



Camie's Surrender

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A Trescott Cove Novel



Satin Notes

Cami's Surrender

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Dedication

To our fans who have supported us. We give you this free read in appreciation for all your support.

Aliyah, McKenna and Taige

Chapter One

Camilla Maxwell tapped her long, emerald green nails on the pale granite countertop. She was not happy with this latest development. Not at all. What Jem needed was rest, not overexertion—and that's exactly what would happen if Cami wasn't there to watch over her.

"I'm not kidding, Cami. I'm fine. I don't need you here, hovering," her sister Jem told her as she leaned against the counter beside her.

Cami sighed heavily. "I'm not hovering, Jem. I'm helping." Cami glanced at her only family and bit back a growl of anger at the scar that was visible on Jem's forehead.

Until this fucker is caught, I'm not leaving you alone, she thought. Out loud, she said, "I don't mind, honestly."

Jem took her hand and faced her. "Cami, you're going to have to let me go. I'm not a baby. You have a job to do, and that office is on the other side of Trescott Cove. You can't be a CPA standing behind my counter."

Cami chewed on her lower lip for a second as she brushed her hands through her long curls. *Now is as good a time as any to tell her.*

"That's true, but..." She pasted on a grin. "I'll not be far away."

"Meaning?" Jem's eyes narrowed.

"I bought the store three doors down. Well, not me alone. I'm going in with another person. Do you remember Zora?" She reached out and took Jem's hand. "We're opening a catering business."

"You're opening a what? At Baltic Place?" Jem screeched.

"A catering business, and it's going to be called Delicious Surrenders. Look, Jem, when I almost lost you, I did a lot of thinking. And seeing you have the courage to go after your dream and see it through to fruition made me want the same for myself."

Cami smiled at the open-mouthed look her sister bestowed upon her. There was no denying that she and Jem had a rocky relationship, one she was longing to change

for the better. She pulled Jem in for a hug. "Don't worry. I won't interfere in everything you do. I'll be in the back, unpacking your newest shipment."

As she walked toward the back of the store, she could hear Jem muttering. "She opened a damn store a few doors down and didn't even tell me! I know Chad had to know about this. That's why they've been thick as thieves."

Cami was glad that's what Jem believed. She and Chad had agreed they couldn't tell Jem the real reason someone was always with her: they had no idea who had tried to kill her. Everyone was coming up empty-handed. Even Rafael Carmichael, who Cami had personally called and asked to check into it, couldn't find anything.

Rafe had looked into Cami's suspicions that Brittany Gates had something to do with Jem getting hurt. But the information he had turned up only proved Brittany was self absorbed and more concerned about shopping and going to social events than anything else. When Rafe had pointed out that Brittany was on a shopping trip in Milan at the time of Jem's "accident," Cami hadn't cared. Rafe's assurance that it wasn't Brittany didn't appease her one bit. All it took was money to get things done. And Brittany had lots of money and plenty of time on her hands.

Cami still remembered the picture she had seen of the spoiled socialite—the almost smug, kiss-my-ass grin on Brittany's perfectly made-up face, her fluffy hair, and the immaculate designer suit she wore. Cami had known instantly that the woman in that photo didn't care about anyone but herself.

Jem had said she remembered seeing an older white woman in the store before she was knocked unconscious, but that memory had to be faulty. The culprit was Brittany; Cami was sure of it. She made a mental note to check and see when Brittany was coming back to town. They would be having a talk, and she would get the truth.

Kneeling in front of a box, Cami sliced through the packing tape and opened it. A soft chuckle escaped her as she reached for the carefully wrapped ceramic figurines. Her fingers were gentle as they removed each one from the box and put it on the desk.

"Congratulations, little sister," Cami whispered. "You've found your dream."
Now it was her turn.

"And what's your dream, Ms. Maxwell?"

And just like that, Cami's calm flew out the window faster than the speed of a winter storm. It was *him*--the man who drove her insane, who made her want to reach out and smack that arrogant smirk off his handsome face, then kiss him senseless and drag him to the nearest bed.

"What the hell are you doing back here, Chadwick?" Cami glanced up and swallowed.

The view of the eldest son of the Chadwick family, Robert Jr., made shivers race up her spine. He wore a long, black wool trench which hung open, revealing the lines of the expensive suit underneath. The suit seemed to love him, the way it fell over his broad shoulders, hung past lean hips. Cami licked her lips before she got control of herself.

"I stopped by to check on Jem." He leaned against the door frame and watched her with eyes that made her think of committing all manner of sin.

Like Chad's, Robert's eyes were green. But unlike his brother's jade green, Robert's eyes were a dark emerald color. And, unlike his brother's, Robert's eyes had the power to stop Cami's breath and make her body cream for him. Making her hands into fists, Cami took a deep breath to calm her racing heart. As she did, she realized it was a mistake. Sandalwood and potent male filled her senses, making her pussy clench.

Snap out of it, Cami. He's male, and they all lie.

"Well, perhaps you should set up an appointment with your optometrist. I'm obviously not Jem." Cami tried to ignore the trembling that being in this man's presence created within her.

One half of his sensual mouth quirked upward. "I can see that. No one would mistake you for her."

Narrowing her eyes, she stood and faced him head on. "And what exactly do you mean by that?"

Robert brushed at something on his coat. "Just that the two of you are quite different." His eyes raked over her form. "And yet, in some ways, you're very much alike."

Something in his gaze burned her. The intensity seared through her clothes and branded her skin. Her nipples pebbled. Cami was thankful her shirt was loose so he couldn't tell. As if reading her mind, his gaze dropped to her chest. Her breath stalled as she felt his gaze, almost like a physical touch.

"Weren't you leaving?" she snapped, ignoring how his look made her feel.

Instead of doing her bidding, he looked at her, a small smile on his face. He pushed away from the door frame and walked toward her, dwarfing her with his size. Cami curled her fingers into her palms to keep from reaching out and touching the silk of his suit, not to mention what lay beneath the costly material. The way the fabric stretched over his chest, she knew his torso was all ridges and angles. Her mouth went dry with the thought of licking along his chest to each nipple.

Focus, Cami! Snap out of it!

"Trying to get rid of me?" One gloved hand went to his chest. "I'm hurt."

"Right," she scoffed, meeting his gaze before deliberately turning away and returning her attention to the small figurines on the desk.

"You don't think I can be hurt?" His question filled the suddenly-too-small back room as his black calfskin gloves landed on the desk beside her hand.

Only her iron will to not let him see how he affected her stopped a shudder from racking her. Deliberately, she picked up one of the figurines and studied it.

"I don't think about you at all, so your question is a moot point. Now, if you don't mind, I have work to do." Cami refused to give in to the pounding of her heart, the dampness of her palms, or the lightheadedness she experienced.

She sat down at the desk and reached for the note cards to begin writing descriptions of the figurines, as Jem preferred to do. Writing the first word, she was grateful her hand didn't shake.

"Don't mind at all." He moved behind her chair at the desk. "But you're stuck with me, Sweetcheeks. Chad asked me to stay until he got here." Robert's breath brushed her ear; his masculine scent nearly overwhelmed her. "And I'd bet my father's company you *do* think about me," he whispered.

I think of all the ways I can rip your clothes off. At the thought, Cami shoved down all the emotions he stirred within her. Men were all the same. They sweet talked until they got what they wanted, and then it was all about them and how much pussy they could get. She wouldn't fall for it. The truth had been shown to her a long time ago.

"I'd bet your father's company that you think about yourself way more than any woman ever could," Cami bit out. "Now, if you're going to be here, do something helpful." She pointed to the door. "Helpful would be out there keeping an eye on my sister and making sure she doesn't overdo anything."

Robert reached around her for his gloves. "It would be my pleasure," he purred near her ear. Then he walked out without looking back.

"Damn him!" she hissed.

For years she had managed to keep all feelings toward men at bay. She even had a group of women she used to get together with once a month to sit and listen to each other complain about the male sex. At Christmas, she had cut them off and instead now met with her sister, some other friends she knew from childhood, and some of the ladies who worked at On the Vine. Between seeing Jem as happy as she was with Chad, and Jenisha Vincent, the owner of On the Vine, talking up how wonderful her boyfriend, Ulrich, was, Cami had started to wonder--wonder if she was the wrong one, or if they were.

In Cami's eyes, Chad had been wrong from the very beginning when he'd moved into Jem's brownstone. That was then. Now, she liked him, even if he was white, and even if he was a man. The care he showed Jem made him all right in Cami's book.

Still, until that day in the hospital when she had the opportunity—pleasant or unpleasant, she wasn't sure yet—to meet Chad's brothers, Cami's own resolve wasn't really tested. When Robert had come to the hospital, she was surprised he had brought

Ulrich Willis. She had known him only distantly, as Jenisha's boyfriend, but she did realize he was Trescott Cove's sheriff. Cami hadn't realized he was such a kind man. He had tried to calm her fears and assure her they would find whoever had hurt her sister.

Even while they talked with Ulrich, there had been something about the tall, dark haired, powerfully built Robert that challenged everything she had convinced herself to accept as true about the male gender. He hadn't backed down from her sharp tongue; in fact, he seemed to encourage her to use it, as if he longed to engage in a battle of words with her. And more.

Robert had sent Jem flowers every day she was in the hospital. Even weeks later, with no leads, he came by to check on Jem. Chad had mentioned that he and Ulrich were good friends, but Cami knew it was Robert who had asked him to have a patrol car come by to check on Jem daily.

Now she sat here, seemingly transfixed, watching him walk up through the door to the front and talk to those in the store. Wrenching her attention from him, Cami tried to focus on the notes before her. When his husky laughter filled her ears, she tossed down her pen, knowing it was pointless to attempt working any more.

Shoving back from the desk, Cami grabbed her coat and put it on as she strode up front. "I'm out of here, Jem. If Chad's brother is staying, then going to go get some things done so we can open the shop soon."

"Bye, Cami!" Jem hollered and waved from where she helped a customer.

"Bye," Cami answered. "I'll call you later." Spinning around, Cami found herself gazing at the dark green eyes of the man she was trying to avoid. "Excuse you!"

"My name's Robert. You know, in case you'd forgotten." He licked his lips as he stared at her.

"I know who you are, Mr. Chadwick." She arched a brow and waited for him to move.

"Say my name," he commanded in a voice only the two of them could hear.

The silvery timbre made her hair stand on end. "Get out of my way, Mr. Chadwick."

"What is it about me that upsets you so?" He leaned in closer. "Is it the fact that you're attracted to me? Or maybe it's that you wonder what it would be like to have my hands on your body. Is that it?"

Cocking her head slightly to the side, Cami didn't stop the sneer from filling her face. "You want to know what upsets me about you? Your damn arrogance. Your narcissism. The fact that you really seem to buy into your own spiel about how fantastic you are. Tell me something--if you're so damn wonderful, why is your youngest brother the one with a woman, instead of you? Get over yourself. Nobody's as good as you think you are."

"Why don't you have a man?" he returned without blinking. "Scare most of them off with your shrewish tongue?"

Cami straightened up. With a calm sigh, belying her still quivering emotions, she replied calmly, "Why do I need a man? Batteries get the job done, and they don't cheat on you." She walked around him, inwardly smiling at the shocked expression on his face. "Good day, *Mr. Chadwick*." No matter how much she longed to, she didn't look back as she walked out into the cold January day.

Striding down the sidewalk, Cami held it together. Reaching the door to Delicious Surrenders, she opened it and stepped inside. Closing the door softly, she turned and let loose.

"Ahhhhhhh."

The sound of running footsteps came, and then a worried voice asked, "*Cami, what happened?*"

Cami glanced at Zora and stifled a chuckle. Zora was wielding a clever, looking from side to side. Her honey-blond micro braids were swaying with her movements.

"Sorry, Zora. It's nothing." Cami took off her coat and threw it on the chocolate brown couch by the door.

She strode over to Zora, who stood straight and studied her, then laughed and made a snorting sound.

"You've been tangling with Robert Chadwick again."

Surprised, Cami avoided her gaze. "I don't know what you mean."

She went to the receptionist desk and picked up a file. Zora leaned against the desk next to her. Cami ignored her.

"Who you trying to fool, Cami? Every time you get near him, you get this look."

"What look?" Putting her hands on her hips, she met Zora's gaze.

"The 'deck him or jump him' look. You're still trying to figure out which you want to do." Zora light hazelnut eyes twinkled.

"Don't you have a kitchen to finish setting up for our opening? I've already set up my half. Our opening is in a week." Cami glared at her.

"My side if ready. Besides, this is much more interesting. So, was he looking scrumptious, as usual?" Mischief danced across Zora's face.

"Zora."

"Oh, he was, wasn't he? Those emerald green eyes of his. Mmm, mmm, mmm." Zora made a fanning motion.

Jealousy clawed at Cami. "You seem to know a lot about his eyes. Aren't you already wrapped up with Chance Jameson?"

"He's left town." Zora's gaze became shuttered.

Cami blinked, not used to Zora being anything but bubbly. "What? Zora, where did he-"

Zora rasied her hand, cutting her off. "Leave it, Cami. I don't want to talk about it."

Zora stood and started to walk away, but turned and winked at Cami.

"You should be trying to decide what you want to do with Mr. Chadwick."

Zora continued on her way, laughing.

"I don't plan to do anything with him!" Cami hollered back.

"Yeah, yeah. Keep telling yourself that," Zora replied.

She disappeared through the doors leading to the kitchen. Instead of going into her office, Cami went around the reception desk and took a seat. Picking up the list of

things still to do, she scanned it. Emerald green eyes flashed in her mind. Throwing the list on the desk, she swore softly.

I can't let him distract me like this.

Pushing Robert out of her thoughts, she picked up the list again, and started making phone calls.

"Hey, Jenisha! When can I come by to see what you've come up with for our opening?"

* * * * *

Robert Chadwick Jr. had watched in silence as Camilla Maxwell strode away. His gaze traveled over the angry, yet totally sexy, swing to her hips. *What a woman.*

He had been, admittedly, extremely suspicious of the woman his brother claimed to love. But Jem Maxwell's genuine heart and kindness had won him over. Jem's sister, on the other hand, was a whole other issue.

He didn't understand what her problem was with him. There was a spark about her, which is what had attracted him in the first place. She was sharp, cold, and cutting at times, but to him, it was only an aphrodisiac. He was used to women who fawned over him, catered to him, and, worst of all, never stood up to him.

Camilla Maxwell struck him as a woman who *would* stand up to him. In fact, he loved the thrill that shot up his spine when she argued with him, and how her dark brown eyes sparkled when she argued with him, and the flair of her nose as she struggled to retain a hold on her emotions.

From the second he had met her, he'd realized that she was something special, something unique that he needed. The only problem was, she seemed to have absolutely no interest in being around him, unless he picked a fight with her.

So that's what he did. He found reasons to be around her and keep her near him, and kept making offhand remarks so she'd give him a piece of her mind. Although he felt she was attracted to him, she made sure it was in no way interpreted as such.

She seemed to have a strong dislike for men, and he'd asked his brother, Chad, about it. Chad had laughed and mentioned something about a "Harpy club." So, Robert

took what he could, and at this point in his life, that was being an ass to get a woman he liked to pay attention to him.

"One day, Sweetcheeks, I'll show you how much better a man is than batteries. And not just any man--me." Still, he had to smile at her comment. Batteries...oh, that brought a whole swath of images to mind.

"Hey, Robert. How are you doing today?"

He turned to face Jaleza "Jem" Maxwell, Cami's sister had a grin on her face, and her cute hairstyle brushed her cheeks. Leaning over, he gave her a peck on her right cheek.

"Why are you messing with Cami?" Jem laughed and swatted him.

His surprise must have registered on his face, because she gave him a knowing look.

"Yeah, I know you want her."

Robert tugged his ear and grinned sheepishly. "Sorry, I did--"

Jem cut him off. "Didn't mean to look at her like she was spread out naked?"

Robert choked. Jem's grin was devilish, and she had a look on her face that made him stifle a laugh. It was one of those moments that made him realize how much alike the sisters were. In all his interactions with Jem, he had formed the assumption that she was more reserved of the two, a paler version of the fiery personality that was Cami. Now he knew he was wrong.

"My brother is a lucky man to have you." He kissed her on the cheek again.

"Don't try to change the subject. What do you want with my sister?" Jem slapped him on the chest.

To strip her and screw her senseless. Robert cleared his throat again.

He knew he couldn't say *that*, especially not to her sister, so he opted for something more diplomatic.

"A date, for starters." He glanced at the door Cami had left though. "If I could only get her to stand still long enough for me to ask her."

"Oh, please. You could have asked her all the times you've seen her." Jem laughed. "Besides, she won't go out with you."

"Why?" Robert frowned.

"You're a man."

"*What the hell does that mean?*"

Jem opened her mouth to speak.

"*Jem.*"

Robert watched a huge grin come across Jem's face at the sound of his brother's voice. She turned and raced across the room. Chad caught her and lifted Jem off her feet. He kissed her, and she held him, sinking into his body. At the sight of the two of them embracing, Robert's heart clenched. He couldn't help but compare Cami's abrasive response every time she saw him to Jem's when she saw Chad.

Give it up, Chadwick. Camilla Maxwell will never look at you the way Jem looks at Chad.

Chad set Jem on her feet and turned to him. Robert walked over to them.

"Thanks for keeping Jem company," Chad said.

"Be careful I don't steal her away." Robert slapped Chad on the back.

"She's not going anywhere." Chad laughed.

"What does that mean?" Jem poked him in the side.

"You love me." Chad raised Jem's ring-covered finger and kissed the engagement ring.

"This doesn't mean I can't look. I'll have you know your brother is a very handsome man. Hell, he might turn my head." Jem grunted and pulled her hand away.

Robert laughed at the look on Chad's face. He could see Cami's influence on Jem. At the thought of Cami, his cock twitched. He focused back on the conversation in time to hear Jem say, "It doesn't matter anyway; Robert has his eye on Cami."

Chad looked at him, then cracked up laughing.

"What?" Jem demanded.

"Bro, you have to be crazy. Camilla Maxwell..." Chad started laughing again.

"Chad, stop laughing!" Jem put her hands on her hips and glared at him, then continued. "He'd be lucky if Cami wants him."

"He'd be lucky if she runs him over with her car to put him out of his misery," Chad countered.

"Hey!" Robert growled.

Chad stopped laughing and studied him, eyes narrowing. Robert shifted uncomfortably. Chad turned to Jem and kissed her on the forehead.

"Let me talk to Robert a sec," Chad said.

"We are so going to talk about this, Chad." Jem glared at him and went across the room to check on some customers.

"I'm going to have to do some begging." Chad sighed, looking after Jem.

Chad turned to look at his brother, then gestured to the door. Curious about what he had to say, Robert walked to the door and outside. Chad joined him on the sidewalk in front of the store and closed the door. Then Chad turned and swatted him across the head.

"Shit, Chad. What's the matter with you?" Robert asked, rubbing his head.

"Are you crazy, lusting after Cami? She's not one of your playthings. Hell, she'd probably eat you alive and spit you out. God help me, that's my future sister-in-law, and if you do one of your 'wham-bang, thank-you-I-gotta-go' things, Jem will be pissed. If you need a quick fuck, go to one of your usual women, Robert. Cami-

"Stop. Stop right there." Angry, Robert cut him off. "You have no business telling me what to do. And --" he poked Chad in the chest--" *you will not talk about Camilla that way. She deserves your respect, and not to be laughed at. Clear?*"

He paused, breathing harshly. Chad's eyes were wide. Robert turned and paced away from him.

"Christ! You're already in love with her." Chad's voice stopped him.

His heart started to race, and he turned back to face Chad, who was shaking his head and looking at him in sympathy.

"Wrong, *Edward*." Robert was pleased to see Chad's eyes narrow at the use of his given name.

"Camilla Maxwell is a challenge I want to conquer and nothing more." Robert took his keys out of his pocket and pressed the button.

His BMW chirped. He strode to his car.

"Who are you trying to convince, me or yourself?"

Robert turned on Chad and swore. Chad put up his hand and grinned, walking over to put his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"Whatever happens, you have my support." Chad chuckled, then continued. "And my sympathy."

Robert growled.

"Hey, we're talking about Cami here. You're going to need as much of both as you can get."

"Whatever." Robert shrugged him off and went to his car.

"Robert!" Chad called.

Reaching the driver's side of the car, Robert looked over the roof at Chad.

"Maybe you want to tell Cami bye." Chad motioned down the street.

Confused, Robert looked down the street and saw no one. He glanced back at Chad. Chad was opening the door to Jem's Collectibles.

"She left a while ago."

"She and a friend are opening a business. They bought the store three doors down." Chad grinned at him.

Robert frowned. He knew Camilla was a CPA and worked for an investment firm on the other side of Trescott Cove.

"She's opening an office of her own?" he asked.

"Nope. It's a whole new venture," Chad replied.

He waited for Chad to tell him what it was. Chad said nothing, just continued to grin.

Exasperated, Robert sighed, then asked, "What sort of business, Chad?"

"Why don't you go on by and ask her?" Chad laughed and went inside the store.

Robert glared after him. Chad waved at him through the glass and went over to Jem. Jem started talking, her hands waving. Robert stifled a chuckle, seeing Chad's expression. Jem was giving him hell. Absently, he looked to where Chad had pointed. Shaking his head, he opened his car and got in. He inserted the key and turned it on, then sat back. A few seconds later, he swore, shut off the car and opened the door, getting out.

Quickly, he made his way down the sidewalk.

You're a fool, Chadwick. Camilla Maxwell has 'handle with care or you will be sucked in' written all over her. Are you ready for it?

Reaching the third door down, Robert took a breath, then opened the door and stepped inside. His breath left him in a whoosh as chocolate brown eyes locked with his. Hunger flashed in Camilla's eyes, and she licked her lips.

Yeah, I'm in for the sweetest kind of trouble. Bring it on, Camilla. Smiling, he sauntered over to her.

Chapter Two

Cami's eyes cooled, and a nasty little grin he wanted to kiss right off her face curled her lips.

"What are you doing here, Chadwick?"

Even her sneering at me turns me on. Instead of answering her, he glanced around. The walls were a pale yellow. Chocolate brown furnishings offset with burnt orange decorations made the room very inviting. He recognized the style of a painting over one of the couches. Walking over to it, he read the signature in the corner.

"Lennox ."

He turned to Cami. She had a glare on her face. Going to her, he picked up the sculpture on the desk. He studied it. It was a partial view of a woman face. The woman's mouth was slightly open almost as if getting ready to eat the bunch of cherries in front of her face. It was exquisitely detailed. The little plaque on it said *Surrender to Temptation by Brawich*.

He grinned when he saw the name.

"Give me that." Cami snatched the piece out of his hand.

She placed it back on the desk and stroked it. Robert shivered, wishing it was him.

"Why are you here?" Cami growled.

"Came by to check out the place you're starting up here."

He leaned against the front of the desk she was sitting at and looked around again.

"Very nice." He glanced back at her.

"I'm so glad you approve." Cami's response was dry.

He stifled a chuckle. "So, what sort of business is it?"

"Catering."

"*Catering*," he repeated. To say he was shocked was an understatement.

Cami's eyes snapped. "What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing. I just didn't know you could cook. Do you always have to be so prickly?"

"Yes," Cami replied promptly. "And you don't know what I can do. I'm a mean woman with a pot."

Her eyes twinkled, and Robert's heartbeat stuttered. She was breathtaking. He shifted his attention away from her.

"Something smells good." Sniffing the air, he asked, "So, do I get a taste of this mean pot?"

Cami's expression was bemused. She stood and motioned to him.

"Come on to the kitchen. We're testing some recipes."

Robert stood and followed behind the sway of her lush ass. She paused and glared at him over her shoulder. Smiling wolfishly, he continued walking toward her. She stepped to the side, gesturing for him to pass, and he chuckled as he went through the door. Then he stopped, his mouth falling open in awe.

Sparkling countertops and tables were all around the room. He counted six sub-zero freezers that seemed to be built into the walls, as well as other various types of refrigerators. Grills were in some of the counters, while a variety of stoves and ovens were all around the room. He glimpsed a pizza oven in the corner. On the right side of the room, he saw an industrial mixer and other baking items. An empty wine rack stood just beyond an open doorway. Through two other open doors, he saw bottles of what looked to be oil, and bottles of various condiments. He surmised it was a pantry, and from where he stood, it looked huge.

The last open door led to a small room, the shelves of which were filled with pots, pans, baking things, and linens. A figure was inside, arranging everything, head bobbing and honey-blond braids swaying. He stifled a grin. It could be no one but Zora Nicolette, whose tendency to outrageous colored braids was surpassed only by her always happy persona.

He had met Zora and her twin sister, Kenya, at the hospital when Jem was hurt over Christmas. When he had first seen the two of them, he hadn't known how to tell

them apart. Chad had let him in on the trick. Kenya tended to match her clothing color to her hair, while Zora didn't. And if you still couldn't tell, then their personalities would give you a hint. Zora was bubbly and always laughing, whereas Kenya, although she had a wacky sense of humor, was more intense. When he found out Kenya was a detective in the TCPF--Trescott Cove Police Force--he understood her intensity. He still remembered Zora's outrageous greeting when she first saw him.

"Aren't you a sexy hunk of a man? Those emerald green eyes, dark hair, and sensual lips make a woman want to forget she's a lady."

He wasn't a man who blushed easily, but the look she and her sister had exchanged had almost made him. He had quickly found his equilibrium and replied.

"And you make a man want to forget he is a gentleman and take you up on whatever you offer."

He had winked at her and Kenya. They had looked at each other again, then at him, and laughed. He had joined them. Cami had made a rude noise and left. What he had said had been the absolute truth. The sisters were gorgeous. But one woman had caught his attention--a prickly, sexy as hell woman named Camilla Maxwell, who had captured him with the first glance from her chocolate brown eyes.

Returning his attention to the present, Robert noted Zora had disappeared from view. He wasn't a fanciful man, yet he found himself wondering if Cami had put a spell on him. Shaking off the thought, he continued to study the setup. From his own knowledge of cooking, he could tell their kitchen had every gadget you could imagine. He turned and glanced at Cami. She had an anxious and proud look on her face. It changed to defiance when she saw him looking at her, as though she were daring him to find fault.

"This is great," he said. "How many people are you going to have working for you?"

Cami's look turned speculative. "Why are you asking?"

"I'm curious. This is quite a big set up." Robert shrugged.

"What? You think we're going to fail? We've researched this very carefully. There are only three other caterers in Trescott Cove and Savoy Valley. They're set up for smaller parties or gatherings. When anyone has larger events planned, they have to use the hotels or one of the restaurants in town and take whatever they have on the menu. And even then, the larger restaurants and hotels are mostly on the other side of Trescott Cove. They're booked up so fast you have to plan events almost a year in advance. Our plan is to offer people an alternative to what these places offer. Hell, I wish they would open a big restaurant and hotel in this part of Trescott Cove, with ballrooms and places we can have events. It's not far to get to the other part of Trescott, but it would be more convenient if one was closer." Cami took a breath, then continued.

"And to answer your question about staff, we've hired more than enough to handle all we need to do. Zora, my partner is a pastry chef, so she'll make all the desserts and sweets. She hired a friend she met in culinary school to handle the various dishes we'll create for our clients. " Cami grinned devilishly. "She was head chef at a restaurant in France, but we stole her away. She was happy to move to Trescott Cove and will be here in a few days. Then, a friend of mine who has been in Milan for the last few years will come on staff as a party planner. We'll work together. I'll plan the menu, staff and so on, and they will do everything else. We've already made a deal with the hotels and restaurants--big, small and in between--for our clients who want us to set up functions from planning to food. We know this won't be easy. We know it'll take time. I don't need you, Chadwick, standing here passing your judgments."

Cami stopped, breathing hard. The passion she had spoken with had impressed him. Watching her flashing eyes, Robert reached out and hauled her to him. She gasped and stiffened, her hand pushing at his chest. Dropping his head, he kissed her. She gasped again, and he stroked his tongue between her soft lips. Her delicious taste filled his senses. His head started to spin. Locking his legs, he held her and ate at her mouth. Cami made a wild, untamed noise in her throat, and her arms came around his neck. Then she took over.

A wanton chuckle stroked against his lips and into his mouth. Robert groaned and clamped his arms tighter around her. Cami licked along the roof of his mouth, then plunged in deeper.

Once.

Twice.

Then a third time.

She bit him gently. Scrapping her teeth along his tongue, she purred, making his tongue vibrate. His hardened cock twitched while his heart raced.

Her taste is... oh my God... Rational thought disappeared, and he let his body just feel. Her sweet, musky scent enveloped them, and she gripped him, her hands deep in his hair. Cami tugged sharply, drawing his head back. He moaned. She laughed and suck his tongue into her mouth.

What are you doing? the cautious part of her asked.

Tasting him and wanting more, her wanton, needy part answered.

Locking her hands tighter in Robert's hair, she pulled. He moaned. With a laugh she sucked his tongue into her mouth, then used hers to tickle the underside of his. He shuddered. Cami sucked in his taste, the manly sweet she equated with Robert Chadwick. She fought for enough control to let him go. Her mind screamed at her to get away, but her body demanded she get closer. Wrapping her legs around his hips, she ground against him. His hard cock brushed against her slacks. The friction made her already hard clit pulse. Wetness flooded her.

A loud clang made her jump. Coming to her senses, she dropped her legs and jerked away. Robert made a protesting sound. Pushing at him hard, she moved away as he stumbled backward. Shocked, she stared at him. His face was almost cruel with need. Harsh breath escaped him. His eyes were molten with desire. Robert took a step toward her. Cami backed up a step, then silently cursed herself for showing weakness. Raising her chin, she plastered a defiant look on her face.

"Fuck." Robert cursed harshly and turned away from her.

He put his hands on the table and dropped his head. He took a few deep breaths and shuddered. The urge to touch him filled Cami. Clenching her hands into fists, she took another step back. His head turned. His expression was a contained mask, but his eyes gave him away. A burning hunger made them shine with a savage intensity. He turned all the way and walked to her. She fought the need to step back. Robert stopped close to her. She could feel his heat. His masculine scent reached out to her and made her feel primitive. Balling her fists tighter, she waited to see what he would do.

He took her clenched hand from her side and watched her eyes. Slowly he uncurled each finger and smoothed her hand between both of his. He glanced at her hand, then back at her face. He raised her hand and kissed each finger. Cami snatched her hand away and stepped back. He chuckled, a sensual sound. Cami silently cursed herself for letting him see he had flustered her.

You already showed him that when you kissed him. She ignored the voice.

Robert turned and strode back through the door. Cami debated for a second if she should follow him. Pride made her go after him. He was already at the door leading outside. Robert opened it and spoke.

"Thanks for a taste of you, Camilla. We'll be doing it again soon." He turned and looked at her over his shoulder, then looked forward and stepped through the door.

"In your dreams, Chadwick!" Cami called.

"Yes, and so many other places we'll try," he retuned.

Whistling, he cleared the door, and it closed behind him. Watching him leave, Cami stumbled over to the wall closest to her. Leaning against it, she tried to still her racing heart.

"What have you done?"

Her voice echoed in the now empty room. Raising a shaking hand, she pushed back her hair and closed her eyes. His scent still hung in the air. Breathing deeply, Cami shivered. Opening her eyes, she stared out at the empty street beyond the plate glass window.

"What are you going to do?"

"Cami, what are you going to do?"

Cami jumped, startled from her thoughts, and turned to Jem, who had spoken.

"Umm, sorry. About what?"

Jem gave her a look, then replied, "About the crab puffs." Jem stepped closer and whispered, "All these greedy people have eaten them up. I want more. You better have some in the back."

"You're the greedy one," Cami chuckled. "And yes, I do have more. I'll go get them now."

Cami glanced around at the filled room. Glasses tinkled as people drank. Voices murmured in conversations, and the food they had prepared was disappearing rapidly. She spotted Zora and Aliana Deen--the chef they had hired--across the room. Zora gave Cami a thumbs up sign. Cami grinned and retuned it.

She continued her perusal and spotted the various town officials in the crowd. Kalen Irvine--who had come on staff as the party planner--was chatting with the mayor. Kalen laughed, and then he looked at her and winked. She blew him a kiss. Kalen caught it and smoothed his cheek. He returned his attention to the mayor. Kalen had done a fabulous job getting everything ready, even though he had been making arrangements from Milan. When he had arrived yesterday, the party side was ready to go. He'd jumped right in, prepping the rest of the food they needed done. She looked back at Jem.

"I'm so glad I have such a good turnout for our opening," Cami said.

"You've done it, sis. Delicious Surrenders is open, and the party is great." Jem hugged her, then asked, "Now where are the crab puffs?"

"I'm going. I'm going." Cami laughed.

Walking across the room to the kitchen, she stopped and chatted with her guests. All of them wished her congratulations on her opening. Reaching the door to the kitchen, she went inside and over to the warmer. Quickly, she pulled out a tray of the crab puffs. Taking it to the table, she grabbed the garnish and fixed the tray. Smiling,

Cami stopped and took a breath. All the hard work had paid off. The last frantic week of preparation had been well worth it. Delicious Surrenders was open and they were already buzzing about it in Trescott. Although they had some smaller jobs lined up already, they still hadn't gotten a big party. She wasn't worried, though, knowing it would be only a matter of time. She glanced at her watch and noted the time. The party had been going for four hours already, and she still hadn't seen Robert.

She hadn't seen him in a week. Even when she had hung out at Jem's shop longer than she should, or dropped in to Jem's house for a visit, Robert hadn't come by.

Where the hell has he been for this last week? Cami cursed herself for even wondering. Shoving him out of her mind, she picked up the tray and went back out to the front area. She went to the closest table and put down the tray.

"About time," Jem said, then picked up a plate. Cami shook her head as she watched Jem fill it.

"I'll take that." Kalen Irvine's rich baritone came just before she saw him try to take the plate from Jem.

"Don't touch, or I'll have to hurt you." Jem turned, blocking him, and growled.

"Okay, okay. Hmm...some people don't know how to share." Kalen put up his hands.

He turned to Cami, his hazel eyes twinkling. Kalen slid his arm around her waist, and they both watched Jem, who was stuffing crab puffs into her mouth and keeping an eye on the tray.

"God, Jem. I have more in the back. Let someone else have some," Cami said.

"Then give them those. These babies are mine," Jem countered.

Cami rolled her eyes and eyed her sister. "You're out of control. Where's Chad?"

"Over there, with William and Robert." Jem gestured,

Her heart rate picked up, and Cami looked where she had pointed. His emerald green gaze caught her. Robert glanced down at Kalen's arm around her waist, then said something to Chad and William. The brothers started toward them.

"Who's the man who looks like he wants to rip me limb from limb?" Kalen's quiet question made her look at him.

There was a speculative look on Kalen's café-au-lait face, and a combative gleam in his eye. Cami stifled a groan. When Kalen got that look, it meant only trouble.

"He's Jem's future brother-in-law, and it's nothing."

Kalen's look clearly said he didn't believe her. He raised a hand, and long fingers gripped her chin. He studied her, then let go of her face.

"I can see it's more than that, but I'll leave it for now," Kalen replied quietly.

He kissed her softly on the lips and walked away. Cami frowned after him, knowing he had kissed her to cause trouble.

"Camilla." Robert's harsh voice cut into her thoughts.

She glanced at him. His jaw was clenched tight and his eyes blazed in anger.

"Chadwick," she returned.

Cami glanced at William. William's features were a lot like his brothers', but his eyes were a pale grey. Cami stifled a shiver, her usual instinctive reaction to William. From the first time they had met, something about him let her know that, although he seemed very contained, there more beneath the surface. She had assumed it was just her, but at one of the gatherings of Jem, Zora, Kenya, and the other women they hung out with, William had come up in conversation. All of them, even Jem, had mentioned they had the same reaction. Demi, the manager of On the Vine, had summed it up best.

"There are just some men who unlock the most primal part of you, just by your being in their presence. William Chadwick is that sort of man. Any woman who makes that exterior of his crack better watch out."

They had all agreed with her sentiment. Now, with William studying her with his pale grey eyes, Cami was grateful that she wasn't that woman. She glanced at Robert. She had enough problems keeping her hands off one Chadwick brother. Robert's face was rigid. Cami growled, then looked back at William. A small smile was on the reserved man's lips.

"Cami, it's a pleasure to see you again. Congrats on Delicious Surrenders."

William's soft voice wrapped around her and made her heart pound.

That was the other thing about him. He had a voice that reminded you of a dark bedroom and carnal touches. William's eyes twinkled with the knowledge. She narrowed her eyes. He knew the effect he was having on her.

"William, I'm glad you could make it." Cami deliberately put out her hand.

William looked startled, then smiled and took her hand. In a smooth movement, he put himself between her and Robert. Robert took a step back. She could see him vibrating with anger.

"Come and show me around," William said.

Before she could say yes or no, he led her away. She glanced back. Chad stood next to Jem, a slight grin on his face. He reached for a crab puff, and Jem slapped his hand. Robert glared after Cami and William, then stormed off in the other direction.

"This is really a lovely place." William's soft voice drew her attention. "It's well designed, and I've heard good things about it. You and Zora must be very proud."

"Thanks, and yes, we are." Cami glanced around and noted everyone seemed to be having a good time.

"Yes, it's very interesting, and a good business to have in Trescott. Don't hurt my brother, Cami, or you'll have to deal with me."

He segued so smoothly into the threat that she almost missed it. William's face was calm, and his eyes were cool. Cami was floored that he had the gall.

"It's none of your business," she said heatedly.

"Ah, but it is my business," he replied in a cold tone.

"William, you don't want me for an enemy."

William laughed. Cami shivered at the cold sensuousness of the sound.

"It's you, Cami, who don't want me for an enemy."

She opened her mouth to reply. William put up a hand, stilling her words.

"Robert is my brother, and I'll do anything to protect him." He gave her a look.
"Anything. And you, Camilla Maxwell, are a danger to him. I just can't decide if it's a good one or a bad one. Don't hurt him, Cami, because I don't want to be your enemy."

"You should watch what you say, William. Robert is the one who won't stay away from me. He was always around until this last week, then he –" Cami herself off, realizing what she said.

William regarded her, and then grinned.

"Welcome to the family, Camilla Maxwell."

"You already told me that weeks ago, William." Confused, Cami watched the warm smile on his face.

"That was for Jem and Chad. This is for you and Robert." William chuckled. "I'm going to enjoy watching you both."

Cami waited for him to explain what he meant. William said nothing, just looked at her with that damnable grin on his face.

"What are you talking about?"

William looked startled, then laughed. "You'll soon figure it out."

He walked away. Women watched his progress across the room, and then he disappeared into the crowd. Cami tried to make sense of what had just happened. One minute, William was threatening her, and the next he was acting all friendly. William Chadwick was a weird man.

"Camilla, this is a wonderful addition to Trescott."

Plastering a smile on her face, she turned and greeted the mayor.

Robert clenched his fist on the table in front of him, trying to calm down. Even if he closed his eyes, he could still see the man with his hand around Camilla's waist.

When he'd arrived, he hadn't seen Cami, so he'd gone to speak with Chad. He knew the moment she had come back into the room. It was as if all his nerve endings had become supercharged. He had spotted her across the room with Jem. The pale yellow gown she wore had hugged every curve lovingly. Her hair hung around her

bare shoulders. It had taken everything in him not to go across the room and kiss her senseless. When a man had come up and said something to Jem, then went and put his arm around Camilla's waist, Robert had given in to the urge to cross the room. She had seen him coming. The flare of awareness in her eyes had thrilled him. At least until the man had distracted her, spoken to her then kissed her like he had a right. There was an intimacy in the way they talked and kissed.

She's mine, damn it.

"Instead of standing in here sulking, you should be out there with Cami," a languid voice said.

"Fuck you, William."

"Tsk, such language." William leaned against the table next to him.

Robert glanced at his immaculate brother. William picked something off his suit.

"Leave me alone, William."

"No, because you're acting like an ass."

"She's busy with someone else."

"Get your head out of your ass, Bert. You were the one she was looking at. You should be out there congratulating her on her business opening. Or just have a conversation. Con-ver-sa-tion. It's a simple thing. Two people talk and, hell, even find common ground."

Robert ignored him. William sighed, then was silent. After a few minutes, Robert couldn't take it anymore.

"Fine. Just give me a minute, and I'll go back out."

"Don't worry. It won't be necessary." William chuckled.

Robert opened his mouth to ask him what he meant, but the feeling cut him off. His skin got warm, his heart rate increased, and his cock swelled as he turned his head and locked eyes with Camilla.

Chapter Three

Hungrily, he took in her luscious, honey skin, bared by the low cut, sweetheart neckline of her dress. The defiant look on her face made him ache to kiss her.

"I'll speak with you later." William's voice made him jerk.

He had forgotten his brother was in the room. Cami stepped out of the way for William to pass. Robert followed her movements as she strolled over to one of the warming ovens and pulled out a tray. She prepped the tray, then picked it up. Camilla came back around the table. He moved to block her way and took the tray from her, putting it down.

"Give that to me, Chadwick," Cami growled.

"Who is he?"

"Who?" Confusion was on her face.

"The man who had his hands all over you. The one who kissed you like he had a right." He crowded her against the table.

"None of your business." Cami's eyes narrowed dangerously.

Ignoring it, he leaned into her. She shivered, then stiffened. Her pulse fluttered wildly in her throat. He licked his lips. Cami's eyes followed.

"Sweetcheeks, everything about you is my business," he drawled.

"No, it's not. Back away from me, Robert." Cami's eyes glittered.

"I can't." He heard the raw hunger in his own voice.

Her eyes became liquid heat, then cooled. Robert cursed, then grabbed her.

"What the hell are you doing to me?" he ground out.

"Keep your hands off me," Cami replied, pushing at his hands.

He banded his arms around her. Cami struggled and swore at him.

"Fuck you, Chadwick."

"That's what I want to do to you, over and over again."

Cami stopped struggling, going rigid. Passion was in her eyes. Her hand flashed up and she cupped his face. Robert growled, pulled her closer, and kissed her. It was a

carnal clash of tongues. Wild noises came from her. A rumble came from him. A sting made him jerk back. He raised his hand to his lip and touched where she had bitten him. He reached for her. Cami scrambled away from him.

"Camilla."

"No, Chadwick. This is my opening. There are people outside that door. We can't do this here."

"Where?" he asked, as his cock screamed for release.

Surprise, then caution, filled Cami's face. She opened her mouth.

"Do you need some help here, Cami?" a voice asked.

Robert turned and saw the man who had been touching Cami earlier. He took a step forward, but Cami grabbed his arm, stopping him. He looked at her, then back at the man. The man smiled, a baring of his teeth. Robert responded in kind. He turned to Cami and hauled her up in his arms, kissing her thoroughly. When he released her, she slumped against the table. Robert walked over to the man and growled.

"Stay away."

He passed the man and went out the door. In quick strides, he went across the room, ignoring William calling him and not even seeing everyone else. Stepping outside into the cold night, he took a breath, then went to his car.

Later that night, as he sat in his home, alone, Robert allowed his thoughts to drift over to the spitfire of a woman who went by the name Camilla Maxwell.

The raw beauty that floated around her had imprinted itself onto him. He felt his cock stir as his attention remained on her. "Cami," he whispered to the dark of the room.

Robert was struck with the urge to free his erection and bring himself pleasure, but he held back. Cami would be real, not a figment of his imagination when her figure, scent, and voice allowed him to find his release.

* * * * *

A few weeks later

Zora was dancing around happily, her red micro braids flying about her head. "We did it!" she hollered. "We got our first big contract."

Cami was just as happy, but she was just holding it in a teensy bit better. "I can't believe it either, Zora. We've had smaller affairs to plan, but this is the first big one. What a way to start out." She looked down at the paper with the particulars on it.

Five hundred people. A black tie affair for Artisan Architectural & Design. It was ironic that the company she had wanted to design the interior of Delicious Surrenders was hiring her to plan a party for their clients. AA&D was the best architectural and interior design firm not only in Trescott Cove, but the world. The firm was run by eight partners, but only two were seen in the media, one an architect and the other a designer. AA&D was always booked solid, which is why they weren't available to design Delicious Surrenders.

AA&D had stated clearly what they wanted--a fun social party with delicious foods. The menu had already been requested and date set. Cami knew she and Kalen would have a lot of work to do to pull this off, but they would be ready. Correction--they would get it done, no matter what. She frowned as she thought about the peculiar way Kalen had been acting. He still wouldn't explain why he had acted the way he had at their opening weeks earlier. His only response was that Robert Chadwick better watch himself.

Not that it mattered. She hadn't seen Robert since the opening. He had seemed to disappear. When she asked Jem causally about him, Jem had laughed at her, then said he was working. Cami had realized then that she didn't know what Robert did. She had assumed he worked at Chadwick Pharmaceutical, but when she had accompanied Jem to Chad's office and asked where Robert's office was, they had told her he didn't work there. It had surprised and disappointed her. She hadn't asked any more, not wanting to seem as if she was looking for him.

But you are looking for him.

Cami refocused on Zora. "We've done it, Zora. We have arrived!" Cami lifted her champagne flute in salute.

As her business partner continued to jump for joy, Cami tried to figure out more about this mysterious partner of AA&D who had hired them. When she had asked if it was Gaines Douglas, the one who everyone knew, the woman who had come to book the party had said no. She was an older woman, and had said only that she was there on behalf of her employer.

The party was to take place in the Star Crystal Hotel, the most prestigious hotel in Trescott. Cami loved that hotel; she had been in it a few times, and had always been amazed by its elegance and beauty.

Cami had been busy the past few weeks. All her free time had been devoted to being near her sister, helping her out. Every other second, she spent dividing her energy between some freelance CPA jobs and making sure that Delicious Surrenders was off and running smoothly.

With tax season almost upon her, she knew she would be getting more freelance requests. She was tired, but it was a wonderful feeling. Her old job had tried to hold onto her, even though she had opened Delicious Surrenders. They still called her, but she had stuck to her desire and not caved. She would still continue doing taxes, but on a case by case basis, not for a firm.

"Hey! Woman, are you still with me here?" Zora snapped her fingers in front of her face.

"I'm here, Zora. Just lost in thought. We should get going on this. Don't want our first big job to be less than perfection."

"I know, I know." Zora winked. "Just think how many handsome men will be there. Possibly single as well. Maybe we can find ourselves one."

Cami rolled her eyes. *Just what I need, a man.* "We'll be working, Zora, not picking up men."

"Anything can happen, my dear. Anything." Zora grinned impishly.

"Only in your world, Zora honey, only is yours." Draining the rest of her drink, Cami headed to the back of the store and began to figuring out what needed to be done first.

As she made a note to call On the Vine about arrangements, Zora and Aliana were mumbling about the menu.

* * * * *

"I can't believe it didn't work!" the voice sneered. "That bitch didn't die. How come she didn't die?"

"Well, what did you think? That Chad wouldn't have gone into the store to make sure she wasn't there?"

"I didn't *think* he would be there at all. I believed he would have been otherwise occupied." The malice in the woman's voice made the man sitting with her fight back a shudder.

"Well, now that you know they're engaged, why don't you just leave everything alone?"

Blue eyes narrowed into tiny slits. "Excuse me? She's busy planning a wedding that should not be hers. A wedding that will not happen. That bitch is not going to ruin my well-laid plans!"

Phillip Buckman was uncomfortable for the first time in his life. He had done many unscrupulous things to get a story. The story. But this...this was getting a bit too much, even for him. He drew the line at murder.

Looking at the blonde he was with, he knew he was in too deep to get out. All it would take would be one call from her, and his entire life would be over. "What do you need from me?" he questioned on a sigh.

A sick smile crossed her face. Evidently, she knew he wouldn't dare go against her. Leaning forward, she told him.

* * * * *

Star Crystal Hotel

Cami stood in a room adjoining the ballroom. They'd stored some things here they had bought, but hadn't used. She looked out the doorway to the center of the ballroom, where the waiters were getting their final orders from Kalen. Zora and Aliana were in the kitchen on the other side of the huge hall, directing their respective chefs in the

preparation of the first set of appetizers. Everything was ready. Cami smoothed her hands down her black suit. She would be here to make sure everything that passed from the kitchen to the wait staff was done in the correct order. Kalen would be up front, mingling with the guests to make sure everything ran smoothly. Excitement was intermixed with nervousness, but she was looking forward to this.

Each item had been labored over and planned down to the last detail. Cami had decided at the last minute to include a special extra. She had poured over books and found what she was looking for. Kalen had called in some of his contacts to get them a special ice sculpture artist to make the massive center piece in the middle of the ballroom. It was a replica of one of the homes designed by Artisan Architectural & Design. The book hadn't listed which partner had created the design, but it didn't matter. She couldn't wait to hear the guest oohing and ahing over it. It was spectacular.

The large ballroom was filled with lovely floral sets put together by On the Vine, a shop that she knew well. When Jem had been injured, she had gone there to get flowers instead of to the shop at the hospital. The white orchids and pale peach roses On the Vine's staff had put around the ice sculpture made it look like a garden grew beneath it. The older woman who had booked the event came in earlier to greet Cami and Zora, and was pleased with the way everything turned out.

A satisfied smile crossed Cami's face. Just one more thing would make that satisfaction complete. "I'd like to meet whoever the main man is at this event," she muttered.

"Ask and you shall receive, Sweetcheeks," a deep voice crooned in her ear.

The shivers that surged through her told her immediately who it was. A subtle, woodsy masculine scent flowed around her. Robert Chadwick Jr.

Ah hell! What is he doing here? Cami turned her head and gasped. *Dear Lord this man is beautiful.*

"Hmm...you don't look all that horrible in a tux," she said as she took in the hunk beside her.

Robert wore a black tuxedo, four-button, with a black satin vest and tie. In the left pocket was a handkerchief the same color as his eyes, a vivid emerald green. The cut of the tux fit his body like a lover's caress, allowing everyone to see how powerfully built he truly was. Over his arm, a black garment bag was draped. He closed the he had entered through, a door she hadn't noticed before.

"Well, after you marry me, perhaps I'll dress better," he goaded. "I'd love to have you dress me."

Her heart pounded, and without missing a beat, Cami retorted, "I didn't know Armageddon was upon us."

He chuckled as he closed the door facing the ballroom, shutting them alone inside the room. Cami swallowed. Suddenly, the air was thick and hard to ingest.

"Mmm...being the last man on earth with you. All that repopulation would be fun."

She scoffed. "Dream on."

"I will. I like you in my dreams." His eyes raked her body.

"Why's the door shut? I have work to do," Cami said, ignoring the need her pussy was demanding to have met.

"Am I in your dreams? What do you long for?" He prowled closer.

"I guess you don't get everything you ask for. What are you doing here, Chadwick?"

"I'm here for the party you planned for me. I love the sculpture you did of my building. It's a favorite of mine."

Cami was trying to understand what was going on.

"Party." Realization was slow in dawning. "You work for Artisan."

Robert shook his head. "Nope, Sweetcheeks. I'm part owner."

Cami was stunned. She had no idea Robert was an architect.

"You designed the building we used for the sculpture?"

"Yes."

Cami didn't know what to say. The building was a work of art--lots of angles, and just breathtaking. From the moment she saw it, she knew it was the one she wanted to showcase. She studied Robert, unable to believe he had created it.

"I can see from your expression you don't believe me. "

She heard the bitterness in his voice and felt bad. His next words erased the feeling.

"I do other things besides seduce women, Camilla."

Jealousy clawed at her as she thought of him with other women.

"Why are you throwing this party and not another of your partners? I was hoping for a different one."

"Well, that's too bad, Sweetcheeks. I'm the Chadwick, the main man, and *this* is for you." A long tapered finger pointed at the bag.

She raised a brow. "What is it?"

"A dress." He held her gaze.

"What do I need with a dress? I'm dressed fine for my role here." Her curiosity had been piqued. Why would he bring her a dress?

"Your role has changed."

"Excuse me?" Her eyes narrowed in warning.

It didn't seem to bother him. Robert held the dress out to her. "Your outfit is fine for a party planner or caterer, but not for a hostess."

"I'm not the hostess. Kalen will see--"

"You are now. We'll talk about this Kalen later. Don't say his name to me again until we do."

Again, he gestured with the bag.

"Why would I want to do that? And we have nothing to say about Kalen." Cami crossed her arms and stared at the hunk beside her.

"Because you would love to spend the evening at my side." He leaned in closer.

"And you are dying to see what dress I picked out for you. You probably don't think I know your size, but I promise it will be a perfect fit."

"Don't you have some model waif to be your hostess?" Her body grew damp at the prospect of being so close to him, to have his arm around her waist.

"Scared?" Robert asked.

"Not on your life. But I can't leave Kalen and Zora to deal with everything on their own."

His hand slid down her side, following the curve of her hip. "I've already asked Zora, and she's okay with it. And you hired this man to do a job, so let him do it. You don't have any other reason. Let's get you changed."

"And if I don't want to help?" Cami demanded. How dare he presume she would drop everything to assist him!

He lifted a shoulder in a lackadaisical motion. "I never took you for a chicken. I didn't think anything scared you."

That's the second time he's said "scare" in reference to me. A challenge had been issued. "A chicken?" She glared at him, overlooking the smug expression. "Let me tell you something, Chadwick. If there was something in this world that scared me, it sure as hell wouldn't be a man. Much less you."

"Sweetcheeks, have no fear. I'm all man, and we both know I make you nervous." He held the dress out to her. "You should hurry and change."

Snatching the bag, she pointed to the door. "Go, and don't let anyone in here."

A predatory look filled his gaze. "Don't worry. I wouldn't dream of letting anyone look at my woman."

"I AM NOT YOUR WOMAN!" Cami thundered as she shoved him to the door. "And stop calling me Sweetcheeks!"

"So feisty," he teased as she slammed the door behind him.

Her heart pounded out of control. He never gave her a moment of peace, and he was so infuriating. The thing that confused her was that she had begun to enjoy, and even look forward to, their verbal sparring.

What could it hurt to help him? He was almost family.

Like you think of him like that, her mind taunted.

Cami sighed heavily as she unzipped the black bag. Mr. Robert Chadwick Jr. had been haunting her thoughts more and more as of late. It seemed if she was allowed a moment of mental reprieve, then he would show up in person to torment her, and vice versa.

Her breath caught as she exposed the dress. A dark, emerald green halter dress. The exact color of the kerchief in his lapel pocket. "Damn," she muttered.

The man had taste.

Casting a quick glance around the room to ensure she was alone, Cami stripped and reached for the dress.

It fell in a silken wave over her body. She grinned as she zipped it up.

Sitting on the bottom of the bag were a pair of perfectly dyed silk couture thong shoes. They had a three and a half inch heel, and were detailed with crystals, which were also green. She reached in and pulled them out.

"Beautiful." Cami was about to put the first shoe on when a knock came on the door.

"Ready?" Robert's voice questioned.

"Come in," she said. *I wonder if he will like what he sees.*

* * * * *

Robert opened the door and let himself in, and his breath caught in his throat.

Holy shit! The blood rushed from his head to his cock, which swelled against the fabric of his boxers.

The green was vivid against the smooth, dark cocoa of her skin. The V in her dress showed off the sides of her breasts and, for a second, he almost ordered her to change.

All that gorgeous, flawless skin. He swallowed and bit the inside of his lip for control. The dress had a slit up the left side, and he knew everyone tonight would get a view of her leg when she walked.

Dangling from one hand were the shoes. Kicking the door shut behind him, he walked over and dropped to the floor before her.

"What are you doing?" she asked, taking a step back.

"Give me your shoes," he ordered. The smell of dark amber, and something else, floated around him.

"Why?"

Without answering, he took one shoe and lifted her foot, placed the shoe upon it. Then he fastened the buckle for her. "So you don't have to put them on yourself." He ground his teeth as the smoothness of her leg tantalized him. "We're almost going to be late."

"Well, excuse the fuck out of me for not knowing you were going to spring this on me a few minutes before it happened." She dropped the final shoe in front of him.

Robert took a deep breath and immediately regretted it. All breathing seemed to do was immerse her natural scent further into him.

"Although," her voice suddenly sounded like velvet, "seeing you on your knees before me isn't all bad."

He buckled the second shoe and trailed his fingers up the inside of her left leg. A grin crossed his face as she stepped backward, but only when he reached her knee.

"Apparently not," he said, standing.

Two steps placed him behind her, where he closed his eyes and willed his raging erection to calm down. The dress stopped a little above the small of her back, leaving the rest bare. *This night is going to be a hellish test.*

"Well, let's get going, then," Cami said, her tone back to how it normally was, sharp and unforgiving.

"Try to be polite," he ground out.

She tossed her head, the curls dangling down her back moving seductively.

"Should I call you master?"

Leaning in closer, Robert placed his hand on her back, her bare skin scorching his palm. "Only in private, Sweetcheeks. That's between us."

He felt her shudder. "You owe me for this, you know."

"I'm willing to pay," he whispered. "Whatever you like."

A huge sigh escaped her. "Let's just get this over with."

He kissed her bare shoulder. "You look beautiful, by the way."

"No need for platitudes. I'm doing this, and I won't embarrass you." She strode to the door.

Robert knew he was getting to her, and yet there was still the sound of pain in her statement. He stood still and watched her hips sway back and forth with her natural, enticing walk. The small train the dress had only elevated her allure.

Hell. This is going to be hell.

And yet...it thrilled him to have Ms. Camilla Maxwell on his arm for the evening. It may be hard to keep his raging libido in check, but it would be worth it.

So worth it.

His smile, he knew, was kinder than it usually was at these engagements. The woman who was acting as hostess was the reason why.

Cami tossed him a glance. "Are you coming?" Impatience was written all over her face.

"Yes ma'am. I'm right behind you." He stared at her until a slight waver of hesitation appeared. Damned if the woman didn't happen to blush.

As the night progressed, Robert was even more impressed with the ease and elegance with which she performed her hostess duties. She always had a kind smile ready for every person she spoke to. It was as if she were born with the grace and instinct that created a perfect hostess. And at the same time, he hated that the other men in the room dared to ogle her as she flowed amongst them all.

He spied the man, Kalen, talking with some of the guests. The ease he showed with them irritated Robert. Kalen murmured something to the people he was talking with and walked toward the kitchen. Making a decision, Robert made his excuses and went after him.

Robert went through the door to the kitchen and spied Zora and the chef, Aliana, hard at work. He glanced around and didn't see where Kalen had gone. He turned and went back through the door, then stopped.

"Looking for me?" Kalen's tone was silky as he leaned against the wall next to the open door.

Robert's fist clenched, and he stepped toward him.

Chapter Four

Kalen stepped forward to meet him. Robert stopped a few steps away from him.

"Stay away from Cami."

"I work with her, Chadwick, so that would be hard to do. And besides, I knew Cami way before you did."

Robert growled and stepped to him. He didn't even see Kalen move. One second Kalen was in front of him, and the next Robert found his face pressed against the wall. Robert tested his grip and found Kalen's hold firm.

"Let me go."

"Are you always such a hot head?" Kalen asked.

"No, he's the more even tempered one," a languid voice replied. "Now let him go."

Robert heard the warning in William's voice. He turned his head. Kalen had a nasty smile on his face. In a fast move of his own Robert broke Kalen's grip and turned on the man. Kalen glided away from him in a smooth move, leaning against the wall and watching him and William with a smile on his face.

"You're lucky I like you, Chadwick," Kalen stated.

"I don't care. Stay away from Cami."

"You're really thick, Chadwick. I'm not going anywhere."

Robert started for him. William stepped in his way.

"Bert, need some help?" a deep voice asked.

Robert spotted his cousin. Bradford Chadwick, sauntering inside from the kitchen. He had on a silky caramel shirt and slacks. He moved with a laziness that Robert knew was deceptive. Robert came to his senses and realized where he was. He looked at the ballroom beyond and was grateful no one had noticed him acting like a fool. He looked back at Kalen.

"What's it going to take to make you go away?"

Kalen straightened. "You know, until you said that, we might have been friends."

"*Friends?*" He looked at Kalen like he was crazy. "We want the same woman."

"Is he always so one-track-minded?" Kalen looked at William and Bradford.

"When it comes to something he wants," William responded.

"Yeah," Bradford said at the same time.

Kalen sighed and shook his head.

"Chadwick, you hurt Cami, and I will kill you."

Although he said it casually, Robert believed him. Kalen nodded and walked away.

"Kalen, stay away from Cami, or I will hurt you."

Kalen turned on him. "Cami would have your hide, and so would Jem."

"Jem? What does she have to do with this?"

Kalen sighed again, then replied casually, "My sisters love me very much, and they won't let you hurt me."

Stunned, Robert stared at the man who claimed he was Cami's brother.

"Camilla and Jem don't have a brother."

"Oh, but they do." Kalen laughed. "At least when they decide to claim me. I'm not going anywhere. After all these years, Cami called me to help her with Delicious Surrenders. I'll do everything I can to make sure it succeeds. And I've made it my duty to make sure you and that brother of yours treat my sisters right. Hurt them, and you'll answer to me."

Kalen walked away.

"He's their brother." William sounded as stunned as Robert felt.

"I don't think Chad knows," Bradford said.

Robert didn't think he did either. "I don't know why Jem hasn't told Chad, but we can't tell him. Jem should tell him."

Robert watched Kalen go to Cami and kiss her on the cheek. Cami laughed and swatted him. They walked away.

"Let's go back to the party." Robert went back inside.

A few hours later, Robert stood with a few CEOs, not really listening to their chatter. His eyes were across the room, watching the ebony enchantress named Cami. She was currently speaking to someone who Robert knew was a lecherous old man. Not someone he wanted around her.

"Excuse me, gentlemen." Robert bowed briefly and headed toward the group surrounding Cami.

"...rather boring personally." Cami was saying, "But I thank you for the invitation."

Sipping his drink, Robert asked, "What invite?" He placed one hand on the small of her back, a silently possessive move.

Charleston Irving smiled at him before turning watery eyes back to Cami. The grin on his face made Robert's stomach knot up. "Just extending to our lovely hostess here an invitation to come play golf with me.

Turning his head slightly, Robert inhaled the gentle smell wafting from Cami's hair. He used his thumb to create small circles on the smooth skin of her back. "Too bad she thinks it's boring."

Irving shrugged. "Perhaps she'll give me a chance to change her mind."

Not so long as there is a breath in my body. "Perhaps," Robert said. "If you'll excuse me, I need to speak with Camilla about something." Applying a bit of pressure on her back, he propelled her toward a side room.

Cami was silent the entire walk. Robert opened the door to the room where she had changed her clothes and ushered her inside, shutting it behind him. She put a bit of distance between them before turning and looking at him.

"What?" she asked, a familiar, biting tone to her voice.

For some reason, her attitude bothered him this time. Normally, it only made him long to pick on her more; but at this moment, it intensified his growing frustration.

"What were you doing?"

Astonishment flashed across her face, followed closely by disbelief. "Exactly what you asked me to do. Hostess. Why, am I doing it wrong?" She crossed her arms, an act that only brought his attention back to her full breasts.

His cock reminded him that it was not dead by any means. Robert shifted his stance to try and alleviate the pressure. "Well, I didn't expect you to hang all over every man," he snapped.

Her dark cocoa eyes widened, then narrowed in warning. "I'm here as a hostess, doing a favor for you. I didn't ask to be dressed like this and paraded around in front of those rich snobs out there. I did this because you..." She trailed off.

Robert watched her breathing increase in speed. "Because why?" he asked as he closed the distance between them. The fact she had to force herself not to retreat under his advance was obvious to him.

He almost groaned aloud as her pink tongue snuck out and wet her lips. His penis throbbed insistently. The urge to pull her into his arms was overwhelming.

"Because, despite how unhappy it may make me, you are almost family," she responded.

What the fuck? Family? I'm being stuck in the "family" category. Oh, hell no! "We aren't family, and I'll be damned if you start thinking of me in that light!"

Her jaw set as a dangerous glow filled her eyes. "Whatever. It's not like I wanted to be part of your family."

A low rumble poured from his gut. That wasn't what he had meant at all. Two steps and he had her in his grasp, his fingers digging into the flesh of her upper arms. He ignored the wide-eyed look she gave him and kissed her.

He didn't ask, just took. His tongue swept through her mouth like a raging tempest. Investigating every inch of her mouth, Robert pressed his erection against her, wanting her to know what she did to him.

One hand dropped down to land on her silk-covered ass, his thumb remaining on the skin of her back. Flexing his fingers, he kneaded her firm flesh. The spicy scent of her arousal filled the air.

She smacked his chest before entangling her hands in the lapel of his tuxedo jacket. With a strong jerk, she pulled them closer together.

* * * * *

Emotions flew through her body as it was pressed tightly against the rock-solid one of Robert Chadwick. Being angry was a wonderful defense mechanism, but it never worked out right when things included the man who was kissing her so wonderfully.

Her pussy pulsed with a need she hadn't ever felt before. It craved something it hadn't ever had before--fulfillment.

As she relaxed into him, the kiss changed from powerful, possessive, and demanding to a thorough perusal. He left no stone unturned as his tongue explored her mouth.

Robert left her mouth and nipped her chin before he turned his burning emerald gaze on her. "I am not your brother, Sweetcheeks. Why didn't you or Jem tell us you had a brother?"

"How did you know?" Cami's eyes narrowed. "Kalen, damn him. Jem told Chad. It was up to him if he wanted to tell you."

"No, you should have told me, Camilla."

"Why would I?" Cami refused to feel guilty for not telling him.

"How is it you have a brother no one seems to know about?"

She shut away the memories best forgotten and answered with as little information as possible. "He's my half-brother, and it really isn't any of your business." Cami studied him. "All you need to know is that we'll all be family. God help us."

"The only way I'll let you call me family is when we're married," Robert drawled.

The thought of spending every night in his arms made her shudder with lust. "We won't be married, so get your hand off my ass before I remove it permanently," Cami threatened.

Instead of listening to her, Robert dropped his other hand and squeezed the other half of her derriere. "Anytime you want to roll around with me, Sweetcheeks, I'm up for the fun."

"You have a room full of people just on the other side of that door. Let go of me so I can do what you asked."

One black eyebrow rose as he lowered his mouth to hers again. "I haven't even begun to ask, yet." His fingers lingered on the zipper of her dress, lowering it. "God, I want to take this off you and—"

The door opened and Cami sprang back from Robert a mere second before a drunk man stumbled into the room. "Oops," he slurred. "Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt. But, we could share her."

Cami seethed as she stepped forward. *Who the hell did that drunk ass think he was?*

Robert stopped her with a touch. "Mr. Haggerty. I think you've had a bit too much to drink. This is the hostess, Ms. Maxwell. We were discussing something."

The man standing in the doorway was oblivious as Robert ran her zipper back up, then dropped his hand. Cami missed his touch immediately.

Mr. Haggerty stared at them before he shrugged and waved at her. "My apologies. Come hostess me, doll. I like Robert, but there are times when he can be an old stogy."

Cami smiled and moved toward the old man. "I agree. Let's go mingle," she said with a wink. *Only a few more hours and I'm done with these people.*

She cast a glance back at Robert and raised a brow in challenge. Would he stop her? Did she want him to?

Damned if the man didn't arch one back at her saying, "No problem. We'll finish this discussion after the party."

She swallowed as a glint of promise filled his sexy eyes. *I'm in trouble.* Cami left the room with the old man, who wanted more to drink.

For the rest of the night, Robert pretty much left her alone. Every now and then, he'd approach and place an innocent touch to her body. Innocent or not, it kept her primed and longing for more.

As she stood by the door and said goodnight to the departing guests, Cami felt exhaustion settling in. It had been a long night, and all her senses seemed on overload. The food had been a success; she had received many compliments for her choice of

party planner and caterer, so that only added to her overload of wonderful experiences. None of the guests realized she was part of the staff who'd planned the event. She glanced up and noticed Kalen walking back toward the kitchen on the other side of the room.

Robert had situated himself beside her and spoke in low tones to those leaving. His hand remained on her waist, keeping her close. He smelled like a mix of smooth bourbon and crisp mountain air. She wasn't sure how he managed to pull that off, but he did, and it was driving her crazy. Cami had to redouble her efforts to pay attention to the people to whom she was speaking.

"Cami, it was a lovely evening," William said, taking her hand in his as he was leaving.

She looked curiously at the other man who stood beside him. The man smiled, a warm grin that made his whiskey eyes twinkle invitingly. He had a raw sexuality.

"Cami is a great fan of yours. She has one of your pieces in her office."

She glanced at Robert, confused.

"Camilla, this is Brawich," he said, answering her unspoken question.

Camilla looked at the man whose art she so enjoyed. She knew he lived in Trescott, but had thought he was a recluse. No one could get to his house without getting lost. He lived in the winding mountains that were between Trescott and Savoy Valley.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," she said. "I have a few of your pieces."

"Thanks. I'm glad people like my work." Brawich laughed, then glanced at Robert and William. "Although my cousins tend to think it's a load of bull."

William, Robert, and Brawich laughed. Cami glanced at them and realized they looked a lot alike. She hadn't known that Brawich was related to the Chadwicks.

"My brothers and sister like to brag about them," Brawich sighed. "They're so strange."

Cami laughed at the exasperated look on his face. This man was like nothing she expected the artist Brawich to be.

"Brawich, they are so honored to have such a famous brother and cousin," Cami teased.

Brawich looked startled, then laughed. "You're a handful, Ms. Maxwell. I like that. Call me Brad."

"Cami. And I like it, too."

"It was a pleasure finally meeting you, Cami." Brad raised her hand to his lips.

"Get going, Bradford." Robert pulled her hand from his.

William and Bradford left, laughing.

"What is your problem? That was rude." Cami poked him in the chest.

"Men keep grabbing you. I don't like it." Robert grabbed her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Get over it. You don't control me." She snatched her hand from his.

She saw someone else leaving and waited for them to come over to them. Cami ignored the man at her side and talked with the departing guests. It didn't take long before it was just Cami and Robert, along with the cleaning crew. She had talked to Zora and Kalen, then sent them home with a hug and tons of congratulations. Kalen was reluctant to leave, but had, with urging from Zora. He threw Robert a warning glare, then went to wait in the car.

Zora, on the other hand, pointed at Robert, who was studying the sculpture in the center of the room, and winked at Cami before whispering, "Have fun with that one."

Cami nodded at one of the cleaning personnel and headed into the room that had her own clothes in it. It was time to go home. Shutting the door behind her, Cami leaned against the wall and rested her head against it. She sighed and lifted one leg to unbuckle her shoe.

"I can do that for you." A sensual timbre invaded her serenity.

"What the...oh, it's you. What do you want, Chadwick?" Her heart rate intensified. He had loosened his bowtie, and stared at her from where he leaned against a table. His hair was tousled like he had been running his fingers through it. *I want to run my fingers through it.*

"That isn't anything you really need to ask me, Sweetcheeks. You know what I want." He pushed away from the table in a single, smooth motion. Every step toward her screamed predator.

Her belly clenched and her skin tingled with the idea of what could happen. If only she allowed it. "Look, I helped you out. Now let me go home." She could feel the moisture gathering at her core.

Robert didn't say anything, just finished diminishing the distance between them. Without slowing, he gathered her into his arms and pressed his lips to hers.

Sweet Jesus! Cami knew she should protest, should hit him, something, but all she could do was sag into his strength. It was a tender exploration of her mouth. Each sweep of his tongue made her pussy throb in response,

She put one foot against the wall behind her and tilted into his kiss. Her hands wound around his neck, and her fingers teased the ends of his hair. It was so soft on her skin.

His hand dropped to her back, and she shivered at the unmistakable sound of her zipper being lowered. He slid it down until he could move it no further.

Slipping his hand inside the opening, he moved his hands over the bared globes of her ass and he muttered, "You're a thong woman? I never would have guessed."

She flushed. For once, Cami was happy to be wearing something slinky and sexy. He began nibbling down her neck, sending wave after wave of pleasure through her body. Wherever he touched her, her skin burned.

Rejoining their mouths, she sucked on his searching tongue. He tasted better than he smelled. Her breasts ached for his caress; they were taunt and sensitive as they pressed against the satin material of the built-in bra.

Robert wedged one powerful leg between hers. The feel of his silk pants rubbing against her inner thighs, made her whimper with longing. It was almost rough, the way he palmed her breasts, but for Cami, it only intensified her craving.

After pulling on her lower lip with his teeth, he let go and stared into her eyes. Passion had darkened the green and they bored into her, seeing into her soul, understanding what she yearned for, hungered for.

Robert watched her face, his hands moving from her breasts down her shape, to her waist, over her hips and back up again. She bit her lip as he leaned in to place a kiss between her breasts. His tongue licked the valley and touched each exposed side as well as beginning to tease the undersides.

Cami's knees began to buckle. She grasped his upper arms, holding him closer. "Sweet Jesus," she moaned.

One of his hands dropped down and moved up under the dress, courtesy of the slit that ended high up on her left thigh. Using the leg that was between hers, Robert spread hers further apart and trailed his fingers up the soft inner flesh of her thigh.

Cami felt like her heart was pounding out of control. She knew he could feel the moisture dripping from her. A single touch of his fingers along the edge of her thong was all it took for an orgasm to rush over her and her legs to become boneless.

He covered her soaking mound with his hand, allowing one finger to slip under and tease her clit. "You are so fucking hot." Robert swirled his finger around before sliding it inside her.

"Oh shit!" she wailed, uncaring that the cleanup crew in the next room could most likely hear her.

He added another finger and began to move them in a nice, steady rhythm that only stoked her fire. Her body clamped down around them tightly. With his free hand, he shoved one side of her halter top out of the way and latched his mouth over the bared breast.

Cami tried to close her legs around his thrusting hand, but his leg made it impossible. Her hands moved back up to his head and wound themselves in his thick hair, pressing him harder against her.

Stars were flickering before her gaze, and she longed to experience his body on hers. Totally. She whimpered as his shadowed face nuzzled the material away from her other breast. The hairs from his stubble abraded her, heightening her pleasure.

Just as suddenly, his fingers were removed from within her and he was stepping back. "What?" she asked still enveloped by a cloud of passion.

Robert held up a shaking hand between them. "You have one chance to stop this," he rumbled, his voice an octave lower than she recalled. "I'm near my breaking point, so if you don't want to be naked except for your shoes, you'd better get the hell out of here right now."

"Or?" The ideas his statement gave her.

Flames flickered in his eyes. "Or I'm going to make you mine. I want those heels on your shoes digging into my back, as you scream my name and come all over my cock while it's buried totally inside you. Be sure, Camilla."

Cami licked her lips and held his gaze. There were some times in life when logic just had no business interjecting its opinion. This was one of them. The way his mouth formed her name, and how it sounded on his lips, made her shiver again.

"Camilla?" His nose flared as he stepped closer to her. "Three seconds." Instead of backing away, Cami erased the space between them. "Shut up, Chadwick. You talk too much." Grabbing his shirt, she yanked him closer still and pressed her lips to his.

Chapter Five

Robert's hands pulled at her dress, taking it off. Cool air hit her fevered skin. He covered her lips with his. Cami expected a hungry assault. He weakened her with a tender, poignant, and sensual kiss that made her heart pound and pulse race. His tongue swept along her bottom lip, then across the top. She gasped, slamming her eyes closed. Robert took advantage, stroking his tongue into her mouth. His sweet, cool, and addictive taste rolled over her. His arms caged her as his body pressed against hers. The hard ridge of his cock pressed against her aching, cloth-covered pussy. A wanton need of wetness flooded her already soaked panties.

With a whimper, she trailed her hands up his shoulders and around his head, sinking her fingers into his silken hair. His harsh groan vibrated through her. Robert licked his tongue along hers, then bit her gently--only a scraping of teeth. A pulse of fire went straight to her aching slit. It throbbed in time with each suck, stroke, then bite of his tongue. With a sensual sound, he pulled back. Cami opened her eyes and saw the glittering hunger in his jewel green gaze.

"I can't hold back, Camilla. I want you too much. You've teased me with your cute sexy ass. This will be rough, hard, and deep." His voice was rough with desire.

After each word, her pussy clenched. His words only made her ache even more to have him in her.

"Fuck me, Chadwick."

The words had barely left her lips when Robert reached out with both hands and grabbed her thong, ripping it off her body. Cami gasped at his roughness. In quick, efficient movements, he finished undressing. His cock sprang free, thick, long, and red with need. Cami licked her lips, aching to taste him. Robert ripped open a condom, putting it on his bobbing shaft. He stepped forward, lifted her and turned to press her back against the wall.

Cami threw her head back as she felt his fingers plunging into her cunt, in and out. Her wetness made his passage easy and slick. Robert licked along the side of her face,

then nibbled her ear. She gasped. He grunted, and his fingers retreated. The blunt head of his generous member probed her entrance, then sank into her creaming slit. Cami screamed loud and long, uncaring if anyone heard. He grabbed her hips and pulled her up and down, hard, on his shaft, setting a punishingly fast rhythm. Cami clamped her legs around him and dug her nails into his shoulders. Robert growled and pumped harder. His cock abraded her pussy walls with each hard thrust. The power of his thrusting made her back scrap against the wall he was taking her against. The slight pain only heightened the carnality of his taking. In and out he thrust, each pump of his cock going deeper and deeper inside her.

" Chadwick."

Rotating her hips, Cami countered his upward movement. His hard muscular chest pressed her harder against the wall. Robert's harsh breath feathered against the side of her neck, and then his teeth sank against her pulse. Her slit gushed with desire. Whimpering, Cami held tighter to his sweat-slicked shoulders. Robert loosened his grip on her hips. Tightening her legs, Cami held him. His hands grabbed hers off his shoulders, then pinned them against the wall behind her. The sensation of being contained drove her into a frenzy.

Growling, Cami clenched her pussy around his shaft. His groan on her pulse made her shiver. The pace of his thrusts increased. The wide girth of his cock created a delicious friction within her hungry, cream-filled pussy. Robert grunted, nibbling up the side of her neck, licking her along her jaw and then her chin. Cami's heart raced, and she couldn't seem to get a breath. The silken steel of his cock gliding in and out of her wetness brought tears of pleasure to her eyes. The incoherent guttural words he spoke vibrated against her cheek.

" Harder!" Cami wailed.

Robert nipped her cheek, then he licked down her face to her lips. Cami licked his lips, and Robert moaned, intertwining his tongue with hers. His thrusts increased in urgency. Screaming, Cami locked her legs around his hips tighter. Robert sucked her tongue into his mouth. Cami whimpered into his mouth. The taste she only equated

with him filled her. Robert rolled his hips in a devastating move that left her breathless. A delicious tightness made her strain against him. Clenching her pussy, Cami felt the heat in her lower belly, and then her pussy flooded with release. He repeated the movement, and it continued to send her over into indescribable pleasure.

"Chadwick!" Cami screamed.

"Camilla."

The harsh grip of Cami's pussy around his hard cock drove him on. In reckless abandon, he pummeled her with driving thrusts into her delicious slit. Still screaming, Cami pressed down. Her pussy contracted wildly around his hard shaft. Keeping her hands pinned behind her head, Robert continued to thrust as he watched Camilla in her release. The look on her face took his breath away. Her lips were pulled back in a grimace, and her dark honey skin stretched as she arched her back.

The hunger he saw in her chocolate brown eyes as she looked at him made him want to be embedded in her forever. He gripped her hands tighter and pumped forward. Her pussy clenched around his cock in a sensual vice he didn't want to ever leave. Her skin was coated in sweat. Her hair flowed around her in a wild mass. Cami growled, a sweet sound in the back of her throat that made his cock harden even more.

Pumping forward again, he watched her eyes go opaque as he sank into her wet flesh. He kissed her lips. She opened to him and sucked in his tongue. He licked along her tongue. She whimpered and pushed down against his cock with her greedy pussy. Cami moaned, vibrating his tongue. With a grunt, he thrust harder.

He leaned into her and whispered against the side of her face. "Watching you surrender to me is beautiful."

"I surrender to no one, Chadwick." Cami's eyes darkened, then narrowed dangerously.

"Camilla." His tone held a warning.

A nasty grin curled Cami's lips. "But I will gladly accept your surrender."

Cami's hands gripped his, and she undulated her hips. Robert gasped and shuddered. He thrust deeper.

"Scream for me, Chadwick." Cami's decadent whisper teased his senses.

She repeated the same movement. Robert moaned. He leaned in and kissed her. He jerked back at the feel of a sharp nip. The metallic taste of blood filled his mouth. Cami licked her lips slowly and deliberately. He pumped into her hard. Cami growled and countered his movements. Robert shivered at each clutch of her pussy on his cock. He held her pinned to the wall, yet Cami was the one in control.

"Moan for me, Chadwick."

Cami's seductive whisper caused goosebumps on his skin. She clenched around him, her silken heat enveloping his erection tighter. Powerless to stop it, he moaned. Cami laughed. She tightened her legs around him and worked her hips in a forward and back motion against his cock. A painful tightening of his sacs warned him he was near. He crowded closer to her, keeping her hands pinned. Cami growled, then licked his Adam's apple. A groan slipped out from him. Still thrusting into her, he saw the defiance in her eyes.

Camilla Maxwell would not surrender fully, but then again, he didn't need her full surrender. She had given him a part of herself, even if she didn't know it yet. He would make sure she knew. His heart raced. The fire and passion she exuded had drawn him, but her rare smiles made him want to stay. The combination was an aphrodisiac that made him weak with lust each time they met. With every accidental touch he made happen, he craved more. The looks she gave him when she thought he wasn't paying attention had eroded his control. Her haughty defiance made him respect her, yet want to fuck her. Now that he was having her, Camilla was his and no one else's. She wouldn't push him away again.

Harsh ecstasy etched her face. He nibbled on her cheek, then stroked his tongue gently along it. He thrust deeper. Cami contracted around him, and then a gush of her cream coated his shaft as she came again.

"Chadwick, come for me!"

Robert's shaft pulsed, and he went over the edge. Cami pushed forward, rolling her hips then clenched around him. The sensation of her undulating pussy and her wanton sounds spurred him on.

"Camilla!"

Crowding her against the wall, he stroked into her cunt as his release held him in a fierce grip. His cock pulsed in time with her clenching slit.

An image of Cami, heavy with his child, flashed into his mind. A moment of panic hit him, but then a calm swept over him. Another image came of Cami laughing and playing with their child, then looking up and holding out her hand. He stepped forward and kissed them both. Robert's breath caught, and then his knees went weak. He held Cami and he fell to his knees. Shaken, he pulled her tighter. Cami breathed harshly, then sighed, relaxing against him. He stroked along her hair and the side of her face, which was partially turned away from him.

After some time, he shifted, and his cock slipped out of her. Robert's heart constricted at leaving her. Cami moved back away from him. He stood and watched as she went quickly to the chair. She dressed without looking at him. Robert turned and got dressed. Shrugging into his shirt, he heard the door.

"Camilla." He turned and saw her at the open door.

Her back stiffened, and then she looked at him over her shoulder. Robert saw her tremble, and then the look he had grown to know so well spread across her face. The "don't give a damn what you think" look he had come to realize she used as a shield.

"It's been fun, Chadwick." Camilla blew him a kiss and went through the door.

Robert let her go. The scent of their lovemaking was still heavy in the room. Striding out the door, across the ballroom, and then out the private entrance, he stepped outside. Camilla's SVU backed out of a parking space. She glanced at him, then turned and drove away. Watching her taillights disappear in the night, Robert smiled with purpose.

"The fun hasn't started yet, Camilla."

Turning, Robert strolled to his car whistling. Camilla Maxwell was in for a surprise. He wasn't through with her. Not by a long shot.

* * * * *

"It's all ready," Phillip Buckman said. He was too nervous to eat. His stomach had been rebelling against him a lot lately.

"Good," the woman said. "Everything will be over soon, and my plans can get back on track."

Phil swallowed nervously. There was no compassion in those baby blues. He had interviewed many people, even killers, and this woman could teach all of them a thing or two about the heartless expression. "So my part is all done, then? We're good?"

"I'm going to wait and see how this works out first. Can't say so and then have you go and do something stupid like warn the bitch." She sipped her iced tea, brushing her blonde hair away from her face. "I would hate for you to suddenly get a conscience."

"You're heartless." He couldn't help but tell her the truth.

"No, I'm a woman who knows how things are to be. We won't be so lucky a third time, so she must die." A malicious smile filled her face briefly. "Then order will be restored."

"He's happy. Can't you just let it go?"

"NO!" She slammed a hand on the table. Her smile became sickly sweet as she looked at him. "I can't." She was clearly making an effort to stay calm. "There's a way that things should be, and that means people should stay with their own kind. Everyone has their place. *She* just needs to be reminded of hers."

Phillip didn't know what to do. For the first time in his life, he felt he was totally in over his head. Swimming with the sharks may just be a phrase, but he was definitely in with the worst of them all. And he didn't know how to get out.

"You, my dear Phillip--even you even have a place."

He bit the inside of his cheek. "I do?"

"Of course. You're a reporter, a man with no morals, and no respect for others and their privacy. That's why you're perfect to help me accomplish my mission."

The woman sounded so damn sure of herself. Phillip nodded in return, biting back what he longed to say. But this woman was a loose cannon, and he didn't want her to explode on him.

He hadn't wanted to be like he was. When he'd first become a reporter, he'd had the high ideals that many did. But it seemed he got better stories by being a cutthroat player. Now it had come back to haunt him.

"Don't you see, Phillip? You were put here to assist me. That's your purpose." She picked up her fork and began eating.

Wasn't he a lucky bastard? "I have to get back to the office. I hope this makes us even." He slid out of the booth and walked out without looking back. The nausea didn't pass until much later.

As he walked down the street, he thought about ways to get out of this. The police? Well, he would be considered an accomplice. And she knew that. He couldn't go tell Chad. That man would just as soon kill him as look at him, and if he ventured close to Jem, it would have the same result.

Phillip's mood was dark as he entered the building that house the newspaper he worked for. As he heard his boss yelling for him, he knew his day was only going to get worse.

* * * * *

Cami threw down her pen on the desk. Her focus was shot. Visions of what she and Robert had done were dancing in her head. She still felt him taking her with such power. When she had driven away from him, she had sworn to avoid him at all cost. He hadn't made it any easier to keep her vow. He had shown up at Delicious Surrenders the next day. Kalen had been there, and Robert had talked with her, but she'd made sure not to be alone with him. Then the day after that, he'd come by again, and by that time Kalen had been called out of town unexpectedly. She'd waited for Robert to make a move.

He had just watched her with possessive eyes and brushed his hand on her cheek, then left. He'd come in each day after that done the same. Those slight touches were driving her crazy. Her eyes landed on the bouquet on the corner of her desk. Robert had sent them to wish her a Happy Valentine's Day. The flowers were the signature bouquet for On The Vine.

He should have at least had the decency to call or come by.

Cami got up and went to her open office door. She noted her secretary's empty desk. She had let her go early to celebrate with her sweetie. At least someone was having a good day. Cami was just out of sorts because Robert hadn't made his usual trip in. She hadn't known she had gotten used to his presence at least once a day for the last five days. Sighing, Cami walked over to her secretary's desk and frowned, noticing there were messages. She picked them up and shook her head, recognizing Zora's handwriting. She read the message and frowned. Walking around the desk, she went across the room and pushed into the kitchen. She waved at Aliana and went across the room to Zora. The usually bustling kitchen was quiet. They had let everyone go early.

"How could you accept a job from Nicola Holland?" Cami demanded.

Zora jumped and whiled from the dough she had been kneading. A guilty look flashed on her face.

"Come on, Cami. It's just a job."

Cami looked back at the note, then at Zora. "Just a job when she leaves a message like this. 'Have Cami call me or come by to make the arrangements for the party. Unless she's afraid to.'" Cami steamed as she read it. "This isn't a job, Zora. It's a challenge."

"You and Nicola need to stop. Just call the woman instead of disturbing me." Zora rolled her eyes.

Cami's eyes narrowed as she read the note again. "What's this address. Is it different?"

"It's her new office. Now go away," Zora said, turning back to her dough.

Cami stormed out of the kitchen to her office. She picked up the phone to call Nicola, then slammed it down. Cami grabbed her bag and went out the door.

Twenty-five minutes later, she stormed into another office. She saw two open doors, but walked to the desk to the side.

"Where is Nicola Holland?"

The raven haired woman at the reception desk looked up at her. Surprised, Cami studied the exotic tilt of Nicola Holland's dark brown eyes through her stylish gold glasses. Nicola sat back in her chair and smiled, a cool grin. Nicola's long, jet black hair was loose instead of in a bun, as she usually wore it. Her honey skin seemed to glow softly. Cami shook her head. She wondered how Nicola always seemed to be so unruffled.

"Well, well. If it isn't Camilla Maxwell. I knew I'd see you soon." Nicola's voice was chiding.

"You said to call or come by, so here I am," Cami replied.

"You know, sometimes, Cami, I wonder why we were even friends." Nicola grinned.

"Since we aren't anymore, wi-"

Nicola cut her off. "Yeah, by your great proclamation to get lost." Nicola tapped her finger against her lips. "How did you so eloquently put it? Ah, yes. 'Consider yourself uninvited to Jem's anymore. The negativity you harpies have is a downer.' Hell, we weren't that much of friends anyway."

Cami stifled a wince as she remembered how cutting she had been. The other two, she hadn't cared about, but although she hadn't wanted to care, the look of hurt and shock on Nicola and Kylie's faces had haunted her. Nicola studied her up and down. Cami tried not to squirm. Nicola had a way of seeing more than you wanted her to see.

"You see, Cami, we were pissed at you. Threw a real pity party, the rest of us, as we sat there plotting ways to get back at you. I realized I didn't even like Shelly and Bianca that much. Only Kylie and you did I actually consider friends in our little group. After that night, Kylie and I have become closer friends. Hell, we even toyed with the idea of still making you pay for your rudeness." Nicola studied her.

Cami knew Nicola was regarded as the best investment manager in the firm for nothing. She went for the jugular when needed.

Nicola continued. "That was, until we heard about Jem. We called Zora, since we weren't sure of what you would say. Zora is good people. She let us know what was happening. We kept in touch through all that was going on, and even now."

Cami was surprised Nicola and Kylie had cared enough to check. Zora had never said a word. Nicola sat forward.

"Kylie would have loved to be here to curse you to your face, but she's out of town. Me, on the other hand, I'm more practical. As we talked to Zora, we realized you were right." Nicola grinned. "We were harpies, but you were the ringleader. So, Ms. Maxwell, after you so graciously kicked us to the curb, we took stock of what we wanted. I took some leave from the job."

Cami remembered that when she had given her notice, right after Christmas, Nicola had been out. Kylie had said nothing to her. The other two had glared and whispered about her.

Nicola was still talking. "I went on a sort of find myself thing and realized I wasn't happy. When I got back, I gave my notice and talked Kylie into doing the same. And we started NK Investments." Nicola grinned like a shark. "Since we had been bringing in a lot of the biggest clients in the portfolio, and most of them left with us, we're doing well." Nicola sobered.

"Although it galls me to admit it, I have you to thank for shaking me out of my complacency. Your bluntness helped me. So Cami, I wanted to say thanks. If you decide to plan our client party in May, or not, that's your choice. Nice seeing you Cami." Nicola picked up her pen and bowed.

Cami looked at her and knew she had been dismissed. She shook her head. Only Nicola could say thank you and actually mean fuck you in that cool tone. She strolled over to Nicola and leaned against the desk. Nicola glanced up at her and raised an eyebrow, her face clearly asking, "Why are you still here when I told you to get out?" Cami stifled a chuckle.

"I've missed you, girl. Boy, you made me wish it was Kylie here to curse me out. That cold voice you use gives me the chills." Cami shivered.

"Oh, no, Cami. I'm not going to let you suck me into being your friend again." Nicola laughed.

"You act like you have a choice." Cami winked.

Nicola glared at her. "I particularly don't like you at the moment."

"Join the club. I have that effect on people." Cami waved her hand.

Nicola laughed, and Cami joined in. Cami stood and walked to the door. She looked back, and Nicola was studying her.

"And we'll plan you a heck of a party," Cami said, then looked around. "An expensive one. It looks like you can afford it. This is beautiful. Who decorated?"

"Artisan."

Cami's heart pounded at the name of Robert's firm. She glanced back at Nicola.

"Really? I thought they were booked."

"They are, but I know one of the partners. Robert Chadwick."

Cami watched the soft smile curve Nicola's lips and clenched her fist.

Chapter Six

"How do you know Robert?" Cami could have bitten her tongue for asking.

Nicola studied her, and the grin curving her lips broadened. "So, that's the way it is. Cami, Cami. You've been a busy girl. Isn't he scrumptious?"

Cami clenched her fist tighter.

"Relax. I've know Robert for years. He was one of my first clients. Actually, he still is a client." Nicola chuckled. "So, you and Robert Chadwick. Give me details."

"There's nothing to tell. I'll contact you about your party." Cami walked rapidly to the door.

"Who're you trying to convince, me or yourself, Cami?" Nicola called.

Cami turned and glared at the unrepentant grin on her face. "We're meeting at my house next week. You and Kylie don't be late, and bring drinks."

Nicola looked shocked, and then she grinned. "Ah, Cami. We made up." She made a kissing noise.

"I don't even know why I like you." Cami chuckled.

"Because you can't intimidate me, and I'm a lot like you," Nicola replied promptly.

Cami nodded, agreeing with her view. She waved and went out the door. Walking down the hall Cami punched the button and waited for the elevator. When the door opened she stepped in and pressed one. As the door closed, Cami's mind was filled with Robert. The elevator made a ding and opened on the second floor. Frowning, Cami looked out and saw no one. The doors started to close and she heard a familiar voice. She put her hand to stop the door from closing and got out.

Cami walked over to the open door and read the sign next to it.

Cerberus Associates. Cami frowned, she had never heard of them. The voice came again. She followed the sounds through the opulent outer office and down the hall. She rounded the corner then backed up quickly and peeked. Her eyes narrowed as she

watched him hug the woman. Dispassionately she studied the woman. The woman's back was to her. Her hair which Cami could tell was long was pinned at the back of her head in an intricate design.

"It's always a pleasure to see you." The woman's melodious tone oozed sex.

"And you Nique. Thanks for everything." He responded.

The woman turned and Cami bit off a gasp. She was devastating. Flawless sienna skin flowed over an exquisite heart shaped face. High cheekbones, eyes the color of rich chocolate, full lush lips with dimples on each side and firm chin. Cami knew she had been called sexy and beautiful but next to this woman she would have stiff competition in any room. They walked towards her. Cami glanced around and seeing an open doorway she ducked inside. She listened to their footsteps as they passed the office she was in. Cami opened the door and peeked out. The woman moved with an effortless grace that was almost predatory. There was a confidence in her movement that seemed familiar. She walked softly and followed them. Peeking around the corner she watched them through the door as they waited for the elevator. The door opened.

"See you next week." He cupped his hand over her cheek and kissed the other.

"Go on you rogue. Tell William I said hello." The woman laughed and swatted him.

Cami's fist clenched at the familiarity they had with each other. The elevator closed and the woman turned. Cami moved back and waited for the sound of her coming towards her. She frowned as she heard nothing. Cautious she peeked out. Seeing no one, Cami wondered where the woman had gone. A hand flashed out and dragged her forward then slammed her against the wall.

"Shit, w-" Cami trailed off as she looked into the woman's cold eyes.

She stifled a shiver. The warmth the woman had shown was replaced by that of a person Cami knew could kill her with no qualm. The woman tightened her grip on her throat, smiled a cold grin then raised her hand. Fear filled Cami as she watched the gun in the woman's hand. The woman released her slowly, stepped back and pointed the gun at her.

"Why are you sulking around my office, Camilla Maxwell?"

The woman's tone was deliberately insolent. Fury washed away the fear. Cami clenched her fist tighter and stepped forward.

"Uh huh, you don't even want to think about it," the woman warned.

"Put down the gun and it won't be a thought." Cami glared at her.

The woman looked at her then laughed a rich sound. Cami cocked an eyebrow and watched the woman put away her gun in her side holster.

"They said you were fearless and a little crazy."

Cami looked towards the elevator and back at the woman.

"I see at least you know about me. Do you know about Jem? Or didn't Chad get around to telling you about her? *His fiancée*." Cami gritted her teeth.

The thought of seeing the hurt on Jem's face when she told her about what she had seen between Chad and the woman made Cami's heart break. The woman's small patronizing grin made her take a step forward. The woman's look stopped her. The look clearly said she would relish knocking Cami on her ass.

"Yes, I know all about Jem." The woman paused. "And all about you."

"At least have the decency to be ashamed of being with a engaged man." Cami frowned.

"Why should I be ashamed?" The woman shrugged negligently.

Cami took another step towards her. The woman seemed to flow away from her in a movement so fast if she blinked she would have missed it. The way she moved made Cami know why she seemed to be so familiar. It was the same way Kalen and William moved. Cami stopped and looked at the woman who stood a little distance away from her.

"Who are you? How do you know my name? What were you doing with Chad?" Cami demanded.

"Dominique Rule. I'm part owner of Cerberus Associates. And we know all about you because Chad hired us to protect Jem," Dominique replied.

"What?"

Dominique continued as if she hadn't spoken. "The only reason I'm even telling you this is because Chad said if you found out we should tell you." The woman looked her up and down. "Usually no one except those who hire us would ever be told anything. Be glad I have a soft spot for him."

There was something in her voice that Cami didn't like. An admiration.

"Chad i-."

"No, William," Dominique cut her off.

"William?"

"He is hard to say no to." Dominique smiled and her whole face lit up with warmth.

Cami couldn't disagree with what she said.

"So you're a bodyguard. And this is a bodyguard agency."

"Yes and bodyguards is some of what we do." Dominique answered.

Cami curiosity was roused. "What else do you do?"

"Why do you want to know? Are you planning to hire us?" Dominique reply was calm.

Cami heart started to race. She studied Dominique wondering why she felt afraid all of a sudden. Dominique hadn't moved yet she felt threatened.

"You are one spooky woman."

"I know." Dominique grinned.

"How long have you been protecting Jem?"

"Since she got out of the hospital."

"I didn't see you."

"You weren't supposed to."

The smug arrogance on Dominique face made Cami laugh. Dominique joined her. Cami sobered.

"Have you figured out who tried to kill, my sister?"

"No, but we are closing in." Dominique look went fierce.

Cami shivered. If they weren't trying to kill Jem she would feel pity for whoever was on the receiving end of the look on Dominique face. Since they were all she felt was a fierce satisfaction. She was pissed with Chad for not telling her but glad he had taken steps to protect her sister. Watching Dominique, Cami thought of something.

"Would it be easier for you if you could get closer to Jem?"

Dominique's look was speculative. "Yes."

"I'll get you closer to Jem." Cami smiled a plan forming in her mind.

"How?"

"You're a friend of mine who just happens to hang out at Delicious Surrenders. Who happens to love collectables so you would be looking for things around the store," Cami replied pleased with the plan.

"I could do that on my own." Dominique pointed out.

"Yeah but Jem would get suspicious of you after time. With you acting like my friend you have an excuse to be there. So do we have a deal?" Cami put out her hand.

Dominique studied her. Shook her hand and released it. "I don't know if this is a bad idea. Who would believe were friends? I know you don't like me and I don't particularly like you either."

"That's okay, I have that affect on people and if you're anything like me you do too." Cami laughed.

"I can see why." Dominique joined her.

"Come by anytime and I'll introduce you to Jem." Cami turned and went to the elevator.

Pressing the button she glanced back at Dominique who leaned in the doorway.

"You knew I was there all along."

Dominique smiled a small grin. "Yes."

"How?"

"Trade secret."

Cami raised an eyebrow at the smugness in her voice then chuckled. She studied Dominique.

"How do you know William?"

Dominique face shuttered and she straightened. "Next time call first before sneaking around." She turned and walked away but stopped looking back. "Tell Kalen if he ever decides to stop planning parties come see me. We will always have a space for him here."

Dominique walked away. Shocked Cami watched as Dominique walked away. Her mind started racing Kalen was very secretive about what he used to do before working as a planner. Now meeting Dominique made her wonder more than ever what he used to do. An image of William flashed in her mind. It also made her wonder about William. Cami didn't like not knowing. The door for the elevator dinged. Cami turned and stepped forward into something hard. Muscular arms encircled her. Cami looked up and her breath stalled. Intoxicating green eyes studied her. A roguish grin curled sinfully delicious lips. He had darkly tanned skin and shoulder-length onyx black hair. The man who seemed familiar chuckled. Cami shivered at the decadent sound.

"Sorry Camilla, didn't see you there," the stranger said.

He bowed his head slightly then released her and walked around her. Cami stepped into the elevator and held the door. She watched him as his long legged stride took him through the open door and across the room. The man looked over his shoulder and winked. Cami laughed and raised her hand and blew him a kiss. The man caught it, put his hand against his cheek then chuckled and continued disappearing down the hall.

"Taylor!" Dominique shouted.

"Hey Nique," Taylor replied.

Cami's eyes widened as she realized why he was so familiar. She had seen him at Zora's. He was Chance Jamison's friend. She didn't know how she could possibly forget such a potentially dangerous man. Robert's face as he came flashed in her mind. Releasing the elevator door, Cami stumbled against the wall her knees weak.

That's why. Any man pales in comparison to Robert. Her inner voice mocked.

Shut the hell up. Cami countered.

Admit it you want Robert and no other man will do.

Ignoring it Cami strode off the elevator as the doors opened. She crossed the massive lobby and through the glass doors. In quick strides she went to her car and got in. As she drove, her thoughts were on Robert and how he seemed to be popping up everywhere, even when he wasn't physically present. She turned onto Baltic and stopped as a crowd blocked her way. She found a spot and parked, then walked through the crowd. Spotting Aliana, she went to her.

"What going on?" Cami asked.

"Ulrich," a voice replied behind her. She glanced at Demi Richards, store manager of On the Vines. Demi joined them.

"Ulrich proposed to Jenisha," Demi explained. "He used the same plan as when he told her he loved her." She smiled.

Cami knew the story. From the way Jenisha had explained it, a year earlier on Valentine's Day, Ulrich had given her fourteen gifts over fourteen hours, all of them with love notes. Each note contained a line to a song that he had his brother, Payne--a famous singer--perform for her. Cami watched as Ulrich lifted Jenisha into a horse-drawn carriage. A voice started to sing. Cami's mouth gaped. She'd know that voice anywhere.

Payne stepped into view and gave Ulrich a thumbs up. She saw the rest of the Willis family, even the usually antisocial Dakota, standing in front of On the Vine. As Payne sang, another, then another, voice joined him. Cami was stunned by the beauty of the singing. She hadn't known the Willis clan could all sing. As their voices rose in the night, tears filled her eyes. Blinking, Cami glanced at Demi and Aliana, who also had tears on their faces. Ulrich joined Jenisha in the carriage, and he took her hand and put it over his heart. His voice rose over the others. The rich baritone cut the air. Cami glanced around and realized Zora wasn't there.

"Where's Zora?" She turned to Aliana.

"At Delicious Surrenders." Aliana answered absently.

Cami turned and made her way through the crowd to Delicious Surrenders. Ulrich's voice flowed behind her. She opened the door and went inside.

"Zora, you need to come see Ulrich singing his butt off. Payne's there too. The Willis' can sing." She glanced around and saw no one. "Zora?"

Zora swept into the room, a beaming smile on her face. She ran to Cami and waved her hand in her face. Cami gaped at the huge ring on her finger.

"I'm engaged!" Zora screamed.

"What? To who?"

"To me," a quiet voice answered.

Cami glanced behind Zora at Chance Jameson. The contained man came to Zora and put his arm around her waist.

"Christ, it's an epidemic!" Cami exclaimed.

"What are you talking about?" Zora asked.

"First Jem, now you, and Ulrich just proposed to Jenisha. Everyone is getting engaged."

"Ulrich proposed?" Zora squealed.

"God, Zora, don't do that!" Cami put her fingers in her ears to clear the ringing. "He's outside singing with the Willis clan. Pay-"

Zora let out another squeal, deafening her.

"Payne! Come on, Chance. We have to go see." Zora dragged Chance to the door.

She opened it, then looked back. "Aren't you coming?"

"I can't hear a thing now. You go. And Zora? I am so happy for you. Congrats!" Cami waved her out.

Zora beamed and waved. Chance had a soft smile on his face. She saw them link hands and walk toward the crowd. A hollow feeling filled Cami's stomach. She turned and closed down the place for the night. After she was done, she went out the door and locked it. Turning, she stopped. Emerald green eyes captured hers. Her heart started to race, then skip. Robert leaned casually against his parked BMW.

Chapter Seven

Cami walked over to him. Her eyes hungrily took in his tailored suit that hugged his body lovingly.

Pull it together girl remember your promise. He is off limits.

"What are you doing here?"

"Giving you a lift home," he replied softly.

The bright moon made his hair glimmer. Cami licked her lips and tried to not touch him.

"My car is down there." She gestured.

"You're not going to be able to get to your car for a while. Not with the Willis's still singing." Robert glanced at the crowd that had gotten bigger.

Cami looked at all the people and knew he was right. Robert stood and opened the door. She walked to him and slid into buttery soft seats. He closed the door, jogged around the hood, and got in. With a flick of his wrist, he turned on the car and pulled out of the space. Silent, he drove with a cool confidence. His woodsy scent filled the car, creating intimacy. Cami kept silent, just enjoying being with him. Forty-five minutes later, he pulled up to her house. He turned off the car, got out, came around, and opened her door. Cami got out and went up the stairs to her house. Robert's hand at the small of her back burned her. She shivered. Still silent, she opened her door and looked at him. Robert regarded her silently.

"Come in for a drink," Cami said.

Robert smiled and stepped forward. She backed up inside. He closed the door behind him and continued to walk to her. Cami retreated until her back hit a wall. Cami's heart thumped, and her mouth went dry.

You promised yourself to stay away from him.

It's just a drink.

You invited him inside your house. You know what will happen.

All the decadent things he had done to her a few days ago filled her mind. Her pussy went wet with need.

Robert leaned close to her ear and whispered, "I want to taste your hot pussy. "

Her pussy contracted and her legs went weak. Robert's sensual chuckle tickled her ear. He kissed her hungrily. Her slit gushed. He released her from the kiss and dropped to his knees.

His wicked green eyes looked up at her as he raised his hand, quickly unbuttoning her dress. Cool air tickled her skin.

"Damn woman, you make me weak," Robert growled.

Cami blushed as his eyes took in her pale yellow bra, garters, and thong. Robert licked his lips. He reached out and ran a finger down her stomach. Cami shivered. His sensuous chuckle gave her goosebumps. His hand continued down and below her panties, cupping her bare mound and squeezing. Cami gripped the entryway table next to her and moaned. Robert shifted his fingers and found where she throbbed. His long fingers played with her hard clit. Cami spread her legs wider. She pumped her hips against his fingers. The pleasure built fast. He stopped.

"Ple..ase... don... stop..."

"I want to taste you, Camilla."

He ripped off her thong and covered her with his mouth. Delirious with lust, Cami held his head and ground her cunt against his face. She rolled her hips. His hands gripped her ass. His tongue stroked in and out of her. Cami gasped and arched closer to him. Robert continued to lick her with a precision she found devastating. He missed nothing. Moaning, she moved her hips. His hands gripped her butt, pulling her harder against his mouth. He made greedy sounds as he lapped at her. Her pussy gushed with cream. Robert's growl vibrated against her clit. A shock of pleasure made her scream. He chuckled, causing even more sensation. Robert pulled out and licked along her aching slit, from top to bottom.

She shivered, whimpered, and begged for more. Robert suckled her pussy lips. His teeth scraped along the sensitive flesh.

"Ooooooh..." Cami cried.

He pulled her tighter and licked inside, then out, over and over again. Cami reveled in his carnal tasting of her. She wanted more. His growl vibrated along her clit. Juices poured along her legs as he ate her with a delicious abandon. Cami arched her ass, trying to get closer to him. Robert's hands gripped the inside of her thighs, spreading her legs wider.

"Sweet," he murmured. "You're so hot."

"Yes, like that. Hmmm... suck it. Yeah, oh yeah, lick me. Mmm... some teeth... uhhh... God... have.... mercy," Cami moaned.

He stopped. Cami looked down at him. Robert's emerald green eyes glittered with lust. With a slightly carnal grin on his face, he leaned in and inhaled. Cami arched and came at the sight. He leaned in and licked along her slit, lapping up all her juices. His fingers spread her. His tongue licked around her clit, and then he engulfed it between his lips.

"Yessss...fuckk!"

Cami gripped his shoulder, her back bowed, screaming. Her orgasm rode her with a harsh grip that made her see stars. She pushed harder against his tongue, holding him as she fucked his face. Pulse pounding, she growled, then arched as another orgasm flowed over the first.

"Give me your cream." Bryce's harsh whisper vibrated against her cunt.

Pushing down, Cami shivered as release flowed out of her. It seemed to go on and on. His tongue licked her greedily.

Robert couldn't stop tasting her. The taste of her come on his tongue made him quiver. It was all Cami--sharp, sweet, tangy, and with lots of spice. He licked it up and suckled her. Cami murmured incoherently. Her body stiffened, and he knew another orgasm was on her. Her nails bit into his shoulder as it took her over. Cami arched. Still

feasting on her sweet pussy, he looked up. The sight of Cami coming was the greatest thing on earth.

Her lips pulled back in a sensual snarl, pleasure made her face stretch in harsh lines, and her eyes went opaque. Cami's full, luscious lips parted as she growled deeply. He held her hips and stroked in and out of her gripping slit. Her pussy vibrated with her release, capturing his tongue in a sweet clench. A fresh drenching of cream flowed across his tongue. He sucked all of it up, not wanting to miss any of the sweetness that was Cami. She whimpered, and then her legs went weak. He caught her, and held her shivering body against his. He spread his legs and felt her hot wetness soaking into his pants.

Reluctantly, he moved her off him and stood. He picked her up. Cami cuddled into him and moaned. He walked to the right, into her living room. Absently, he noted the homey and vibrant feel of the room. The reds, oranges, and browns blended together nicely. He took her over to the deep orange couch and squatted to put her down. Cami sighed and looked at him, a come-hither grin on her face. He kissed her. Cami held him tight, eating at his mouth hungrily. She licked his mouth, taking in the taste of herself. He tangled his tongue with hers, and she moved against him. He pulled back, and her murmur of protest almost made him change his mind. He stood, then stroked her hair away from her face and ran his finger down her cheek.

"Rest. I'll let myself out." He left her and went to the door.

His cock rubbed against his slacks, mocking his stupidity.

"You're leaving?" The anger in Cami's tone made him turn.

He locked his knees together so he wouldn't fall. Cami knelt on her couch, her pale yellow bra highlighting her pebbled nipples. The matching garter created a perfect compliment to where he should be buried. Her curly hair was wild around her. The sensuous honey skin he wanted to lick had a slight sheen of sweat. Robert took a step to her, then stopped.

"Dream of me, Camilla." He walked to her, grabbed her hair, and pulled her up for a tongue lashing kiss.

Cami's hands gripped his shoulders. He disentangled himself and strode down the hall. He winced as he heard her cursing. Reaching the front door, he opened it, stepped outside, and locked the door. He stopped and bit his knuckle, shivering as he fought for control. Dropping his hand, he adjusted his pants and went to his car. He got in and gripped the wheel.

"You had a willing woman, and you left. You're an idiot, Robert."

Sighing, he started his car. He had wanted Cami with every fiber of his being, but knew that, before he touched her again, he wanted her to admit she loved him. Looking back at the house, he prayed it would be soon. His control was tenuous.

* * * * *

Cami tapped her shortened fingernails on the countertop. She had introduced Dominique to Jem without any problems. Although she wouldn't admit it to anyone, she felt better knowing that a professional was looking out for Jem. Of course she had given Chad a piece of her mind for not telling her. Cami had gone to his office to confront him. Chad hadn't even batted an eye, just ignored her tirade. He had asked calmly if she wanted to be copied on the reports. She had said yes. William was in the room at the time, she had turned and asked him to tell her more about Dominique. The small smile he gave her didn't comfort her one bit. After she asked him how he knew Dominique, he had gotten that same closed look on his face and left the room before she could say another word.

Kalen had gotten an identical look when she had gotten around to asking him about Dominique. Cami couldn't get anything from him. She had watched the interaction between Kalen and Dominique and couldn't figure out how they knew each other. Even when William had stopped by she couldn't tell what was going on between William and Dominique. Cami knew something linked Kalen, Dominique and William together but couldn't find out what from any of them. If it wasn't for her fear for Jem's life she would tell Jem, Dominique was her bodyguard.

Cami scowled. If it wasn't for Dominique, Jem would have been injured numerous times over the last few days. She shuddered as she thought of the reports she got every night by email. The little incidents of a car almost running Jem down or her car almost crashing made Cami lose sleep. When they checked her brakes had been cut. There were so many other things little things that kept happening. Cami clenched her fist. At Christmas they knew someone was out to hurt Jem but nothing had happened since then. Cami had almost started to believe it was stopped. Now with all these things they knew someone was trying to hurt Jem. Chad had started keeping close but he was trying to keep Jem from finding out how serious it really was.

Cami shifted. She wished she hadn't agreed to wait for Jem, who was running late for an interview. As it had of late when her mind wasn't on Jem, her mind turned to thoughts of Robert. For the last few days, he had been playing with her. Although thoughts of Jem's safety consumed her, Robert's presence kept distracting her. Since that night at her house, when he'd given her such a good orgasm with nothing in return, he had been popping up even more. He showed up at Delicious Surrenders, and also had a knack for knowing when she was at her sister's business.

His habit of casually dropping by was wearing on her nerves. At first, she had been confused, and it left her wanting more of him. With each of his visits and seemingly inadvertent touches, it was all she could do not to drag him somewhere and tie him down to have her way with him. Now, she was just plain pissed that he made her want him so much. Since she knew his schedule of supposedly casual visits, she had made sure for the last two days that she was elsewhere when he came. She couldn't afford to let her guard down around him.

"Excuse me. I'm here for the interview." A soft voice intruded on her thoughts.

Cami glanced up and stared at the tall blonde woman who stood before her. She was reminded of the reason she was at her sister's on a Sunday. Jem had called saying she was running late, and asked if Cami could start interviewing the person coming in.

"Have you ever worked in a store like this before?"

"No," she said. "But I would really like the opportunity to try."

Cami skimmed over the image before her. Pale blond hair was up in a casual ponytail, and her face was striking with a bare minimum of make up. Although the woman had a tentative smile on her face, Cami could see the tension in her. Cami noted the casual look of her clothes, but knew it was Saks Fifth Avenue designer name clothing and boots that looked suspiciously like Michael Kors Domino in Tmoro suede. The woman's hands looked as if they had never missed a manicure. Unsure about this, Cami went on to explain what her sister was looking for. When she was finished, the woman sent her a nervous smile.

"It sounds wonderful to me."

"If you want to fill out this application, I'll make sure my sister gets it the moment she returns."

The door opened, and Robert Chadwick Jr. walked in. Cami's heart accelerated, and her panties grew damp. Just being in his presence was turning her into a horny kid. Her mouth grew dry. The underlying current of attraction that had exploded between them only got more intense every time he came around. She was doing her best to keep him at a distance, but he was relentless. Like a damn dog going after a bone. Still, she wasn't about to ruin her sister's name and snap at him in front of a potential employee. She had opened her mouth to greet him when he spoke first.

"Brittany? What are you doing here?" Robert walked over to them both, his eyes lingering on Cami before refocusing on the blonde.

Cami's eyes narrowed. He knew her? Why did she feel a spear of jealousy shoot through her at that realization? She flicked her gaze back to Brittany and waited for her answer. Cami tried to remember where she had heard the name.

"Hi, Robert," Brittany said. A worried look settled over her features.

He crossed his arms and leaned on the counter. "What are you doing here?" A menacing scowl filled his lean face.

"You two know each other?" Cami asked, bringing both of their attention back to her.

Aliyah Burke, McKenna Jeffries and Taige Crenshaw

Brittany nodded silently, but Robert spoke. His voice had a low, dangerous feel.
"This is Chad's ex."

Chapter Eight

Cami studied the woman, who looked nothing like the photo she had seen. The attitude was gone, and the face and make up were more sedate. All of it was different. No wonder she hadn't recognized her.

Cami barely stopped herself from lunging over the counter and beating the bitch. "What," she snarled, "Come back to see what else you can do to try and hurt my sister?"

Brittany blinked her big blue eyes and looked extremely innocent. "No, that's not it at all. I'm just looking for work."

Moving around the barrier between her and Brittany, Cami found herself in Robert's strong arms. "Let go of me, Chadwick."

"Don't hit her." He gathered both of her wrists into one of his hands. "Why're you looking for work, Brittany? You don't need to work."

She shook her head, her blonde hair moving with the motion. "You know what? Forgive me for trying to get a different reputation. I thought maybe I could get a chance to prove I'm more than a ditsy blonde who lives off her parents' money." Her slender shoulders rose and fell in a dejected motion. "I guess I was wrong."

"No, you weren't," Jem's voice broke in.

"You do know this is Chad's ex, right?" Cami demanded, staring at her sister.

"Let me handle this, Cami. Please, just go into the back with Robert."

"Are you sure?" When Jem nodded, Cami warily agreed. "Okay." She struggled against Robert, but only succeeded in feeling his penis harden and begin to dig into her side. "Let go of me!"

He dropped his hands and gestured to the back. "After you."

Cami swore under her breath. If she left the store, Jem would know something was going on. And she'd be damned if a man made her run away. Even one like Robert. Spinning on her heel, Cami glared at Brittany once more before she stomped to the back.

* * * * *

Robert made certain to conceal his erection with his coat and followed Cami into the back room. The woman he had rapidly become obsessed with stood there, arms crossed, and one foot tapping out a cadence on the tiled floor.

"You've been avoiding me," he said as he tossed his overcoat on the back of Jem's chair.

"Your point?" she snapped.

"My point? Every time I try to come see you, talk to you, I get this attitude, or you run away." His tone mimicked hers, low and snarly.

"If you want attitude, I'll give you attitude," Cami growled. Her foot tapped faster with her increasing agitation.

"That's not what I want from you, and you damn well know it."

"What else is there? Don't say commitment, because you're incapable of such a thing." Her words were hurled with an overwhelming amount of venom and pain.

"I'm incapable of it? Me? Have you looked in the mirror lately, Sweetcheeks? I'm not the one running away." He moved toward her and stared down at her, angry. "You spend so much time being a bitch you can't see what you have right in front of you."

Her nostrils flared and her cheeks became flushed. *Damn, she's beautiful when angered.*

"I know exactly what's in front of me. A man. And men are unfaithful." She held her ground, never retreating.

Robert backed up a bit. He might be upset by her attitude, but there was something more in the reason for her belief. There was raw pain and betrayal in her tone. "You really think Chad is going to be unfaithful to your sister? Can't you see how much he loves her?"

"Yeah," she muttered. "I've seen it before. I hope to God that I'm wrong, but sooner or later, he's gonna want to have more than one woman. And then I'll be left putting back together her broken heart."

"What happened for you to believe men are such vile creatures that would wound a woman they actually loved?" Robert reached for her and drew her into his embrace.

"Because I've seen it first hand," she sneered, pushing him away. "I know all you wanted from me was sex. Well, you got it. Let's not pretend it was something else."

"Oh, baby, I have to open your eyes." He pulled her back against him, loving how she fit into his frame so perfectly.

"I'm not your baby. And thanks, but I've had my eyes opened already. Not exactly an experience I care to repeat, on any level."

Robert cupped her oval face in his hands. Today her curls were free and tumbled wildly around her. Skimming his thumbs over her cheeks, he leaned in and kissed her. When she struggled, his hold on her tightened, keeping her immobile.

Despite his refusal to let her escape, he kissed her tenderly, showing her what he knew his words wouldn't be able to explain. He poured his love, his heart, his everything into it.

He stepped closer as his thumbs were hit by the splash of her tears. Robert felt his chest swell with a myriad of emotions as her arms snuck around his waist and held him close.

Robert dropped his hands and placed them on her denim-clad ass, drawing her closer to his pelvis. He thrust his hips slightly and smiled into her mouth as he heard her whimper. Despite her reasons for not wanting to trust men, he knew she wanted him.

Grabbing her under her buttocks, he lifted her and backed her against the wall. Her legs curled around his waist, pressing her closer yet. His kiss became dominating. He wanted her to surrender herself fully to him.

She gave, little by little, underneath his unrelenting quest. He plunged his tongue deep into her mouth, wishing he could be driving home in her wet heat.

Cami rubbed against him, the crotch of her pants sliding against the ridge of his erection, making him long to strip her naked. His cock throbbed more insistently, and he ground back against her.

He devoured her mouth with a hunger that had only intensified since their first meeting. She tasted like the sweetest ambrosia ever created. The seam of his pants near to bursting, he slid a hand up under her sweatshirt and cupped one of her breasts.

Her legs tightened around him. He ate her moans as she undulated against him. They mimed making love and, at that moment, there was only them. He rolled the pebbled tip in his fingers, tugging on it, eliciting more reaction from the woman in his embrace.

Robert could feel his balls beginning to tighten, and he stopped moving. He was seconds away from erupting in his pants. Cami continued to stroke along his arousal with her body. The scent of her sex inflaming his blood even more.

"Camilla," he murmured into her mouth. His body shook as she grunted in response.

"There are some nice ones back here," Jem's voice interrupted the moment.

Robert watched Cami's eyes fly open in surprise that quickly changed to horror. He refused to remove his hand, or to let Cami free. In silence, he shook his head.

When Cami opened her mouth to say something, he slanted his over it again. The door clicked behind him, and he knew he had to give Jem some flowers for just shutting out the outside world and giving them their privacy.

Taking his mouth off hers, he pulled her sweatshirt off and dropped it on the floor. His breath caught. She wore a pale yellow bra, and it barely seemed to contain her breasts. The tips were taut and poked through the sheer material.

He licked his lips. One hand moved to the shoulder strap and gently slid it down her skin, then he followed suit with the other side. He took one finger and trailed it over her torso, mapping the vision before him.

"What are you doing?" she whispered.

"Memorizing the most beautiful thing I have ever seen."

He set her feet on the floor and reached for the button on her pants. As he tugged them down, he saw her panties were the same color. Another thong. And it was soaked again.

"Don't talk," she said and he could hear the begging in her voice.

"First, we're going on a date, Camilla, and I'm going to talk the entire time. I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do to you, and how much I love doing it." Robert met her gaze and smiled slightly. "Then I'm taking you home, and I'll let you dream of me. We're going to start to date, Camilla. Often. And I won't touch you. Maybe a kiss, but no more. You're going to dream about me, and need me as much as I need you."

He groaned as she wet her lips. Camilla pulled up her pants and buttoned them, then pushed him back. She sauntered away, then looked over her shoulder at him.

"You're not the only one who can talk, Chadwick. We'll see how long this no touching lasts." Cami grinned with delicious intent. "We'll see who surrenders first."

Robert's heart raced as she went through the back door. He shifted his pants to give relief to his hardened member.

"Aren't you coming to take me to dinner, Chadwick?" Camilla's challenging tone filtered back to him.

Robert stifled a groan. It was going to be a test of wills, and he wasn't sure he would be able to withstand Camilla's temptation. He strode after her.

* * * * *

She sat in her car for a few moments before getting out and striding toward a nearby shop. Subtly, she glanced at her watch. Just a few moments now, and her problems would be eliminated.

With a smile to an employee of the store, she continued to peruse. Although she was expecting it, when the explosion rocked the street, she screamed right along with everyone else.

As one, the people inside the store ran out to see what had happened. Smoke and flames billowed out of the hole in the storefront of *Jem's Collectibles*. People ran around and yelled. Sirens wailed in the distance.

She hung back and watched as the trucks pulled up and battled the flames to get inside. Still, her eyes were hopeful, and it took a bit for her not to smile when the body

bag was wheeled out. When that was followed a bit later by a body on a gurney, her curiosity had been piqued. The ambulances drove away.

Two people? Oh, dear God! What if Chad was in there?

Grabbing onto a fireman, she demanded, "What's going on? Who was hurt?"

"I'm sorry, ma'am. I can't say. Please, stay out of our way and let us do our job."

The man left.

Her phone beeped, and she pulled it out to look. "No!" she yelled as she took off for her car.

* * * * *

Cami pounded the piece of dough. She was imagining it was Robert's face. He had done as he'd promised--talked to her throughout dinner of what he would do to her. Cami had given as good as she got. She had seen the strain on his face. When he went to her house and walked her to the door, she had been ready for him. She had laid a kiss on him and felt his knees buckle. Cami knew she had him, but then he'd pulled away, mumbling something about a lovely evening, and went to his car. When he got home, he had called and told her some more of what he would do to her. She had repaid him in kind and told him come over. He had declined, but set up another date. Pride and hunger for him had made her agree.

Each date had been hotter than the last, but he still resisted. And she still played along, trying to get him back into her bed.

"Damn idiot. Two weeks and nothing. He must be a damn machine." She flipped over the dough and pounded it again. "Getting me all revved up--"

"Cami."

"What?" She glared at Zora.

"We can't use the dough." Zora gestured.

Cami looked down at the dough she had been beating. It was too stiff for what they needed.

"Go take your frustrations somewhere else," Zora said.

Aliana snickered. Cami gave them each a glare and threw the dough in the trash. She'd opened her mouth to deliver a withering comment when a loud blast shook the walls of Delicious Surrenders, rattling the dishes. Cami looked over at Zora, a question in her eyes.

"I don't have a clue." Zora shrugged.

Panic lodged in Cami's chest as her thoughts turned to her sister.

"Jem!" she gasped, bolting for the door. Outside she frantically looked around for Dominique who she hadn't seen today. Usually she was hanging around Delicious Surrenders or Jem's Collectibles. Her breath stalled then tears formed as she saw the newly built business of Jem's Collectibles in flames.

"Jem!" she screamed, and began shoving her way through the gathered crowd.

Chapter Nine

Oh no, please, no. Dear Lord, don't take her from me. I'll do anything. Please don't take my sister.

The fire trucks didn't take long to get there, and Cami ignored the tears streaming down her face as she hollered for them to hurry up. She wanted to vomit as they first rolled out with a body bag on a stretcher.

"Wait...wait!" She made her way to the cops. "My sister owns the store. Please, is that her?"

"No ma'am. This is a guy."

Chad? "Let me see the body," Cami demanded in a forceful tone. "I have to make sure it isn't my brother-in-law."

"Ma'am, I'm sorry, but his face is gone. You wouldn't be able to ID him." A detective placed a hand on her arm.

"Oh my God," she muttered. "Please don't be Chad, either." Looking back at the man next to her, she asked, "Is there anyone else in there?"

"Just one, a woman, and no, she isn't dead. She is in critical condition, though."

Alive. She was alive. "I'm going with her to the hospital," Cami informed him seconds before she dashed off to the ambulance and waited anxiously beside it.

Her heart was in knots as they ran from the building with the stretcher. "Come on, hurry. Hurry. Hurry," she urged over and over.

As they loaded the unconscious body into the vehicle, Cami followed immediately. She took the limp hand in her own and brushed a lock of hair away from the soot-streaked face. Even as she placed a call with her phone, she never let go of the hand she held. Cami spoke to the person on the other end as tears streamed down her face.

When they pulled up to the emergency entrance, they had to pry Cami's hand away from the patient. She took a deep breath and then entered the chaos of the ER.

"Cami?" Robert's voice crooned in her ear. A fresh wave of tears fell as she launched herself into his open arms. "You're freezing. Where's your coat?"

"I...I...when I heard the...the explosion, I just ran out without it. I was so worried, and when I saw where the flames were coming from...and I thought it was Jem..." She broke off in a wave of tears.

Robert settled his coat around her shaking shoulders, enveloping her with his comforting scent. Being in his arms felt so good.

"Cami?" A feminine voice spoke.

"Jem!" Cami ran to her sister and wrapped her arms around her. Another wave of tears began to fall. Even though she had known it wasn't her sister in the ambulance with her, to actually see her just brought her relief back in another wave.

Over Jem's shoulder, Cami saw Chad standing there, watching the reunion with a compassionate gaze. With a smile of her own, she let go of her sister, headed to Chad and wrapped her arms around him. She kissed him on the cheek, and chuckled at his surprise. Dominique who stood a distance behind Chad nodded and turned going back down the hall.

"I'm glad to see you aren't hurt, either."

"What do you mean?" Chad asked as he returned the hug and kiss.

Cami went back to her sister, took her hand, and walked over to a group of empty seats in the emergency room. Robert sat near her, and Chad settled himself on the other side of Jem.

"The first one that was brought out was in a body bag. They told me it was a guy, and that's when I thought it may have been Chad. But when I asked the detective, he said that the face had been blown off." Cami looked at Robert. "That's when I called you."

"And I'm glad you did, Camilla." He leaned in and kissed her lightly on the lips. She blushed.

"Camilla?" Jem asked. "Wow. You must be special, Robert. Not many get away with calling her Camilla."

He grinned arrogantly. "I call her lots of things. Don't I, Sweetcheeks?"

Cami groaned. "Shut up." Her expression grew serious again. "Jem, why *weren't* you there?"

Jem smiled broadly. "We had an appointment with the obstetrician. You're gonna be an auntie. We're pregnant."

A *baby*? Cami sat frozen in silence for a moment. "Oh my God. Congratulations! Both of you." She pressed a kiss to her sister's cheek, and heard the best wishes coming from Robert. But it all seemed hazy and distant, almost surreal.

"Excuse me," a voice interrupted.

There was a doctor before them. "Yes?" Cami asked.

"You were the one who rode in the ambulance, correct?" The man stared directly at her. "Camilla Maxwell?"

"Yes." Cami gripped Robert's hand like a lifeline. "Is Brittany okay? Has there been a change in her condition?"

He nodded. "She's awake. And she's asking for you."

Jem stood along with Cami. "I'm going with you. This is my fault. She's my employee."

"This isn't your fault, sis." Cami took her hand, and together the women went to the room where Brittany Gates lay, the men following silently behind them.

As they neared the room, a screeching voice demanded, "What do you mean I can't see her? That's my *daughter* in there!"

At the door to Brittany's room, a blonde woman who looked like a slightly older, more coiffured version of Brittany was facing off with a doctor and Rafael Carmichael, Cami's friend and a detective on the Trescott Cove Police Force. A man Cami didn't know stood next to them, a dazed, vacant look on his face. Dominique stood next to Rafe whose expression was grim. His partner, Detective Kenya Nicolette, Zora's sister, walked over to him and said something in his ear then turned to look at Dominique. Kenya nodded her head, making her auburn micro braids move in a ponytail swing. They were in a deep discussion and didn't notice the newcomers. But the blonde

woman did. The second the woman saw them, her demeanor changed from anger to downright hostility.

She flew at them, hands curved into claws. "You! This is all *your* fault. My baby is lying in there because of you."

Cami stepped in front of her sister. "It wasn't her fault. My sister would never hurt anyone."

"Shut up, bitch!" Mrs. Gates snarled. "She...*she* was supposed to be there. Not my daughter." Her slim body quivered with rage. "She keeps the same schedule, and then on the day of the bomb, she decides to put my daughter there. How is that not her fault?"

Cami narrowed her eyes. "How do you know my sister's schedule?"

"It was for her," the mother wailed. "It was for her. My daughter, mine, was supposed to be with Edward, not your sister. Not your kind."

Robert stepped up beside Cami. "Mrs. Gates, are you saying you knew about this? Did you have something to do with it?" he asked.

Mrs. Gates stared at Chad, but there was a vacant look in her eyes. "Brittany was perfect for you. You would have made the perfect couple. Why Edward, why did you turn your back on your own kind?"

Cami barely registered that Robert's parents had arrived as well and were listening in.

She shoved down the sick feeling in the pit of her belly. "So you tried to kill my sister, so Chad and your daughter would be married?"

"So perfect," Mrs. Gates moaned. "And now it's all gone. My baby was there instead." She sighed as she looked at Cami. "You know, this means I'll have to kill you, as well."

A grim-faced Rafael Carmichael walked over and put cuffs on her and handed her over to an officer. They took her away before she could say any more.

"Cami, I was just about to call you and Jem. Someone came into the station with a notebook from Phillip Buckman. He detailed in it all that happened to Jem last

Christmas, and what was to happen today. Dominique and her people found further proof at Mrs. Gates house to close up the loose ends." Rafe threw a look at Dominique who grinned unrepentantly.

"Who is this woman?" Jem demanded looking at Chad.

"Your bodyguard." Chad replied.

"Wha-"

"I'll explain later, Jem." Chad squeezed her hand.

Jem look clearly stated they would talk about it. Chad winced and shifted.

Dominique laughed and walked away. Cami was too distracted by what was happening to even laugh at Chad's predicament. She couldn't believe it. She opened her mouth to ask a question. The man she had seen before stepped forward and walked over to Jem. Chad got in front of her protectively.

"Back off. Hasn't your family done enough?" Chad growled.

The man looked at them, and his shoulders slumped.

"I just wanted to apologize."

"We don't need you apology. Get away from here, Buckman." Chad took a step forward.

Jem touched his shoulder, and Chad subsided. The man looked past Chad at Jem.

"I'm sorry, Ms. Maxwell. My brother ...well, he was mixed up. He... excuse me."

The man left, his sobs echoing in the hall.

Rafe glanced after him, and then looked at them. "Jared Buckman brought us his brother's notebook. Dominique found the papers documenting the payments and plans in Mrs. Gates house. They planned to kill you and not fail this time, Jem. If Philip hadn't gotten a conscience and gone--"

"Rafe!" Kenya called.

Rafe glanced at her and nodded. He touched Jem's hand and kissed Cami on the cheek, then went with Kenya. They went down the hall and out of sight. As Jem turned to Chad and began to cry, Cami opened the door of the hospital room and walked in.

Brittany lay there, a gray pallor to her skin, connected to all sorts of tubes. Still, she attempted a weak smile when Cami entered.

"Hey," Cami said over the beep of the machines. "Glad you're awake."

Brittany nodded. "I didn't have anything to do with it," she uttered in a faint voice. "It was my mother and her illustrious plans for me to be back with Edward--I mean Chad. She was behind the first attack, as well."

Cami took her hand and squeezed it. "Don't talk. You need to focus on getting better."

"I wanted you to know the truth. You know, just in case I don't make it. The man was Phillip Buckman. He came in the store and told me my mother's plan. He tried to get me to leave, but I didn't get out fast enough." Tears shimmered in her eyes. "He was being blackmailed by her."

"Why tell me?" Cami asked honestly.

"I admire you. Jem told me how you had to take care of her from a very young age. You have a spirit and a backbone that I wish I had. The only thing I know is spitefulness. I tried to change, but, I don't know if it happened soon enough."

"I believe you. You need to rest now, get better and tell the police what you told me."

Brittany closed her blue eyes. "Hold onto that Robert. He's good for you. It's not all horrible to surrender yourself at times."

"All those meds that are flowing into you must be making you delirious." Cami shook her head. "Just rest. I'll be back to check on you."

There was no answer from Brittany, so Cami set her hand gently down on the bed beside her and turned to walk out of the room. She froze at the sight of Robert standing there, watching her with those incredible eyes of his. Jem, Chad, and his parents were gone.

"Chadwick," she breathed.

"We need to talk," he said. "Let me take you home."

"I have to get back to work. I've left Zora to handle things." She patted his hand and handed him back his coat.

"Keep the coat. I'm driving you."

Too exhausted to argue, thanks to the days events so far, Cami just nodded and accepted the jacket he placed back over her shoulders.

She expelled a sigh of relief as she slid onto the buttery soft leather seat of his car. Tears stung the backs of her eyes as she realized it was finally over. They knew who had been after her sister, and Jem was safe. Not to mention, her sister was pregnant.

Robert sat behind the wheel, and immediately the interior of the car seemed smaller to her. "Amazing, don't you think?" he asked as he started the powerful engine.

"What's that?" she queried as she rested her head back.

"That they're having a baby."

Her gut clenched. "We'll see."

"Aren't you happy?" There was pure astonishment in his voice.

"I'm happy," she said. Robert whipped around on the road and drove off in a different direction. "What are you doing, Chadwick? I have to get back to work."

"Taking you home. We have some things to get straightened out."

"I don't think so, I can't stand another one of your talking sessions right now. Take me to work," Cami demanded.

"No."

She seethed the rest of the way to her house. Who the hell did he think he was?

It was the challenge in his gaze that prompted her to precede him inside her home. The moment the door was shut behind them, she shot him a glare and said, "So talk."

Robert remained standing between her and the door. "Tell me why you aren't happy about Jem's pregnancy."

"You didn't take me to work because I wasn't as ecstatic as you about it? Are you shittin' me?"

"Answer the question."

"I'm happy for them. Sorry I don't express myself like you do."

He arched that damn brow of his. "Are you sure about that?"

Her belly clenched. With one statement he managed to saturate the room with sexual tension. "I'm not in the mood for this. I'm exhausted, and I still have a full day's work ahead of me."

Robert crossed his arms and stared. "Then quit avoiding my question. Answer me. Tell me what happened in your past to make you feel this way."

"Look, I don't need you to psychoanalyze me. I feel the way I do, and why isn't any of your business."

"Tell me, Camilla. Quit being scared and face your fear. Tell me and let me help you carry the burden."

Knowing she wasn't going anywhere until she answered him, Cami told him. Partially because of the challenge, and partially because she *wanted* to tell someone. Wanted to tell Robert. "Fine. I don't trust men because my father used to bring his skanky whores home and fuck them in his and mom's bed. She was too weak to stand up for herself and spent her days in the bottle. I had to raise my sister. Mom was no help, and all Dad wanted to do was lay between some slut's legs."

Robert opened his mouth, but Cami cut him off. "No, you asked, so listen. I heard him tell her that he loved her. But then it wasn't twenty-four hours later and he was off fucking someone else. Jem got pregnant early in her life, and her baby's father left her, as well. Men haven't proven themselves worthy."

"What about you? Has some man hurt you?" Robert flowed like water toward her.

"Plenty. Look, I answered you. Can we just drop this now?" Cami backed away from the mouthwatering male before her.

His dark charcoal gray shirt stretched across his muscled chest. The color beautifully offset his emerald eyes. He had on a pair of faded blue jeans that accentuated his powerful and corded thighs.

"No, because you aren't letting anyone in, especially me."

"I don't depend on anyone but myself. What do you want from me, Chadwick?"

"You." He reached for her and placed a hand on her cheek. "I want you. I want you to stop calling me Chadwick, and use my name--Robert."

"What about Bob, Rob, or Bobby?" she sassed. "Would that work for you?"

"Woman..." he growled.

Cami glanced at him and admitted what she had been denying to herself all along. Robert's eyes warmed, and he cupped her face.

"I love you, Camilla Maxwell."

Her breath stalled at the love she saw shining in his eyes.

"I love you too, Chadwick," Cami replied.

"Woman..." he growled again.

Cami grinned. Who knew being with this man could make her heart feel so light and carefree?

He grabbed her by the front of her shirt and tugged her close. "You know how much you've come to mean to me, don't you? You know I love, you yet you still insist on calling me Chadwick."

"Think of it as a term of endearment. I can't rush into anything with you."

His eyes narrowed briefly before he nodded. "So we take things slow."

Reaching out for his belt loop, she pulled him toward her. "How slow is slow?"

An arrogant grin filled his face as he lowered his mouth to hers. "Not that slow. Do you have a few minutes before I take you back to work?"

"I hope it's not just a few. I'm sure Zora can hold things down for an hour." She shuddered as his mouth nibbled on her neck. "Or two."

Robert watched the smile play on her lips. She took his hand and pulled him after her up the stairs. She walked down the hall and into her room. Cami turned and kissed his neck. He sighed and held her. Her hands quickly divested him of his clothing, then removed her own. She took his hand and walked backward to the bed. Letting go of his hand, she sank down and, with her head on the pillows, crooked a finger at him. He

climbed up until his face was close to hers. With a glance, he took in Cami's smiling face as she lay on her back next to him. The twinkle in her eyes made him humble.

He cupped her face and looked into her eyes, repeating his vow. "I love you, Camilla Maxwell, and I will marry you someday."

Surprised pleasure filled her eyes. She gave him a typical Cami answer.

"Maybe, someday, I might say yes."

Robert laughed and kissed her soft, full lips. Cami nipped him. He pulled back. She chuckled, grabbing his head and kissing him. Her sigh filled him. Robert settled his naked body against her until he was covering her. Cami murmured, and then loosened her hold.

"When I'm through with you this time, Chadwick, we'll both have found our pleasure," Cami vowed.

She pulled on his shoulders and brought him to her. With a wanton grin, she shifted her legs open and cradled him. He surged forward into her. Cami gasped and clutched him. Robert's mouth went dry as her beautiful eyes shone with her love for him. He leaned forward and captured her lips. Cami moaned and moved her hips. He stroked in and out of her in a slow rhythm.

Her breath caught, and then she sighed. Opening his mouth, he sucked her tongue, savoring her taste. He pumped his hips more urgently. Cami clenched her pussy, pulling him deeper inside of her. Robert groaned, settling against her. His hand reached up and gripped the rails of her bed for leverage. He pumped harder into her. Cami took more of him. Through a feverish gaze, he watched her eyes as she went over. She arched her back and rolled her hips.

"Robert!"

Her scream of his name sent him over the edge into a scorching pleasure.

"Camilla!"

Robert's passion-filled cry made her eyes burn and her body clench. His emerald green eyes filled with love, making her breath catch. He loved her. Cami waited for the

rage and panic to come. It didn't. Robert had shown her that love was possible. Love was real and didn't have to hurt or destroy.

He rotated his hips, and his hard shaft created a fresh burst of release. She wrapped her legs tighter around him, and watched his eyes as he came again. Her own orgasms continued overlapping until she didn't know where one started and the other ended. Robert bit his lip. She leaned her head up and licked where he had bitten. His lips curled, and he sealed his mouth to hers. Her body tightened again with each thrust of his hard cock. Robert wrenched his mouth away and roared with another release. Cami rolled her hips and revelled in the pleasure of his pistoning cock. She screamed as another orgasm filled her. The release made her quake.

"Camilla."

Robert's Adam's apple bobbed. She licked it, and nibbled on it as the cords in his neck stood out. His harsh breathing made his throat work. She rolled her hips, enjoying the feel of his cock stroking her inner pussy. This man had gotten through all her barriers, just by not taking her crap, and then seducing her with a focused intensity. He made her want to give him all she was.

"Robert..."

He collapsed against her, and she held him close. His head turned, and his lips closed over hers. His tongue stroked into her mouth. They kissed leisurely for a while. Robert sighed, then let her lips go. He opened his eyes. Lazy hunger and love blazed in his gaze.

"God, I couldn't wait to get you into bed," Robert murmured.

Still part of her, he rolled them until she was against his chest.

"You have a faulty memory, Chadwick. I distinctly remember, we've slept together before." Cami looked down at him.

"We've made love before, everywhere else but in a bed. And we've never actually slept together. "

Cami thought about it and realized he was right. She laughed.

"Well, now that you're here, I'll let you stay a while," she replied.

"Don't you know by now that I'm not going anywhere, Camilla?" Robert gave her a look.

Her heart skipped a beat. She knew he wasn't. Camilla glanced at the clock and noted the time. After eight. Zora had probably already closed Delicious Surrenders by now and run home to Chance. She glanced back at Robert, smiling wickedly.

"Well, we could sleep-sleep together, but there's a problem," Cami said.

"What's that?" Robert asked.

"I'm not at all tired," Cami purred.

Robert eyes lit, and he gave her the sensual grin that made her heart race and her pussy clench.

"You will be."

He rolled her beneath him. Cami laughed and held him.

We hope you enjoyed Cami's Surrender. Check back next week at Satin Notes ~ <http://www.satinnotes.com> for our new story.

For more about Trescott Cove and Satin Notes check out the site.

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