

"Fuck!" Mark exclaimed running his trembling hands through his brown locks. "What the hell am I doing?"

For the rest of the trip, Mark kept his eyes glued to the road. Finally, around half past four he turned onto Dayton Drive he felt his heart sink deep into the pit of stomach. His stomach made a low growl and threatened to return all the coffee if he didn't get a hold of himself and right now. As his black SUV crept down his street, he wished he was still on tour. *Shit. Get a grip, Mark*.

Mark pulled into his driveway and looked at his four bedrooms, two and half bath house.

The raised Ranch-style home sat on three acres of land that Mark fenced up by hand, to keep wild women away. He loved the two bay windows in the

front, but he wasn't just admiring the house, he was scanning for movement. *I wonder what room she is in.* Mark turned off his engine, got out and grabbed his bag, heading for the front door.

Before he could place his next step, Mark stopped, turned on his heel, and raced back to his ride. He threw open the door again in a mad panic, looking for his rose. It rested on the passenger side seat, waiting patiently. Mark knew if Eve saw it, she would do everything short of burning the house to destroy his favorite keepsake. *I need a diversion.*

Mark held the rose in his left hand and threw his blue blazer over his arm, concealing the flower from view. With his right hand, he fumbled in his wallet easing out the Platinum MasterCard, and kissed it goodbye, as he closed the door and headed back to the front door. Eve stood there with a phony, plastic smile plastered on her face. Mark forced himself to smile back.

"What were you doing?"

The questions began..."Nothing," he answered his smile already faded from his handsome face. "Here ya go. Knock yourself out." He held out the credit card as he brushed past her.

Once inside he took the stairs two at a time. Upstairs he heard the front door close, then the start of engine.

"Bitch," he whispered.

Mark felt a surge of nervous energy as he paced around his room. He carefully removed his hidden keepsake and sniffed it. *My God it smells like her. Okay. I gotta find a hiding spot.* Mark walked past the chest of drawers, a picture in a silver frame catching his attention. He picked it up; in the picture was Eve and himself in somewhat happier times. Somewhere between then and now, they had changed and grown a part, only the comfortable somewhat stableness of not being alone kept them together. Eve had been blessed with olive colored skin,

dark hair and eyes. The harder he looked at the picture; the only thing he saw in her eyes was dollar signs. Eve's face was long and when she was upset it seems to grow even longer making her resemble a horse. Her square teeth didn't help matters either. Eve's smile was nothing like Kylie. Eve's smile was crooked and had a tooth protruding from her upper gum. Mark then looked at himself in the picture. He wasn't smiling in fact he had a trapped look on his face. *Like a deer in highlights*. At thirty five years old, he should be happy.

Mark looked at the mirror, then back at the picture, and finally again to his reflection. *Oh no wait a sec. What's that?* He placed his tanned hand on his face, pulling down his lower lid in order to see his brown eyes better. In his eyes, he saw a glimmer of something in his eyes. The picture captured his dull, expressionless eyes. Mark made a funny face and ran his fingers through his hair. It was full, thick and brown with no visible grey. His skin tanned and taut not wrinkled or loose.

Mark turned and looked at the flower. He wanted to keep it, to save it so whenever he wanted he could look at it; so he could remember the woman that made him laugh. The only woman that made his heart pound rapidly in his chest.

His thoughts raced. Where could he hide it? Then the answer came.

"My study."

Mark hurried down the hall a small key and his beloved flower in hand. He unlocked his closed door scurried inside, closing the door hastily after him.

This locked room was his Fortress of Solitude; he kept it locked which showed his faith in his partner. In his fortress, he could lock out Eve and her bitterness. He sat in his brown leather chair and ran his fingers over the mahogany wood desk. On the left side, he reached down to open the last drawer; it was deep and filled with miscellaneous papers.

A white linen handkerchief that his mother had given him for Christmas a few years back lay strategically placed on top. *Perfect.* Mark picked up the handkerchief and placed the flower inside, careful not to damage the petals. After wrapping up his present, he gently set the items back in the drawer. He took another key; smaller than the first and locked up the drawer as a secondary precaution measure.

Mark leaned back, satisfied with in his efforts of concealing his prize. He knew that Eve would be buying herself into a stupor and if he wanted to get some sleep, he'd better do it right now.

Absently, he touched the place where he thought his heart lived, and walked out. He doubled checked the lock to make sure no one could enter. After a quick shower, Mark pulled on his grey boxer-briefs, stuffing his extremely large rod into them. *Extra large my ass.*

As he flopped down on his sleep number bed. How much money did that credit card have on it? He couldn't remember. *Thank God it wasn't the black unlimited card. I'd be in debt up to my eyes-balls for sure.*

Mark had given his mother, Karen, that card to keep for safety reasons. Eve was also a damn good snooper. Nothing was safe in his own home, not his money; his heart, or even his sanity, from the talons of the evil Eve. His mother had warned him of women like Eve. Gold diggers she had called them. They can only see your money, not your heart, his mother's sweet voice reverberated in his head.

"I know. I know," Mark said absently answering the phantom voice.

Mark grabbed his pillow, jammed it under his head, and closed his eyes. The feeling of complete reverence entered his soul the moment Kylie's sexy face appeared. He lost himself in the power pull of the dream. Mark wiggled his toes and fidgeted with the sheets. He moved his arm to the right, almost alarmed at the

presence of a woman beside him. He hadn't heard Eve come home. Tentatively, he pried open his eyes a little peering at the figure next to him.

Mark swallowed the ball of dread building in his throat. When he finally got the courage to pry his eyes open completely, he was stunned at what he saw. The woman in his bed was not the picky, money hungry sex fiend he thought it was. Instead, Kylie lay sleeping beside him. *I must be sleeping.*

Mark rolled on his right side and propped his head on his hand, he intertwined tendrils loose black hair around his fingers. He relished in the silky way it slipped through his grasp. Her chocolate colored skin called out for his attention, and touching her seemed essential, necessary.

Mark pulled back his hand quickly as a slow moan escaped her perfect pouty lips. *I have to be dreaming.* His eyes scanned the décor in his room. Everything looked the same except for one major difference. Kylie was in his bed.

Instinctively he reached out to touch her. Just as his fingertips caressed her cheek, her eyes fluttered and opened slowly. A slow, sleepy, yet intoxicatingly sexy smile appeared.

"Beautiful," he whispered.

Mark leaned close and kissed her, wishing that if this was a dream that he never wake from it. He felt Kylie pull away from him.

"You okay?" she asked sliding off the bed. Mark loved the short blue chemise she wore.

The garment was just long enough to cover her taut ass.

"Wait," he begged grabbing for her wrist.

"One second. You don't wanna kiss me with morning breath, do ya? I'll be right back" Kylie blew him a kiss and walked into the bathroom adjoining.

Mark leaned his head against the pillow inhaling her sweet scent. He acted like a man with an addiction. *Yea I'm addicted to Kylie. I'm craving every inch of her.*

Bang...bang...bang...

Mark's eyes flashed open; he still clung the pillow to his chest.

"What the hell?" he asked sitting up just in time to see the bedroom door crash open.

"Didn't you hear me blowing the horn?" Eve's voice sounded nasally and irritated.

"No, I didn't hear you, Eve. I was sleeping. Ya know sleep, one usually lies down, closes their eyes and uh well they sleep!" Mark was a smart ass, especially when woken up in the manner Eve just did. He threw back the covers in a mad rush.

"What's your problem?" she snorted.

"If you only knew what my problem was, Eve. If you only knew."

After that, he stormed downstairs to inspect the damage of three hours of shit shopping. The amount of crap Eve bought would bankrupt anyone else. But a mere fifteen bags from Macy's wasn't bad. He had seen worse. Staring at the bags, he could hear Eve's voice as she chatted on the phone about her latest haul.

"Some fashion designer she turned out to be," Mark mumbled and shook his head as he moved the bags to shut the front door.

He glanced at the pedestrian for a second before closing the door, but something inside him thought he recognized the image. Mark fumbled with the doorknob before opening it and stepping outside. The sun had set hours ago and the night air felt chilly.

"Jesus, I see her everywhere. I gotta get it together."

He felt this irreversible need to get back to sleep, to dream of his beloved.

"What the hell am I gonna do now?" he asked himself, leaning his back against the door.

Eve's annoying tone alerted Mark to Eve's precise whereabouts in the house. *She's in the kitchen.* Mark tiptoed past the swinging kitchen door towards his wet bar. He picked up a bottle of Patron and quietly slipped unnoticed upstairs.

Chapter Three

In the weeks since his eye-opening trip to Jersey he struggled with keeping his dreams to himself. Even in his dream Kylie was irresistible. Waking each morning, Mark missed Kylie even more. Her face haunted him. All he wanted was a chance to get to know her, to care for her, to protect her and most importantly, he wanted to love her and be loved by her in return.

“You’ve only met her once, spent a few hours at some park looking at the world in a different light. Shake it off, man,” a little voice said in the back of his mind.

“Shut up,” Mark retorted as he turned off the engine.

His mother’s house was a large six bedroom Victorian on four beautiful landscaped acres, a small stable, almost hidden off to the right, with his mother’s prize horses, and beyond that a man-made pond that made this house the talk of the town.

Mark ran his nervous fingers through his hair and got out. He strolled up the walk, watching out for his sneaky nephews who loved to play “ambush Uncle Mark.” He raised his fist to knock on the big red and white door when his twin nephews Justin and Jason popped out of the bushes that lined the front yard. They were completely bare-chested and marked up in war paint courtesy of their mother’s red lipstick. Each boy grabbed a leg, and Mark laughed, pretending to stagger as he let the boys pull him down on the soft green grass.

“Howdy, Uncle Mark. Grandma said you’d be comin over today.” Justin started.

“Yup she did and we waited for you since after breakfast. What took ya so long? Huh?” Jason finished the sentence his older by four minutes brother had started.

“That long, huh?”

Mark looked at both boys and felt his heart ache. He wanted to have his own children one day. Both boys nodded.

“That’s a pretty long time. Well, what can I do to make it up to you guys?”

The twins stared at each other. Mark knew that look; they often spoke to one another without using words. *I guess I would be closer to my siblings if we shared the same amniotic sack.* He loved watching them. His sister Tammy always said he was loopy, but Mark stood fast on his opinion.

“Guitar Hero!” the boys yelled together.

“So be it, but...” he held up his index finger, “I gotta talk to grandma first, okay?”

“You got it, Unkie Mark,” the boys chimed in unison.

Mark smiled as he stood up brushing the dirt from his jeans.

“Okay, be good boys.” Mark went back to the door where his mother was standing. “How long you been watching?”

“Long enough. Guitar Hero, huh? Better you than me. That game drives me crazy.”

His mother opened her arms and embraced him.

Mark held on tight afraid if he let go he may fall to pieces.

“You’re trembling, Mark. Sweetie, what’s wrong?”

Slowly, Mark straightened, making sure his legs listened to his brain. He opened his mouth but the words were caught in his throat.

“Come on in, and come talk to me. You two boys come on in,” Karen said her voice soft and gentle.

“Okay Grandma.” Like a whirlwind the boys ran inside.

Mark walked through the threshold and immediately felt at ease. The tension of the last few months seemed to melt away. He followed his mother into the den, but his older brother and sister called it the Conversation Palace. His mom loved to listen. As a single parent, she had done everything to make sure all the kids knew they were loved and had someone in their corner at all times. She wanted to help them as much as she could. Sometimes it felt like downright meddling, but Mark needed her guidance.

He shut the door behind him and shot a knowing glance at his mother.

“Sit down, Mark. Let’s talk.” She gestured to the chair in front of her.

“I can’t sit, Mom, I can’t do anything...” The words came out garbled and tangled.

“You know that’s not true. Where’s all this coming from? Is it Eve again?”

Mark scoffed. “It’s past Eve, Mom, way past her.”

He walked over to the big bay window that faced the back yard and looked out.

“So?” Karen pushed.

Mark licked his lips. “I met someone.” He heard his mother gasp.

“Wait before you say anything. About three months in Jersey, I met someone. Mom, she’s the most elegant and sensitive creature God ever created. She’s utterly beautiful, inside and out. I can’t get her outta my head.”

Mark realized he had been pacing.

“I’m smitten. Jesus this is insane.”

He ran his shaky hand down his face.

“Well, did you sleep with her?” his mom said cutting to the quick.

So direct you gotta love it. “I don’t sleep with everybody. I don’t care what the damned papers say and to answer your question...” He stopped pacing and stared his mother square in the eye so she could see the truth.

“No, I didn’t sleep with her. I wanted to, but she’s so different. I want it to be the right time for both of us. Not a wham, bam, thank you ma’am sorta deal.”

“How long did you spend with her?”

Mark could tell he had piqued his mother interest.

“A few hours. We walked around some park and just talked. It was wonderful. The best and worst day of my life. I find her then lose her in one night.”

“So, that’s all okay. Eve can’t blame you...”

“No, it’s not okay, Mom. It’s not about Eve. I can’t stop thinking about her. I dream about her all the time. I long to hold her in my arms. I feel so disconnected from everything.”

Mark sat in the chair across from his mother.

“I can’t forget her. I tried to pretend my heart doesn’t ache for her. Her smile is the most precious and wonderful sight in my eyes. She takes my breath away. When I look into her eyes I see my purpose.”

Mark poured his feeling out, as he had never done before. Getting women had never been a problem for him. His only problem was too many girls and not enough time to screw them all. Now he was all twisted around, feeling insecure and a tad bit vulnerable by one female. It was driving him mad.

“She captured a piece of my soul, Mom. What am I supposed to do?”

Mark could no longer contain the tears. He wiped them away, but they were quickly replaced.

“Oh Mark,” Karen threw her arms around her son. “It’s okay.”

For the first time since was he a boy, he wept sadly in his mother’s arms.

Chapter Four

The weeks passed quickly since he'd spilled the beans about his feelings to his mother. Karen didn't like Eve and made that fact known at every opportunity she could.

"You look great," she kept telling him.

He didn't feel great. He felt like shit most of the time, drained by crying and dreaming. Everyday away from Kylie made him feel numb. Every breath apart from her was labored. Every thought was consumed by his yearning to see her again.

"I know what I gotta do," Mark said to himself.

Eve was out on another useless shopping spree. His mother had told him, no, she begged him to move large sums of his money into a separate account, away from the joint bank account he and Eve shared. All of his credit cards now bore the minimum limit. He knew once she figured this out she would be enraged. *Good, this ends tonight. I'm tired of living like this.* Determined, Mark grabbed his trusty overnight bag and tossed in some clothes. He knew that when she heard what he had to say it wasn't going to be pleasant. Mark knew that trying to make her leave his house would be hard hence the packing. At this moment he didn't care, he would always have a place to go, so that wouldn't be a problem. His problem was Eve.

No more frantic days of walking around on eggshells in his own damn home. No more bitchin and hollerin about why he'd stop fucking her and when he was going to start again. It had been almost six months when he made the conscious decision to stop sleeping with Eve. He never really got anything out of

it anyway. After being with Kylie, he didn't want anyone else. Mark would wait, wait until he could have Kylie in his arms again. Next time he won't ever let her go.

Mark trotted happily down the stairs, his feet felt so light that he stomped down the stairs just to make sure he made each step. Carefully he placed his bag the front door and waited.

Once Eve got home the fireworks would start. *It's time to grab my balls and stop letting her run over me.* He checked his Tag Heuer watch. *It's a quarter to three.* Today he would change this, take back the power he had so easily given to Eve. It began with breaking it off with Eve, then he could start his new mission.

Find Kylie.

When Eve came the door it was like an A- bomb went off. Mark didn't even let her close the door before he started.

"I just wanna let you know it's over."

"What's over?" Eve said mockingly.

"This," he gestured to both of them. "Us. We're over."

Eve opened her mouth but Mark cut her off.

"No, you talked for over ten years and it's my turn and I have a lot to say."

Mark stalked over to her.

"I'm not happy and I truly don't think I ever was. Maybe somewhere inside I felt something for you but not now." He shook his head in disgust. "All I feel for you now is contempt."

"What have I done to you now, Mark? Huh? I work, I cook for you, I do everything..."

"Liar!" Mark's temper flared.

"You don't work unless you think spending my money is a job, then you're the CEO of your own fucking company. Mark Sucker Enterprises is closed, Eve.

As for your attempts at cooking, well I've tasted better, plus my mother taught me how to cook, so I won't suffer when you're gone."

"You're a piece of work, Mark. You'll just kick me out? How could you do that to me?"

Mark heard the tone change in her voice and knew she was trying to push out tears.

"Just stop it, Eve okay? All you want is my cock and my fucking bank account. Let's get real. Now you don't get either. I'm done. This..." he opened his arms encompassing the whole house. "all of this mine. I brought this; the car you drive, I paid for. The clothes on your on back, I bought. All the money you spend is mine. So tell me how you do everything. It's not you, it's me."

He pounded several times on his chest emphasizing his anger.

"You do this all the time. We break up and you find out there is no one else around who will put up with all the shit you dish out. No one but me. You always come back. Always. So what!"

Eve put her hands on her hips, trying to look defiant.

Mark copied her, making his square jaw long and drawn out trying to do his best Eve impersonation.

"You jerk! You stupid, at times frigid, man-whore. You bounce all around the country fucking whoever you like..."

"Have you ever stopped me?" Mark shot back. "If you wanted us to work you could said something besides telling me that I could screw anyone I wanted as long as you weren't around. How quickly you forget, Eve."

Mark watched Eve as she reeled from his statement as if she had been slapped.

"I was just trying to make you happy," Eve stammered.

“Yeah right. You never cared about my happiness. In the years we’ve together this is the passion I’ve seen from either of us. I’ve had enough. I’m not in love with you, I don’t even know if I ever was. I just want out and I want you out. I’ll give you some time to get your stuff and get out, but I want you gone when I return. You hear me, Eve? Gone.”

“Ha! You speak of love but you’re so damned scared of everything that you wouldn’t know love if it came up and bit ya in ass.”

“Think what you want. Pack your stuff. Don’t go to my mother’s crying, because you will find no sympathy there.”

“You’ll come back you always come back! No one will want to deal with your infidelities or whorish ways, Mark.”

Mark held up his hand to cut her off again.

“You’re just running your mouth, Eve. I’m done listening to what you have to say. I want no part of what you are offering. None. Now leave it be.”

Mark hustled past her, grabbing his overnight bag on his way out the door.

“One week, Eve. That’s all I’m giving you. One week. Get packing.”

With that, Mark opened and slammed the door behind him, leaving Eve to stew in her juices.

How good he felt telling Eve everything that had been weighing on his heart for ten long tedious years. *I should have done this a long time ago.* Mark knew leaving his house was a risk, but it was a risk he was willing to take. His plan was in motion. Other than his house, he didn’t care.

He expected Eve to throw a bitch fit, break his stuff, damage, as much as possible, but to Mark it was all material objects that he could be always replaced. His sanity was irreplaceable. With Eve out of his life, he could pursue Kylie wholeheartedly.

The truth of Eve's stung deeply but for Kylie he would give it all up, for her he would anything.

Chapter Five

Instead of showing up on his mother's doorstep, Mark stayed at his bachelor pad that he had convinced Eve he'd sold.

"Good Evening, Mr. Storm." George the doorman greeted.

"It's been awhile, sir." He opened the door.

"Yes, George it has been awhile but it's good to be home. If Miss. Eve shows up she's not allowed in, okay?"

"Anything you say, sir." George agreed.

Mark nodded as he passed George, and from the corner of his eye, he thought he saw the old man smile. *Guess no one like the bitch.*

"Only you, dumb ass." taunted a little voice in the back of head.

"Shut up," Mark retorted as the elevator door closed.

The soft tune of the Bee Gee's floated in his head. Everything made him want to find Kylie more and more. *Why did I let her go without doing something?* The question had burned in his soul since the day they'd parted.

Mark stepped off the elevator, walked to his door, and unlocked it. He stepped inside, flicked on the light, then exhaled loudly.

"It's good to home."

He closed the door and dumped his bag in the chair along with his jacket. He stood perfectly still and looked around his large apartment. His living room had beige walls that accented the tan leather couch and matching chair, with throw pillows continuing the earth tone theme. The living room also had a huge picture window with fantastic views of the rose gardens below.

Mark glanced at the empty mantle piece above the stone fireplace and sighed. He turned, grabbed his bag, and treaded slowly upstairs to his room.

He walked into his room and placed his bag on the foot of his bed. This room was considerably darker than downstairs. The walls were painted midnight blue with black mini-blinds hanging at the windows to keep the light out. On the ceiling were painted constellations of Orion the Warrior and Cygnus the Bird. He remembered many a night staring at his starry night sky wishing for better days.

On the right side of the room hid a mirrored closet full of designers duds, many with the price tags still attached. Across the room was his thinking window, accompanied with a ledge that he sat on to write his music. He loved sitting there in the moonlight, composing the melodies to his songs. Along the far wall was his black lacquer dresser.

Mark flopped back on the bed, crossing his arms behind his head. For a moment he just stared at the wanna-be stars. He was free from Eve, at least for the time being. Now he could go after Kylie without baggage.

How the hell am I going to do that? I don't even know her last name. I only know what she looks like.

A light bulb went off in his head. Mark leaned over grabbed the phone from the nightstand and dialed his best friend Charlie's number.

"Hello?" The dry, scratchy voice of his friend let Mark know that he had awoken his chum.

"Hey man, it's Mark. I'm sorry to wake you but I have a big favor to ask."

"It's alright, Mark. Shoot, what's up?"

"Well do you still have that composite sketch software?"

Mark knew that Charlie was now and had always been a paranoid freak.

Charlie knew the news without having had watched it. He had numerous conspiracy theories about the government, the internet, you name it, Charlie had a valid reason for its existence.

“Yup, what do you need?”

Mark’s heart leapt for joy and he did everything he could to contain it.

“I need to use it. I gotta find this girl.”

“Why? You gotta Billie Jean moment going on or something? She steal your wallet?” Charlie laughed.

“Charlie, come on man it’s nothing like that.” Mark tried to hide the desperation out of his voice.

“I’ll be there first thing in the morning. Where are you?”

“My apartment just outside the city.”

“Gotcha. See ya in the morning.”

Mark smiled as he hung up the phone. He knew he could describe Kylie but once he had the picture what would be his next step? Sitting up he began to peel away his clothes. Absentmindedly he checked himself out in the mirror. For his age, he was still in pretty good shape. His broad chest was sprinkled with tiny dark hairs. When glanced at his now flat stomach, he remembered the beer gut he used to sport.

Good thing I met her after I worked and lost the weight.

He turned from one side to the other somehow he looked different. He looked and felt stronger, mentally and emotionally. *I should’ve cut Eve loose ages ago.* Mark striped naked and walked into the bathroom to start the shower. Kylie’s sweet laughter engulfed him as he closed the frosted glass shower door.

Mark shifted around so the nozzle pointed on the back of his neck.

I have to get her back. She has to know how I feel.

Wait a minute...he was semi famous. He knew how to milk the media. In a flash, Mark knew exactly what he was going to do. He would do the craziest and hopefully most romantic thing he could think of. He needed to hold a press conference and ask his fans and anyone who had ever felt real love to help him, help him to find the love of life.

It was risky but he was willing to take it.

Chapter Six

The next morning Mark awoke early, feeling rested and rejuvenated. Sleeping in a bed without Eve had been so relaxing. He showered, brushed his teeth, and put on a pair of dark jeans and a white tank top. The shirt seemed to cling to his pectoral muscles. Mark's heart felt free as if he'd been given a second chance. A second chance at life and love and this time he planned to do everything in his power to make it work.

He bounced down the stairs and into the kitchen to make his morning coffee. Even the coffee smelled better to him.

A loud knock on the door alerted Mark to his morning visitor. He sipped his brew as he walked to the door. His hand lingered at the knob, afraid it might be Eve, but George wouldn't let him down. Charlie had his ways of getting past old George. Mark theorized about how he might have done it.

"Good morning," Mark said cheerfully as he opened the door for his childhood friend.

"Morning," Charlie replied entering Mark's apartment; his laptop tucked neatly under one arm.

Charlie was about an inch shorter than Mark and sported his brown locks in the bed head manner. Mark envisioned Charlie waking up each day running his wet fingers through his hair, apply a little gel and poof, he was done.

Charlie's hazel eyes had gotten them in quiet a few jams in their earlier and much wilder days. His cocky demeanor, with his sharp witty tongue had always made him the bad boy and the girls loved it, which only fed Charlie's ego.

Both men were older and hopefully wiser now; Charlie had finally settled down with a nice girl and had a wonderful bouncy son. Mark envied his friend's life and hoped to one day join him on the trail to happiness.

The one thing that had not changed about Charlie was his paranoia; it only grew as he got older. He knew things that most people didn't, such as the so called cover-up of the missing WMD; he knew news headlines before it made the five o'clock news.

His latest computer gadget was this composite drawing software, police issue. Funny thing, Charlie isn't a cop. Knowing all of this was the main reason he called him. This software had to help him carry out his plan to find Kylie.

"So what's this all about?" Charlie asked as he sat down to set up his computer.

"Honestly it's about a girl. You want some coffee?"

"I might in a bit, once you tell me what the 'real' deal is with all this?"

Mark settled down next to his buddy.

"I met a girl a while back. I want to see her again. Problem is, I only know her first name. I know what she looks like but..." he shrugged.

"That's it. Will you help me find her?"

He felt Charlie's cunning eyes pry into him, filtering out any lies or untruths.

"A woman got you twisted up like this?" Charlie laughed.

"I told ya it would happen to you. So you kicked Eve to the curb? That's the best news I've heard in a long time. Now let's get to work."

Mark and Charlie sat there for hours going through more than one pot of coffee and looking through each part of the human face making the picture perfect. Everything had to fit together like puzzles pieces. Charlie worked diligently as Mark described Kylie's features, each feature etched within the

lining of his heart. The moment she slipped out of his life, a piece of himself felt hollow. Mark caught Charlie's inquisitive stare; he knew what the question that still lingered in the back of his mind.

"No, I didn't sleep with her." Mark downed the last little bit of his coffee.

Charlie grunted, shifted his weight, then replied, "Done."

Both men sat back as a face slowly began to appear on the screen. Mark's heart skipped a beat as he stared at the face on the screen. It was her.

"You sure about this man?" Charlie said holding back his chuckle.

"Yes," Mark's voice whispered. "That's her. That's my Kylie."

"What are you gonna do now?"

A cunning little grin pulled at the corners of his mouth.

"You'll see. It's gonna be big, Charlie."

He wiggled his fingers expressing an explosion.

"It's more likely the biggest damn thing I've ever done. I just hope it doesn't blow up in my face."

Mark popped in a memory disk to save the picture, his plans methodically playing out in his head. He knew if he told anyone what he truly planned to do, someone along the line would try to talk him out of it. Thanking Charlie profusely, he ushered his friend out.

Mark felt as if his life rested solely on making the right move. All his life had been a sea of uncertain chaos. He'd taken slack because he generally didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. This was going to be a huge leap of faith. His time had come and now hoped he could finally get it right.

He stared at his reflection as he fixed the pale blue button up shirt. He nervously adjusted his black blazer. He drew his breath and held it for a full minute. He steadied his shaking hands. For days, he had shut himself up in his home, freshly recovered from Eve, twisting, tweaking and working out the kinks

of his plan. His heart pounded in his ears, the sound was deafening. *Maybe I should've worn a tie*, he thought messing with his shirt once more. *Jesus*.

Mark knew what awaited him outside the bathroom walls, people with cameras, nosy as hell reporters and the crazed gossip hungry paparazzi. This had been his call, his decision. Mark took another deep breath, and grabbed the handle of the bathroom door; felt cold in his hand. He shivered, squeezed the handle, calling silently on his inner strength to guide him. In a flash, he opened the door to be instantly blinded by the masses of flashes.

Mark walked to the podium, flashed a smile, and braced himself for the barrage of questions. His press conference had begun.

Chapter Seven

As Kylie sipped her fruity umbrella drink, she could taste the sweet strawberries dancing on her tongue. She tilted her head to the side catching her younger sister Lily's attention.

"Stop thinking about the one that got away, Kyle. I mean, come on," Lily waved her hand to show the men aboard the luxury vessel. "This ship is filled with all kinds of sexy ass."

Kylie snickered. Lily was a lively and bold young woman, especially since their parents had died in a car accident. Kylie had taken their place, always taking care of Lily even at the price of her own dreams and goals. The death of their parents sent both women into a spiral, but after the reading of the will they learned about the inheritance. Their mother had stowed away money from her design company Rosie's Petals; Kylie and Lily's money problems no longer existed. Lily loved the money but Kylie still felt the intense desire to work. "You have to have a good work ethic, Kylie. Always pay it forward," her mother's voice echoed. So Kylie stretched herself thin by working with under privileged children as a mentor. At least three times a month, Kylie spent time in county hospital to stay with the HIV and drug addicted babies.

The two sisters were as close as sisters could possibly be. They may have looked alike but inside they were different. Lily stood at five feet while Kylie was five feet two inches, but Lily swore she was taller. Lily's long brown hair was streaked with auburn highlights and her large brown eyes took on the world.

What a wonderful sister to have, Kylie thought. She could always talk to her sister, so when the burden of missing Mark had become far too much to bear

Kylie confided in her. Lily's solution was to wash Kylie's tears away with a cruise to the Caribbean Sea filled exotic men from all over the world. She said the time away could clear her head. Maybe she was right. Kylie looked around at all the scantily clad men. *The eye candy element is defiantly here.*

No matter what Mark's gorgeous face still haunted her heart. She remembered his handsome face, his impeccable attire, and his charming smile. Kylie smiled. She turned her head and let the sea breeze caress her skin as her eyes looked across the sea. The pristine crystal blue water lapped at the sides of the ship. She stood up and walked to the railing. The fresh sea air kissed her hot dark skin; she turned her face towards the beaming sun and closed her eyes. Parting her full lips, she whispered Mark's name to swirling, sea salt kissed wind.

"Come on Miss Thang, we got a dance floor calling our name." Lily grabbed her sister's elbow and dragged her to the dance floor. Kylie forced a smile on her face and cast her lost feelings out to sea. Tonight she would have a good time.

Or at least she'd try.

Chapter Eight

Since his impromptu press conference, Mark's face had been plastered everywhere for weeks, along with the sketch of Kylie. Access Hollywood declared him one of the most romantic men of two thousand and seven. The show even offered to do a spotlight segment on his hunt for true love.

Mark didn't know what else he could do, besides just wait. He sent a special message to his fans and pleaded with anyone that has ever been touched by love to help him. The response had been incredible, shocking even to Mark. His phone rang off the hook with good and bad comments on the stunt he had pulled. After his manager called him insane and then told him to recall the conference, to say it was a hoax, to recant everything he'd said before, Mark decided to start screening his calls.

His mother was beside herself; she kept asking where her son was because Mark's new attitude and determination was astonishing. Other than singing, he never really committed himself to anything, but Kylie had his heart and that was the difference.

Mark also knew with all the new publicity Eve would crawl from beneath the rock she had been hiding under. She would do anything to see him fail. His cell phone had a total of twenty-five missed calls from her alone. He didn't bother to respond, and he just deleted each and every message. With one simple phone call, Mark would find himself duped by the crafty con artist.

His mother kept him updated on Eve's latest antics. Eve wanted Kylie out of the way, and if this masterful plan of his failed, Eve would send him over the edge.

Where could be Kylie hiding? What if she doesn't want to me find her? I mean if I've been all over the bloody news, where could she be?

Mark shook the negative thoughts away. After weeks, he knew his love story would be replaced by which heiress did what or which celebrity goes to jail, as if jail was the new “in” place to be.

A true plea for love could not compare to those high-tension attention grabbing shock stories. Tina Turner's “What's Love Gotta Do with It” wafted through his stereo speakers. *Now that's just fucking great.*

He walked to the balcony, slid open the glass door and stepped out into the afternoon sun. *Where is she?* This feeling of helplessness washed over, shaking him to his core. Mark braced himself against the railing and locked his knees. He felt his stomach churn and sweat dotted his brow.

Mark clasped his eyes shut trying to drown out the noisy spinning world, afraid if it didn't stop soon he would vomit.

“Mark?” a soft voice caressed his ear.

His eyes flashed open and stung with tears. “Kylie?” he croaked, turning. “Kylie, is that you?”

Mark let go of the railing and staggered forward, still blinded by his tears.

“No Mark, it's me. It's Eve.”

He felt the color fade from his face and his heart slowly tearing in two. He caught his breath and prayed...

“I don't know how you talked me into coming to New York. You know how busy this place is I just don't have time...” Kylie glanced at her watch.

“I mean the cruise was great. Don't get me wrong, but I should really be getting back to work and...”

“See that’s it, Kyle. I’m so sick of you throwing your life away. You’re still young and you act like somebody’s grandma for heaven’s sake. I mean, shit, live a little. You work for what?” Lily shrugged. “Are we not loaded? You don’t even do what you want to want to do, for heaven’s sake, you work like a maniac because mom used too. She fought for us, Kyle. I know that but you don’t have kill yourself trying to complete some dream that isn’t even yours.”

Kylie tried to interrupt, but Lily shut her down and continued.

“No, listen for a change. You say you listen, but well, this time hear me, okay? I appreciate everything you do. I do, but I’ve noticed that you’re kinda well...”

Lily lifted her gaze and thought.

“Well honestly you’re a bit boring. There I said it, you’re boring. Sorry...”

Lily laughed, jabbing Kylie playfully.

“Hey,” Kylie nudged her sister back.

“You are,” Lily tried to hide her smile.

Kylie looked out the window of the black limousine. She hated trying to manipulate a car in New York. She just wasn’t that aggressive. New York was always the place Kylie ordered a driver. She wasn’t used to jet setting over the globe and she felt a bit weary.

“Look we’ll check out Manhattan, grab a bite at the Thai place get some express shopping done. Come on sis.”

Kylie stared into Lily’s eyes. *Oh no not the puppy eyes.*

“Alright, fine but I hope I’m not too boring for ya.”

The sisters laughed. After bouncing in and out of Macy’s Fifth Avenue, grabbing a quick bite to eat, they headed towards MTV Studios. Kylie loved it down here. Watching the big screen made everything come alive. It was hypnotic. The limo hugged the curb and Lily ducked out.

“Hey wait a minute.” Kyle scrambled out after her. “Wait here.” She instructed the driver.

“Yes Ms. Thomson.” He nodded.

Kylie closed the door. Weeks in the hot sticky sun, she wasn’t ready for the cold city. The chill in the air made her shiver.

“Lily, come on. I’m cold.” Kylie inched towards Lily who seemed entranced by something on the big screen.

“Come on.” She tugged.

“No, no wait watch this a minute. Is that you?” Lily pointed at the screen.

“What? Where?” Kylie glanced up.

On the huge screen was Mark, his lips were moving, but she couldn’t hear his words. Then a composite of her face donned the big screen.

“Holy shit, that is me. What the hell is going on?”

Kylie covered her mouth. She couldn’t take her eyes from the screen.

“Oh God, I wonder what’s on? If he’s okay...” Panic began to set in.

Her eyes slowly realized that a small crowd of people were milling around her and Lily. They were whispering and pointing at her. *What the hell are they gawking at?* Kylie felt like an animal on display.

“What the hell are y’all staring at?” Kylie blurted out.

A girl with black hair and dark blue chunks stepped forward.

“You’re Kylie, right?”

Kylie thought for a minute before she answered but Lily boldly stepped closer to Kylie.

“Yea she is, so what!”

“Mark Storm sent out a plea to find you. He said you walked into his soul and he couldn’t stop thinking about you.”

The young woman with blue hair said.

“Are you serious?” Kylie couldn’t help but to sound shocked.

“Yea it’s been all over the news and in the papers. Where you been?” The girl’s thick New York accent sounded harsh.

“In the middle of the ocean,” Kylie replied.

“Well that explains why ain’t nobody found ya yet. I hope it works out, he sounded really sincere.” She vanished into the crowd.

Kylie stood still unable to move.

“He’s looking for me,” she whispered to herself.

Lily helped Kylie back into the limo.

“What do I do now?” Kylie questioned. “I mean he probably thinks I’ve blown him off. Oh God, Lily, what if he thinks that about me?” Kylie’s eyes widened.

“Okay, wait before you get all hysterical. I’m sure we can find him. Just calm down, he lives in Boston and that’s not far.”

Lily leaned forward to rap on the dividing glass. The chauffeur pulled the window aside.

“Yes ma’am?” he asked politely.

“Take us to Boston, okay?”

“No problem,” he driver answered.

Lily closed the window and sat back. She leaned against the leather seat, took out her cell phone dialed a number, then winked at Kylie.

“Now this is far from being boring, sis.”

Kylie smiled brightly. Her heart overflowed with the recent knowledge that Mark felt something for her. Even in the small amount of time, they spent together, something clicked between them.

She wanted to be with him, her heart ached for him.

Now she knew Mark was waiting her.

Chapter Nine

“How did you get in here, Eve?” Mark asked.

Eve dangled her key. *Stupid ass. I never asked for the key back.*

“Get out. I don’t want you here.”

“Just a second ago you looked like a love sick school boy. All queasy and shit. Look what you’ve turned yourself into, a sniffling shell of a man. Oh Mark,” she walked over to him with arms wide open.

“Oh, hell no!” Mark sidestepped her advances.

“We’re over, Eve. So leave!” He pointed at the door.

“Mark, I have to admit that whole media circus you created for some chick made me think of what I miss about you.”

“Eve, please I’m trying to be polite.”

Mark knew this cat and mouse game and he wasn’t playing.

“Alright you want me to leave that bad? Just like that? No talking about this? I mean I’m here to comfort you in your time of need. Obviously, she blew you off. I’m here to pick up the pieces.”

Eve reached out and touched the side of his face. Mark recoiled.

“Bullshit, I know what you want. You’re either horny, broke or both. I want neither!”

Eve stepped closer to him. “We were so good together, baby.”

Closer and closer until she was just a breath away, Mark grabbed her shoulders to push her back when the sliding glass shattered. Eve screamed and fell to the floor in a heap of babbling mess.

“What the hell?” Mark stepped over Eve, carefully walked over the broken shards of glass to the balcony.

What he saw dropped his jaw and tore his heart again.

Kylie stood in his front yard, chest heaving. He could see another rock in her hand.

“You jerk!” she screamed and stormed off.

“Kylie! No wait! I can explain.” he called after her. “No please!”

Spinning around, he darted out the front door, leaving Eve whining on the floor.

Kylie didn’t know where she was going, but it was away from here. From her vantage point from the yard, she could see two figures close to each other, kissing maybe. She knew it was woman and Mark, and that’s all she needed to know.

Well it’s my fault really. I took too long. He’s moved on. Guys have needs too. “Screw their needs!” she said slowing her pace.

The road was dark and not to say just a little creepy. In her fury, she’d left her sister and a perfectly good rental car back at Mark’s whore house. *Which way was it?* Kylie stopped and looked around. She had been so happy on the way here that she hadn’t bothered to read any street signs. She cussed herself for allowing that moment of happiness.

“Great! That’s just fucking great!”

Kylie kicked at the loose pebbles at her feet. She wore her favorite sling back Jimmy Cho shoes, but now her feet ached.

The sound of scuffling shoes on the asphalt behind her made her think of something besides the pain in her feet. She was lost and now someone was following her.

“Where are the damn street lights?” she whispered rummaging through her bag for a weapon of some kind. This never would be happening if she hadn’t seen Mark on that stupid hypnotic screen. If that rocker New Yorker would have just kept her mouth shut, she could still be oblivious, surely not standing on a dark street getting ready for the fight of her life.

As the scraping sounds grew louder and closer, Kylie moved over the street onto the grass and slowly kicked off her shoes. *Better the shoes than me.* The grass felt cold under her feet, but she bounced softly on the balls of her feet, like so many boxers do in the ring, as the figure drew closer.

“Kylie? It’s me. It’s Mark, can we talk?”

Anger replaced her fear, but she felt relief as Mark got closer.

“Go away,” she said turning her back. *Oh please God don’t let him walk off and leave me here.*

“I don’t know what you saw, but I can explain.” Mark jogged up to her and with one hand touched her shoulder. “You’re cold. Please.”

Kylie turned to face him.

“Tell me what you saw?” Mark asked.

Kylie nodded. “Okay. I saw you and whoever dancing the mambo or something. Kissing maybe, I don’t know. I just I blew my shot because...”

Mark chuckled. Kylie spun around away and walked off.

“No, wait. I’m not laughing at you. It’s just you got it all wrong.” He stood in front her.

“My ex-girlfriend showed up at my house tonight. After everything that had happened with my search for you, she thought I would go back to her. First thing in the morning, I’m calling a locksmith and have all my locks changed. I told her I don’t want anyone else. I missed you so much I felt weak. I thought I

kept hearing your voice call my name. I thought I'd never see you again, never be able to tell you..." he paused, trying to compose himself, this was the moment he's longed for.

"Tell me what?" Kylie asked hesitantly.

A vehicle screeched its tires and pulled up beside them.

"There you are, jeez don't ever do that again."

Lily's voice cried from the car.

"Oh, lookie it's the asshole of the year. Is he bothering you, cuz I got some pent up anger issues that I could reenact right about now."

"Who's that?" Mark nodded towards the car. "Whoever it is she's doesn't like me right now. Should I be scared?"

"That's my sister, Lily, and you might wanna be a little scared. Plus I don't like you that much right now either, but come on."

She walked to the car and opened the door.

"Is he coming with us?" Lily asked annoyed.

"Yes he is and don't say a word," Kylie warned.

Mark got in the back seat. He had to stuff his manly six foot frame in the car but anything for Kylie.

Chapter Ten

The three of them didn't speak the whole ride. Lily drove and Kylie grit her teeth, watching her sister grip the steering wheel. She had so many questions for Mark. Her heart yearned for the answers to her one burning question. What did he have to say? He'd chased her down the street, sent a plea for love through the media. What else could she ask for? *Yea but loving him and having him want me are two totally different things. Honestly, I don't know what I saw.* No matter what happened before or what lies ahead, she needed to believe him. Lily drove up to the main entrance of the Four Seasons.

"I'm gonna go out for awhile, but if you need me you know how to get in touch with me. And you be careful," She shot a glance in the backseat. "My sister is a second degree black belt in Tai Quon Do, so don't get it twisted."

"Calm down, Lily. I'll be fine. Be careful and see ya soon."

Kylie gave Lily a quick peck on the cheek and got out of the car, pulling up the seat so Mark could pull his body from the clutches of the backseat.

"Nice meeting you, Lily," Mark said as politely as he could.

"Yea okay, we'll see bub," Lily chimed back, then sped out of the parking lot.

"Wow! She's real peach, huh?" Mark exclaimed.

Kylie shot him an unpleasant look. "Actually she is."

Kylie stalked into the hotel. As soon as she got past the doors, a feeling of nostalgia crept over her. She hadn't been in a hotel lobby with Mark in a year. Kylie turned her head to stare at Mark.

He stood a few yards away with something in his hands. On closer inspection, she realized he carried her shoes, her favorite shoes. *Damn*, she thought. *He must've picked them up for me when I thought I was about to turn into an Olympian Sprinter or a world champ boxer.*

"You didn't have to carry my shoes for me. Thanks." She walked until she stood about an arm's length away.

"It's okay. I figure if I had them, you might think twice about running off. I caught my occasional episode of *Sex and the City*; I know about the shoes." He winked.

Jesus, he's beautiful.

"Funny. Come on," she smiled then nibbled her bottom lip as the elevator door opened. She stepped inside, Mark in tow.

When the elevator door opened, Kylie hurried out, ran the card key through the lock and pushed open the door.

"It's just a room," she said sounding suddenly disappointed.

"It's a room with you in it. That's all I could ask for."

Mark softly caressed the back of her head. Her hair smelled of sweet strawberries. God how he'd missed her.

"I have so much to tell you, Kylie. I just don't know where to begin."

"Start at the beginning, Mark," she whispered back to him. "Start at the beginning."

"Okay, sit down." He brushed by her, took her hand, and guided her to the couch. Mark propped her feet on his legs and started massaging her them.

"After we first met, I honestly don't know what happened. I couldn't get you out of my head." He locked eyes with her.

“Your smile fueled my endless nights and brought joy to lost days. You know that when I saw you I had a girlfriend, well of sorts, right?”

Kylie nodded.

“When I got home, I didn’t feel like I was at home. I felt empty and all screwed up inside. I knew that missed you.”

He caressed her cheek, marveling at how soft her skin felt.

“Each day away from you was torture, each passing minute a lifetime. I broke it off with Eve and followed my heart. My heart lead me to you; it belongs to you.”

Mark ran his hand up her calf and squeezed lightly. “I know we only spent a few hours together but I feel like we’re...”

“Connected,” Kylie finished his sentence.

“Yes, I feel like we’re connected.”

Mark reached out tenderly to stroke her moist cheek. He leaned closer and wiped away her falling tears.

“All I want is you. I want to know everything about you. I want you to know that my heart jumps into my throat every time I hear your name.”

He held her face in the palms of his hand.

“I want to be the man that you confide in, that you stay up late at night and laugh with. I want to be the man that you love...” he dropped his head at the sheer mention of love. *How crazy am I to think that she could believe that I love her?*

Kylie didn’t speak, and with each breath, he hoped her giggle would breach the endless silence.

“You’re like our tree, scarred and broken, but always strong enough to stand against the raging wind.” She cupped his chin.

“I thought about you, each and every day...” she voice choked. “I whispered your name, hoping the wind would carry me to your heart, that you would one day hear my call.”

Mark laced his thick fingers with her slender ones. *Like puzzle pieces.*

“I heard you, Kylie. I heard you.”

They inched towards each other, the urge to finally embrace threatening to take over. With the slightest touch of their lips, months of waiting, wanting, wishing, and lusting exploded. Kylie’s plump lips were so soft that Mark felt like an addict, constantly craving the touch of them against his.

He crawled on top of her, kissing her precious lips and hoping his large frame would not suffocate her.

“It’s been so hard trying to live without you. Before I met you, I didn’t care about anything, but you opened my heart to so much more.”

Mark put his head under her neck doing his best to conceal the tears that escaped and now dotted his face.

Feeling Mark’s partial body weight pressing hard against her somehow made her feel safe and secure she knew with him, she was finally free to be herself. Even though a man or two had passed in and out of her life, some gates had never been opened. Kylie was still a virgin. Mark’s pink tongue slid up her throat sending wave after wave of pleasure down her spine. *Oh that feels so good.*

Kylie arched her back to accommodate Mark on his journey of finding all her hidden erogenous zones. She tugged up his shirt; every inch of his flesh seemed to generate an electric current that intoxicated her.

“Ohhh,” she moaned, gently running her nails down his back. His deep moaned licked her senses. Pushing up her shirt exposing he lacy bra, he nuzzled the valley between her full breasts before pulling one cup down freeing the

pebbled nipple. She couldn't help but to moan louder as Mark's tongue and warm mouth toyed with tit. Her body twitched as small tremors rippled through her making her panties damp.

"You okay?" he asked, concern filling the brim of his brown eyes.

"Yea, yea sure. Why?" Kylie felt his eyes probing her.

"Are you sure?" he questioned again.

"I want you, Mark. Nothing else matters."

She wrapped one arm around his neck arching off the couch to capture his perfect mouth in a searing kiss. *God I can't stop kissing him.* Kylie flicked her tongue out licking his lips, tasting like sweet honey.

"Wait," Mark held her back and brought her closer. "I want you too, but if you're not ready, I can wait for you."

Kylie fought back the burning tears. She wanted to tell him, but she had told others. They laughed, called her names like frigid and stale. She didn't want to lose him, not like that. She cleared her mind and mentally shattered the icy fingers of fear that gripped her heart.

"Let's go in the other room."

Kylie slipped from beneath him, missing his buff body protecting her from the outside world.

Kylie held out her hand while walking backwards. Her brown eyes slanted, giving him a sexy come-hither look as she bit her quivering bottom lip.

"Come here," she gestured with her index finger.

Mark stood, and followed her into the adjoining bedroom. She closed and locked the door behind him.

"I wanna feel your skin against mine," she said in hushed tones while unbuttoning his shirt.

Her heart beat faster as she slipped her hands over his broad shoulders, sliding his shirt off in the process. His chest had only a scattered amount of dark brown hair living happily in the middle of his chest. The sight pleased her very much. Men, covered in hair did nothing for her libido. She loved a man with a body she could see clearly defined, not covered by hair. Mark's body as of yet made her weak in the knees. She placed her head against his chest, listening to the steady beating of his heart.

Kylie took a half step back so he could drop his shirt to the floor. Her nipples hardened in response to the cooler air. She loved the tender way his fingertips explored her awaiting skin. Along her arms, and slowly over her shoulders, his hands moved, lingering only for a moment to release her bosom from the offending garment.

Staring deep into his eyes, she felt the intense desire his taunt body exuded as her bra fell to the floor. Mark squeezed the small of her back, his big hands resting above her tight rear. With every caress, Kylie's mind went into over-load.

What if he finds out my secret? Damn, I should've paid better attention to Lily's tall tales.

Mark felt her tremble in his embrace. *Is she afraid of me?*

"I got an idea," he whispered to her, pulling her on the bed. "Lay on your stomach." He kneeled on one side, leaned over her, and slipped his hands underneath, fiddling with her jeans zipper. Cautiously he glided them off her shapely legs and tossed them to the floor. He focused on her round, tight bum, encased in mouthwatering see thru powder blue panties. Kicking off his shoes, he undressed quietly and kneeled over her, making sure not to crush her under his weight.

"What are doing?" she questioned turning her head towards him.

"Just relax, you'll see." He promised.

Mark began to massage her back and shoulders. He admired how smooth and flawless her chocolate skin appeared. Her soft moans let him know he was on the right track. Mark had been around the block more than once, so he was no spring chicken or a novice at sex. From her body movements, he could tell she was afraid and unsure. That's not how he wanted to spend their first night together. Mark wanted it to be memorable, especially if it was her first time. His fingers danced down her spine and tickled her sides. Mark smiled as Kylie giggled and wiggled under his touch.

This moment had been well worth the hell of the last months. *Tonight I'll show her how I feel.*

Chapter Eleven

Kylie buried her face in the pillow, her body begging for his touch. His hands handled her flesh like seasoned professional. She curved her back, allowing access to explore her ample rear and below. Her breath caught in throat as he took the bait and slid his hands lower. He squeezed and slapped her butt playfully.

“This color looks so good against your skin. You have no idea how hard it is...”

Kylie cut him off.

“How hard are you?” she tilted her head over her shoulder.

“Turn over.”

She wiggled her ass, slightly grazing the bulge in his boxer-briefs before rolling over on her back.

She noticed his handsome face had flushed red and his eyes were fixed steadily on her heaving chest. Reaching out, she grabbed his hands and placed them on breasts, making his face flush even more. For once in her life, Kylie had no care in the world, she felt as if floated hundred feet above her body in a bubble of pleasure and excitement. She hoped like hell it didn’t burst. Laying half naked in front of Mark was easier than she thought. Mark’s roving eyes taking in every nook and cranny of her body while his hands plied her nipples.

“So, you were talking about being hard?” she said jokingly.

“See for yourself.” Mark insisted guiding her hands down his boxers.

Oh my God, you’ve got be joking, fondling the massive burgeoning erection in her hand. *It’s not gonna fit. Holy shit...* Not being a total dumb-ass in the sack, she

fondled and stroked his enormous rod. She started slow at first, exploring his firm flesh, then discovering her own rhyme, as she become more confident. Kylie squeezed harder and watched Mark shudder. He was such a big man, strong and steady, but in her hands, he was butter on melting in the noonday sun. With each groan that escaped Mark's lips, she stroked his iron-hard tumescence harder.

"Oh God," he whispered.

"Well, I have to agree with you about it being hard," Kylie teased coyly.

Mark opened his eyes.

"Come here," he grunted pulling her up into his arms.

His commanding kiss bordered on pain. She felt his rasping breath, telling her how much he craved her, yet he held back. Kylie slid her fingers under the waistband of his boxers, pulling them off, now both of them were completely naked. She felt his hard shaft resting in the crook of her thighs and turned to her head, inviting his lips to plant his sweet kisses along her neck.

"I love your skin," he said.

"I love yours," Kylie replied sweetly.

She parted her legs, allowing Mark to lie comfortably between them. He sat up on one forearm, holding his erect rod against her nub, rubbing. *Oh God here it goes. I hope it fits.*

Mark felt the moisture between her thighs and knew she was ready for him.

"Are you sure?" he whispered in her ear.

"Yes, I'm sure." Kylie pointed to the nightstand. "Look inside."

He leaned over, opened the drawer and saw the unopened box of condoms, he took one then closed the drawer.

He rested forehead against hers. She could hear him tear the foil package. As he lightly kissed her parted lips, he carefully grabbed his staff and began to push inside her. She tensed and Mark immediately stopped.

“Do you want me to stop?”

Her eyes fluttered before she opened them. “No. Why do you keep asking me all these questions?”

Mark took a deep breath. “Because I know, Kylie.”

“You know what?”

Mark looked down at her, his brown eyes boring into her.

“I know,” He stated plainly.

“And it’s okay. In fact, I’m honored to be your first. I’ll be gentle, I promise. If you don’t like something just tell me and I’ll stop. Okay?”

“Okay,” Kylie uttered sweetly.

Mark planted small kisses on her lips. Again, he Mark slid his aching bulge deeper into her wet vessel. He held her as a spasm ripped through her frame. Mark shifted his weight and thrust deeper. Kylie cried out, but Mark knew it was pleasure and not pain. He groaned as her muscles engulfed his hardness. Suppressing his need to pound into her sweet little core, he rotated his waist around in a semi circle, slowing pulling out, then pushing back inside of her canal. It felt as if he were virgin himself, and all these experiences brand new.

His past encounters with other women, were hastily done, mostly due to his lack of interest and this very manly need to extinguish the immense sexual frustrations that filled him on a daily basis. Miraculously he controlled his erection, holding fast to let her ride each one her orgasms. But each time Kylie’s muscles contracted, his engorged manhood got harder to control.

“You feel so good,” his voice caressed her ear lobe.

Her response was to wrap her brown legs around his waist. He put his hands firmly on both her round ass cheeks, plunging harder.

“Oh,” she moaned clawing his back. “Don’t stop.”

The headboard thumped hard in a rhythmic melody against the wall, alerting to the guests in the next room and all who listened to the fun they were having.

“Oh Mark, please don’t stop,” Kylie begged.

Mark gathered the energy he could muster, placed her leg over his shoulder. At this angle his entire distended flesh fit snugly inside her. He held her waist, rocking back and forth, enjoying the way his cock slipped in and out so easily.

“You’re so wet, Kylie.”

Her hands were over her head, grasping onto the sheets. Sweat lubricated their bodies as the heat between ignited into fiery frenzy. For a virgin, Kylie kept up with his tumultuous pace, her skin so slippery and soft that his fingers glided over her flesh with ease. Mark ran his fingers through her damp hair.

Kylie peered at him, her luscious eyelashes kissing her high cheekbones.

“You’re so beautiful.”

His eyes stared into her heavenly brown orbs.

“Absolutely exquisite.” Mark pressed his body against hers, feeling her racing heart beating next to his own. With exuberant passion, he kissed her, feeling sex-drunk. He could no longer fight the overwhelming urge to reverse positions. Quickly, she rolled him on his back. *It’s like she read my mind.* A look of bewilderment flashed in his eyes.

“Let me show you.”

“I can handle it,” Kylie retorted.

“Oh really?” he questioned casting an arrogant look at Kylie.

She sat up, rocking back and forth, as she began a sexual assault on Mark's rigid shaft. She held her head back as the ends of her black hair tickled his inner thighs. Being on top, she needed no further instruction. He was just as hard when they first started making love. His stamina and self-control were immeasurable, but now she wanted to turn the tides.

She braced her against his chest, leaning forward, and thumped her round rear up and down, making his hard phallus penetrate deeper. She moved her hands to squeeze his shoulders. *Oh God, where'd she learn that?*

"That's right, Kylie. Just like that. That's my girl."

Mark bent his knees and leaned her back against them. Her hands caressed her moist body in a sensual display, amazing and titillating him.

He leaned her back farther, squeezing and tugging at her throbbing clit as he rode the edge of his orgasm, the culmination of hours of lovemaking.

"Harder," he growled. His grip tightened on Kylie's small waist as he drove his molten member deeper into her awaiting treasure trove.

"Oh God," Mark grit his teeth as he spilled his seed.

"Oh God, is right," she whispered between pants, lying on his chest totally spent.

He played with her damp hair.

"You okay?" he asked his concern back.

"Yes, I am," Kylie answered quietly.

Mark could tell by the sound of her voice and slow pattern of her breathing that sooner, rather than later, sleep would take her.

"Good night, Kylie."

"Good night," she mouthed the words.

Mark lay there in bed staring at the blank hotel room ceiling; for once he was completely satisfied with his life. *This is the way it should be.* Having the woman

he loved falling asleep in his arms is what he truly yearned in life. Now all was right world and Mark planned on keeping it that way. Another plan brewed in his brain.

“Just wait until tomorrow,” he said.

Closing his eyes, he whispered. “I love you, Kylie,” before falling asleep with a Chester cat smile on his face.

Chapter Twelve

Sunlight broke through the yellow patterned curtains and spread across the two lovers like a blanket, encasing them in a ring light that stood out against the dark places in the room. Mark opened his eyes. Kylie lay on stomach, her hair loose and framing her oval face. Last night had been spectacular. There was no place in the world he would rather be, no woman he could ever want that could replace the woman in next to him. He stared at her with pure admiration, this woman that had done something to him that he had only wished for. She made him feel, she opened him to the true aspects of love.

In his brutal, cutthroat business, one needed a tough skin. Mark learned to wheel and deal, and to take all the women he could possibly handle a night. Now here, in this hotel room, his whole appeared so clear. He knew what he had to do. Another brilliant plan taking action, he joked lightly rising from the bed as not to awaken his lover.

Mark had to suppress the urge to stroke her skin and kiss her shoulder. He settled for one last glance as he picked up his boxers and pants, heading to the shower. In the throes of their passion, an immense feeling consumed him, his heart finally full. He got out of the shower and looked at his clothes on the floor. Mark hated the thought of wearing the very same outfit he had on the day before. Instead, he wrapped his towel around his waist. Carefully he poked his head out of the door, searching for Kylie, who he assumed was still asleep in the bedroom.

Not hearing a sound, he tiptoed out and made his way to the front of the room. He gathered from Lily's irritable behavior towards him that she probably

wouldn't be staying the night. Searching for his cell phone, he dialed and waited for an answer.

"Hello, Leo's Car Service. Marco speaking, can I help you?"

"Yea, Marco. What's up, it's Mark."

"Oh hey Mr. Storm. What can we do ya for today?"

"I need a car, preferably a Mitsubishi Eclipse. I need it delivered to the Four Seasons in downtown Boston. Can you do that?"

The voice on the other line sounded muffled as Marco shouted out Mark's desires.

"Yea, Mr. Storm, we can handle it. What time do you need it for?" Marco asked.

"As soon as you guys can manage it, Marco. Drop the keys off at the front desk, okay?"

"Yup, we'll do, Mr. Storm."

Mark hung up his cell then picked up the hotel phone to call room service. Having no other choice for the time being, Mark put on his boxers and pants, leaving them unzipped and opened. A small rap on the door shook Mark from his planning. There was so much to get done. He opened the door and greeted the room service worker.

"Thanks man," Mark said handing the young teen a fifty dollar tip.

"Thanks," the dutiful teen exclaimed. "Thanks a lot."

Mark smiled and pulled in the cart. The smell of fresh coffee, pancakes, and bacon filled the room. He heard the shower going and knew she was awake. He placed the food on the table and arranged some wild flowers in the centerpiece.

"Babe, breakfast is here, you're hungry, right?" Mark called into the bathroom.

"Yes, I'm famished. I'll be out in a second."

“No worries, baby. Take your time. I’m not going anywhere.” He strode nervously to the table, tampering with flowers again.

“Hey,” Kylie voice drifted over his shoulder. “Whatever ya got there sure smells good.”

He turned around to see her walking over to him, leaning to one side, towel drying her hair.

“Yea, huh I got some pancakes, bacon, and coffee. Interested?” he waved his hand to the table.

“Wow, can I wake to you being this romantic every day?” she asked coyly.

“Only if you want too, baby,” He pulled out her chair gallantly.

Mark sat across from her. The small round table fit them perfectly. *Like puzzle pieces*. They laughed when they both reached for the cream.

“Listen,” he moved, allowing her to use the cream. He smirked when he noticed that she took her coffee the same way.

“Um, what do you have planned for today?”

He took a bite of pancakes, licking the sweet maple syrup from lips, and wished it had been Kylie’s nectar instead.

“Nothing really? Do you have plans?”

“Sorta. Listen I want to take you somewhere, but I need a change of clothes first.”

“Oh Mark,” she reached out and squeezed his hand. “You don’t have to take me anywhere. I’m happy just being here with you.”

Mark caressed her cheek lovingly. “I know I don’t have to, I want too. Gimme an hour, okay? I’ll be back.” He wiped his mouth and leaned over the table to kiss her forehead. “An hour,”

“Okay, sweetie. I’ll be here. I have to talk to Lily anyway.”

He tore himself away from her and strode to the door.

“Hey wait minute,” Kylie called. “take this,” She gave him the card key.

Mark smiled, kissed her again, and bid her goodbye.

His feet were so light he walked on air. An hour was still a short amount of time to accomplish everything he wanted to do. First things first a fresh change of clothes, then he would go shopping.

Kylie sniffed the flowers once more before wiping her mouth and leaving the table. She piled all the dirty dishes back on the cart and left it outside her door, leaning against it, nibbling her nail. Her first day of not being a virgin and she felt great. It was true she felt a little sore but the long warm shower this morning helped a lot. She looked around the room, her mind transfixed on the memories of last night.

She ran touched her breast, rubbing her sensitive nipple and craving for Mark’s warm wet mouth. Kylie tucked some of her air-dried tendrils behind one ear.

“Okay, pull it together,” she said gathering her erotic thoughts. “I’d better find Lily.”

She found her cell phone in her purse and dialed her sister’s number. Lily finally answered on the fourth ring. Her voice was shill and full of laughter.

“Hey sis, it’s about time called. I left you five voice messages last night. What happened with the World Worst boyfriend contestant?”

“Lily, don’t do that, okay? You may not like it but I’m very fond Mark. In fact, he’s taking me away in a bit. I wanted to let you before you inform the National Guard,” she said sarcastically.

Lily scoffed.

“Hey where are you anyway? I hear a lot of commotion in the background.”

“Oh, I’m in Santa Monica. Thought I’d check it out, give you and wonder-boy some time alone.”

“Lily.” Kylie voice sounded stern. “I’m not kidding. Look, take care of yourself and try to stay out of trouble. I’ll be with Mark and if you need me, call me.”

“Okay.”

Both women sat in silence. “Kylie?” Lily asked.

“Yea?” Kylie replied.

“I’m sorry. As long as this guy treats ya right I have no problems, okay? I love you and have fun.” Lily’s giggle brought a smile to Kylie’s face.

“Thanks, I will.”

Kylie closed her cell phone. She enthusiastically skipped towards the bedroom to pack her dainty overnight bag as questions of what surprise Mark had under his sleeve. He was up to something, his brown eyes danced wildly about at breakfast. He seemed jittery and nervous. *Oh God did he regret last night?* Kylie refused to let her mind delve into such negative thoughts. If Mark regretted last night he sure wouldn’t be taking her somewhere. *I wonder where we’re going.*

She went through her bag, pulled out her iPod, and plugged in her speakers. The first song on shuffle mode was Justin Timberlake’s Bringin Sexy Back. Kylie danced merrily, shaking her round booty to the music. The way she felt right now, sexy was here and running free through her veins.

Mark’s body complemented hers in every way. His huge manhood remained steady and rock hard throughout their entire love making session. She wondered if all men had the self-control he displayed in the sack last night. If not, she was definitely the luckiest woman on earth!

Kylie fiddled with the spaghetti straps of her yellow print, fairy cut Vera Wang sundress. The dress fit her well, clinging to her like a desperate lover

begging for a second chance. Absently, she brushed her locks. All the while her mind, drifted away.

The hour passed even more quickly than Mark thought it would. He hurried past a laughing couple, holding his bag, and whistling a happy tune.

Marco had truly done him just justice in the car department. The Eclipse was black on black, with shiny chrome wheels. Its leather interior still held the new manufactured smell. The thought dawned on him that it could be brand-new. Mark opened the door, tossed in the bag, and slipped into the driver's seat. He felt better with his new set of clean clothes. Mark wore a pair of dark blue Sean John jeans, and a white V-neck shirt. The Cool Water cologne he wore mingled with the new car scent of the car.

Starting the engine, he pulled away from the curb, turned right at the light and headed back to the hotel, still humming his tune. Mark sat at the red light, arched his back to remove his cell phone from the side pocket. He glanced up at the light before dialing the number to the hotel.

"Good afternoon, the Four Seasons, this is Melissa. May I make you a reservation today?" a cheerfully female echoed.

"No, thank you. Could you ring room 501, please?"

"Sure thing, sir. Hold a moment for that number, please."

Mark heard a series of clicks accompanied with some drowsy elevator music, before the line finally started to ring.

"Hello?" Kylie's sweet voice made Mark smile.

"Hey gorgeous, it's me. Can you meet me out front in ten minutes?"

"I sure can, hun."

"Okay, see you in ten minutes. I'm driving a black car."

"Okay, see ya soon."

He hung up the phone, pressed the accelerator, and advanced down the street. When he pulled up at the main entrance, she was standing outside waiting for him. The sudden tightness of his jeans was evidence of his growing arousal. No woman ever made him feel this horny and yet still so satisfied.

He pulled up in front of her, leaned over, and opened the door.

"Get in," Mark settled back into the driver's seat.

"Thanks. I didn't know whether to bring my bag or not, so I did just in case."

He looked at her small maroon bag.

"Not a problem." He took it from her and placed it on the back seat.

"You look great," she complimented closing the door.

"Thank you, so do you," he leaned over and kissed her. "You ready?"

"Yea, but where are we going?"

"You'll see, baby. You'll see."

Mark put the car in gear and took off towards the highway. His fingers found the button for the CD changer and clicked play. Stevie Wonder's True Love floated through the speakers. Kylie put her soft hand on top of his as he gripped the gearshift. He squeezed her fingers and shot her a quick look.

How beautiful she looked right now. Her hair blowing wildly in the wind while a jazzy Stevie Wonder song played with their already intertwined heart strings. Today was turning out to be another perfect day. As they drew closer to the surprise, Mark saw Kylie sit up and begin to take notice of their surroundings. A sideways smile creased his face, but he said nothing. He just kept driving.

"Hey," she exclaimed staring out the window. "I think I know where we are." She turned her head to look at Mark. He pressed his lips together so hard they looked like a thin line. "Ohhh, you're sneaky," she pointed her finger at him, and then turned her attention back to window.

He turned left into the parking lot and shut off the engine.

“Well,” he clapped his hands together. “We’re here. Let’s go.” He nodded outside the window.

Kylie bit her lip and raised her sculpted eyebrows. “What are we doing here?”

“Come find out.” He opened the door and got out.

He waited for Kylie to join him on the other side of the car; he locked her arm around his and proceeded towards the entrance of Rock Woods Park.

“What are we doing here?” Kylie asked again reading the sign.

“I wanted to show you something.” Mark led her a little ways down the path. When he heard a gasp escape her lips, he knew she saw it. He unlocked his arm from hers and slowed his pace. He watched Kylie walked over the twisted, odd-looking, yet hauntingly beautiful tree. Gone was all the trash and debris, replaced by a small white picket fence surrounded the area and a gold sign in the ground. Kylie leaned closer to read the inscription.

Our journey begins here. M.S. and K.S. forever.

He watched her as she tried to decipher the last part of the message.

“Our journey?” she asked turning to face.

“Yes, in this place you opened my eyes. So I couldn’t a more significant place than this.”

“This is all wonderful, it is Mark, but those are not my initials.”

“Well, we can fix that too.” Mark said kneeling on one knee in front of her.

“Oh my God,” Kylie clasped her hands over her mouth.

He reached into his pocket, produced a tiny black velvet box. He casually popped it open.

“Kylie Thomson will you do me the ultimate honor of becoming my wife?”

Mark looked up into her eyes as tears flowed down her face.

“Oh Mark,” she whispered. “Yes, Oh my God, Yes!”

“Yes?” He sounded shocked.

“Yes,” she said with more confidence.

Mark stood up, took the three-carat canary yellow diamond ring with platinum setting out of the box, and slipped it on her finger. With the ring in its proper place, Mark picked up his new fiancée and swung her around. There was no feeling in the world, save probably the birth of his first child, that could top this moment.

“I love you, Kylie.”

“I love you too, Mark”

Their embrace rivaled the most the strongest union and shake the foundations of true love to its moral core. They stared into each other eyes, lost in the infinite bounds of their love.

Mark held her face. Kylie’s smile beamed up at “I love your smile.”

The End

Raven Starr can be found hanging out on the Red Rose Publishing chatter loop or on her web site.

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She has Fan-tasy out with Red Rose Publishing now!

Coming soon from Red Rose Publishing

Excerpt from Eve's Revenge

Mark paced the floor of the church, his brothers talking quietly behind him. Everything had been great. He'd spoken with Kyle just hours before and now she was gone. He took out his cell phone and frantically dialed her number again. The more the phone rang the more the angry grew within him.

Mark began to squeeze his phone in his palm when it rang.

"Kylie?" he asked.

"Funny, this is the second time you've confused us." said a very familiar voice on the other end.

"Eve? Why are you calling me?"

"I just wanted to know how your wedding was going? Are you having fun yet?"

Finally, the relaxation that Eve's call might have something to do with Kylie's disappearance his anger exploded.

"Eve, what have you done?"

Her response was laughter. But it was no ordinary laugh, this was more like a cackle of insanity, that grew louder and louder.

“Eve!” Mark screamed. “What have you done!”

At that moment the phone goes dead.