



SINS OF ARROGANCE

A Creatures Of Sin Novel

INDIA HARPER

SINS OF ARROGANCE

...“Go home, Carver. Not everything I do is about you.”

“No?” He stepped up on the doorsill, taking a chance by curling his hand around the back of David’s neck. “Tell me you don’t want this.”

It was a slow kiss, more exploratory than demanding, and Carver felt it right down to the bottom of his boots, even if David didn’t. David’s mouth was warm and soft from sleep, malleable under Carver’s mobile kiss. David’s hands brushed up Carver’s chest in an intimacy that nearly had Carver on his knees, then came to rest on his shoulders. He didn’t surrender, but he didn’t pull away, which was enough for Carver.

So Carver pressed his advantage, deepening the kiss and moving closer. David’s flannel sleep pants concealed nothing. David couldn’t deny this if he wanted to.

“Invite me in,” Carver murmured against David’s lips.

“No.” But he made no move to get away.

“Goddamn it, David, you want this as much as I do. Don’t be such a fucking martyr and ask me in.”

“What if I do?” His mouth never moved away from Carver’s, each word a caress in itself. “What if I let you into my house, and we fuck like animals all night? Then what?”

Carver groaned at the thought. “Jesus, who cares? Let me in!”

David’s mouth opened, and suddenly Carver was lost in a surge of desire David’s demanding, commanding, overwhelming kiss inspired. When David pulled away, Carver couldn’t think.

“I care. Goodnight, Detective.” It took only a slight shove to trip Carver off the doorsill and shut the door in his face.

He stood there, dumbstruck and staring at the door as it sunk it what had just happened...

SINS OF ARROGANCE

BY

INDIA HARPER

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

<http://www.AmberQuill.com>

SINS OF ARROGANCE
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

This book is a work of fiction.

All names, characters, locations, and incidents are products of the author's imagination, or have been used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, locales, or events is entirely coincidental.

Amber Quill Press, LLC
<http://www.AmberQuill.com>

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be transmitted or reproduced in any form, or by any means, without permission in writing from the publisher, with the exception of brief excerpts used for the purposes of review.

Copyright © 2009 by India Harper
ISBN 978-1-60272-526-3
Cover Art © 2009 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: Elemental Alchemy

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 1

Lucas snapped off the TV, silencing the latest in a long line of inane reality shows that were his preferred entertainment. “I’m bored.”

Lieutenant Carver Eliot didn’t look up from the newspaper he was reading only half-attentively. “No one said protective custody was exciting.” Carver resented the assignment as much as Lucas did, but he wasn’t going to show it.

Lucas dropped the remote on the coffee table with a pout, crossing his arms over his chest. “I’m doing you guys a favor. The least you could do is be nicer to me.”

Carver turned the page. “You were in the wrong place at the wrong time. If you hadn’t shown up early for your ‘escort’

SINS OF ARROGANCE

gig with Councilman Burroughs, neither one of us would be stuck here.” It was an assessment that mirrored Carver’s own situation. He’d been unfortunate enough to get stuck on this investigation, thanks in large part to his own unreliable reputation in the department. His partner resented it, Carver knew, but their commander had probably figured a babysitting job was the safest place for Carver. It was the kind of crap assignment he had always hated. Truthfully, he wasn’t even all that wild about police work in general, but it was this or the military, and the first sergeant who tried to haze him would probably have gotten a combat boot up the ass. The force had seemed like a better choice at the time. Assignments like this made him wonder about that.

He didn’t have the patience for this shit, getting stuck in a two-star hotel room keeping an eye on a spoiled gigolo. Granted, the view wasn’t bad. Lucas was tall and lean and never wore his shirt, showing off his well-tanned six-pack and a fine black treasure trail that matched his head of black hair artfully disarrayed. But the eye candy wasn’t enough to make up for the sheer, unrelenting boredom and frustration of spending an eight-hour shift watching the kid. Watching him eat, watching him work out, watching him watch TV. Christ, the only time Carver wasn’t watching him was when Lucas went to take a piss.

“If we fucked, no one would have to know.”

That got Carver’s full and undivided attention. “Excuse me?”

Lucas gave him a sly, knowing smile. “When you’re not

SINS OF ARROGANCE

pretending to read the same page of that paper, you're looking at me. And it's not in disgust."

"Of course it's not disgust." Carver wasn't sure what Lucas was playing at, but there was no harm in playing along. "You're well aware of that. Maybe you're not the brightest guy, but you don't exactly ride the short bus, do you?"

Lucas swayed a little closer with an innocent shrug. "It's all part of the job. Hard to pick up johns if you can't tell which ones are interested and which ones are disgusted."

"Or disgusted with themselves."

"Oh, definitely. Those ones tip better." He stopped next to Carver's chair. "But you aren't disgusted, are you, Lieutenant?"

"I'm also not interested. I don't have to pay for sex, thank you very much."

"No one's asking you to, sweetheart." Leaning down, Lucas teased his lips over Carver's. "Come on, Carver, play with me. I'm bored to tears, and so are you. You know you want to."

Fraternizing with a witness was a very big no-no. A very big no-no that could cost him his career. Even if he had a hard time giving a damn about it. Lucas smelled great and looked even better, and it *had* been a long time since Carver had gotten an offer even half as good. Resisting temptation wasn't his strong suit on a good day. *As long as nobody finds out about it...*

Carver caught the back of Lucas's neck and hauled him close, taking the kiss from teasing to hungry quicker than you

SINS OF ARROGANCE

could blink. Lucas seemed only too eager to reciprocate, dropping onto Carver's lap and proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that he was worth every penny he got paid.

Lucas' hair was coarse and thick, slightly tacky from the product he used on it. It clung to Carver's fingers, making it easier to grip as the two of them kissed, rough and aggressive, tongues thrusting in promise of what was to come.

Lucas straddled Carver's lap, groaning at the feel of his heavy balls and rigid cock grinding into Carver's. Carver knew this was twelve kinds of stupid, but he had never let good judgment stop him before. He arched up, sucking hard on Lucas' bottom lip and earning a satisfied chuckle in response.

"All work and no play makes Carver a very horny boy."

Carver glared at him. "Please tell me you don't use lines like that on your paying customers."

"Only if they pay me to"—he paused to give Carver a deep, soul-searching kiss— "really well. And cheesy or not, it doesn't make it any less true, does it?"

Most nights, Carver had just enough energy to drop into bed and maybe, maybe get himself off. Going out and finding someone else to do it was too daunting to consider. Getting it offered to him this easily and in such an attractive package made the temptation impossible to resist.

Carver gave Lucas a shove of encouragement. "How about you stop psychoanalyzing me and put that gorgeous mouth of yours to more practical use?"

"I said fucking, not sucking, Lieutenant."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Got to see if you’re worth my time,” he said wryly. “Though I’m sure VH1 is having a *Project Runway* marathon if you’d rather not.”

“You’re an asshole, you know that?” But Lucas did a very nice full-body slide down Carver before settling between Carver’s knees.

“Since the day I was born.” Popping the button, then drawing down his fly, Carver shoved his pants down far enough to let his cock spring free. *Oh, yeah.*

Apparently, it wasn’t far enough for Lucas, who proceeded to drag Carver’s trousers and boxers the rest of the way off. So much for a quick cover-up if anyone happened by.

A minute later, he didn’t care if the police commissioner himself walked in as Lucas lazily started licking around the tip of his cock, mapping every crease and ridge in slow, plush strokes. When he sucked the tip between his teeth for better contact, Carver hissed and dug his fingers into the arms of the chair. Lucas didn’t miss a stroke, palming Carver’s balls and looking smug. Carver wasn’t sure he’d ever seen anything quite as erotic as his cock disappearing between Lucas’ full lips. He hadn’t felt anything this good in a long time.

Backrooms and backseats didn’t allow for much in the way of finesse. Here, there was no need to hurry things or ignore unwanted voyeurs.

Carver groaned when Lucas released his cock. That gorgeous mouth didn’t go far, descending wetly along Carver’s shaft before surrounding his balls. Christ, things kept going from good to better. And then some.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

He gave a surprised yelp as Lucas hauled him closer to the edge of the chair, hooking one leg over the chair arm and the other over his shoulder to open Carver wide.

“Jesus, fuck!” He struggled for control as Lucas tongued at the tight pucker of his ass.

Lucas sucked on one finger before replacing his tongue with it. “Oh, I’m going to love fucking you.” He breathed across Carver’s balls as he worked one finger, then another through the tight muscles.

“I didn’t say anything about getting fucked.” Carver panted, already way too close to release for comfort.

“Who said you got a choice?” Fingers still working Carver’s ass, Lucas rose up to look him in the eye. “You pay me seven fifty, you can tell me what to do. Otherwise, I’m calling the shots. Got any complaints?”

Carver’s pride screamed out, but the demands of his hormones overcame it. “Christ, just do it already.” It was too late to stop now.

Chuckling, Lucas reached for the gym bag he’d left by the sofa and fished around in it one-handed before coming up with a strip of condoms and bottle of lube.

Still breathless, Carver had to comment. “You take protection to the gym?”

“God, yeah. I do some of my best pick-up work in the showers. Now open my pants.”

Deep down, a part of Carver that he very rarely acknowledged thrilled at Lucas bossing him around. Carver was an alpha from head to toe, but every so often it was nice

SINS OF ARROGANCE

to let someone else run the show.

He had Lucas' pants open before he could think twice, taking one of the condoms and tearing it open, then rolling it down with well practiced ease. Lucas just grinned and offered up the lube. "You might as well finish the job while you're at it."

Carver growled, although honestly he was eager for the excuse. The cut of Lucas' jeans hadn't done him justice. Lucas should be making movies the way he was hung. Carver said as much as he squirted the cool gel into his hand.

"Thought about it." Lucas hissed when Carver wrapped his hand around him.

Jesus, the boy had some serious girth on him. Carver was going to be feeling this one for a while.

"But the contracts suck, and there's no residuals. I'm better off turning tricks."

"Until you get caught."

Lucas flashed his teeth. "Why do you think I offer freebies to cops?"

"It's a good day to be a cop." Carver grinned and tugged Lucas forward.

Lining himself up, Lucas said, "It's a rare day when they're as fine as you."

"No need for flattery. You've already got my ass."

"No." Lucas thrust inside with one hard stroke, forcing Carver's eyes to very nearly roll up in his head from the sensation. "Now I have your ass."

Forget days, he was going to be feeling this for a solid

SINS OF ARROGANCE

week. *God damn.*

His girth was enough to make Carver's eyes water as his muscles stretched and relaxed to allow more penetration. Lucas worked his way deeper with quick strokes, making Carver's fingers curl into the arms of the chair for grip. He could feel Lucas' breath on his face, but neither of them moved to kiss. That wasn't what this was about. They were just fucking, the simple satisfaction of one body violating another. Jesus, it felt good.

By the time he felt Lucas' balls against his ass, Carver was panting, already desperate for more. He caught the back of Lucas's neck and hip, trying to urge him on. "Come on, fuck me."

"No wonder you're a cop. Always ordering people around." That didn't stop Lucas from pulling back and slamming his full length back in again.

Carver roared, "Harder."

Lucas chuckled, obliging. "Knew you were my type."

"Spare me the commentary." Digging his fingers in, Carver held on and met Lucas' thrusts. *Fuck. Yeah.*

Distantly, he heard someone call his name. Didn't sound like Lucas. Sounded like— Fuck it, he could care less so long as Lucas did that again.

The door burst open. First Carver registered the gun, then his partner, Detective Yuri Connors, looking even more bug-eyed than usual. *Well...fuck.*

"Better make it fast, Lucas. We've got company." No point in not finishing. Fucked was fucked, and Carver was

SINS OF ARROGANCE

going to enjoy some of it.

“Jesus Christ, Eliot!” The door slammed shut.

Lucas didn’t need the warning. His face was already twisting, and Carver felt him swell and hitch just before he cried out in a gasping hiccup, his whole body going rigid over Carver’s, denying him his own release, but feeling so good all the same.

Carver could hear Connors on the phone in the other room, shouting at whoever was on the other end. Probably Commander Tomczik. There went his job.

Lucas relaxed and pulled out, sinking down to the floor to lean back casually on his arms. “Sorry about that.” He sounded relatively sincere for a man who had just blown his wad. “I figured we’d have more time.”

“Yeah, well, don’t worry about it.” Carver pulled on his pants and closed his fly, his erection already fading in the face of the coming diatribe.

Connors had no business stopping by this early into their shift. There should have been plenty of time. That didn’t change the fact Carver and Lucas shouldn’t have been in the position to begin with. *Shit*.

“What the hell were you thinking?” Connors emerged from the other room. “Were you even thinking?”

Carver was going down, so there was no point in playing nice. “Eight hours alone with someone hung like that, what would you be thinking?”

“Not all of us are as perverse as you are, Eliot.”

“Fair warning, Lucas.” He held out his hand to help the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

man up. “Blink wrong in Connors’ direction and he’ll start screaming harassment.”

Lucas stood next to him, unabashedly removing and twisting off the spent rubber before pitching it in the bin next to Connors’ feet. “This mean I’ll be stuck with him from here on out?”

“Sorry.”

“I’ve had worse.” He eyed Carver. “But I’ve had a hell of a lot better.”

“You better straighten up your act, Eliot. The commander’s due here in ten minutes.”

Carver took the two steps that separated them. “Poor choice of words there, Buggy. Be glad I’m not the type to turn your attitude to my advantage.”

“You’re in no place to threaten me.”

“I’m in the perfect place.”

“No one would believe you.”

No, they wouldn’t. Carver knew his word carried as much weight as a sieve did water. “Doesn’t mean I can’t make your life miserable.”

Connors knew it, too. “I guess I should be worried. I mean, if you make your own life this miserable, I hate to think what you could do to mine.”

Unfortunately, the bastard was right.

CHAPTER 2

He got three weeks disciplinary leave without pay.

His OMI hearing was held the day he came back.

Afterwards, Tomczik escorted Carver to the privacy of the commander's office. Rubbing his face tiredly, Tomczik dropped into his chair. "God, I hate those things."

"It could have gone worse."

Tomczik glared at him. "Don't get cocky, Eliot. You got off damned easy and you know it. I don't know what the hell good they think sending you for ethics retraining is going to do. You've taken the classes so many times you could probably teach them yourself."

And in his sleep. Right now, he was just so grateful to still

SINS OF ARROGANCE

have a job, a few classes and a demotion really weren't anything to complain about.

"If the DA didn't have an airtight case without that gigolo, you can guaran-goddamn-tee that you'd be lucky to only lose your job."

"Fortunately, what-ifs are a waste of time." He really needed to watch the attitude. In a couple weeks, things could return to normal, but he had to make an effort now.

Tomczik pulled out a manila folder and handed it over to Carver.

Couldn't be a new case already. But who was he to complain? He opened it and frowned. "What the hell is this?"

"I think it's pretty clear what it is. I do know you're at least passably literate, your handwriting to the contrary."

Very funny. "You're transferring me!"

"I should've transferred you ages ago, but I thought... Well, it doesn't matter." Tomczik shrugged. "What does matter is that Montgomery runs a tight ship, though I've heard the lieutenant there makes him seem downright lenient."

"This is just temporary, though, right?"

Tomczik didn't reply.

"Goddamn it, Commander! Zone Six is the fucking back of nowhere! What am I supposed to do, help little old ladies across the street?"

"Might be better for your career if you did, Eliot. Be real. You didn't honestly expect to stay on Major Crimes after this stunt, did you? Jesus, you've pulled some ballsy shit under my watch, but usually you were smart enough to protect the case.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Even if I wanted to keep you, there's no way in hell the chief would allow it. This isn't just a corruption investigation you endangered, Carver. This has the potential to be a Federal case, and now we have to explain that our best witness has been tainted by one of our own who couldn't keep his dick in his pants!"

Zone fucking Six. Jesus Christ. They might as well have kicked him off the force entirely. He swallowed down further comment. "When do I start?"

"Tomorrow. Eight sharp. And don't you dare be late."

He'd been called on the carpet by his dad plenty of times when he was growing up. Even at its worst, that hadn't hurt like a transfer to BFE did. "Might as well kick me in the balls while you're at it."

Tomczik colored. "You're an ungrateful son of a bitch, Eliot. Now get out of my sight."

There were times Carver didn't need to be told twice.

Back at his desk, he pitched things haphazardly into a box under the smug glare of Connors.

"Zone Six." Connors tsked. "They don't even assign rookies there anymore."

"At least you don't have to worry about me grabbing your flabby ass anymore." Dropping an office stapler in on top of his own clutter, which looked pathetically insignificant considering how long he'd had that desk, Carver looked Connors in the eye. "Oh, wait, that's right, I don't fuck guys as ugly as you. My mistake."

"You son of a—"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

He got right into Connors face. “Go ahead, Buggy. I’ve had a shitastic day and I’m just dying to beat the crap out of something. You won’t even take the edge off.”

For a moment, he thought the homophobic bastard might actually do it before Connors backed off with a sneer. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you? Probably get off on it, you pervert.” He turned away and headed to the locker room. “Enjoy the West End, Eliot. You should fit right in in Fairywood.”

It was tempting to follow him, but Carver was in enough shit right now. He didn’t need to add assaulting a superior officer to the list.

The fact Buggy Connors outranked him now just added to the pile of crap.

When he got home, he was surprised to find a package on the mat outside his apartment door. Inside was a bottle of Maker’s Mark and a note. *Hope it was worth it. L.*

Carver did, too.

CHAPTER 3

Lieutenant David Logan kept to the background during the debriefing, watching former Lieutenant, now Detective Carver Eliot very closely. He was an arrogant piece of work lucky to have a job at all after the stunt he'd pulled. Without a trace of remorse. Good looks, the right amount of charm, and a relatively impressive service record in spite of his many infractions had gotten him out of a deeper pile of shit than anyone had a right to get out of.

David frowned. *Good looking.* Not a direction his thoughts needed to be straying. Eliot would be enough trouble without throwing attraction into the mix. Wiry build, shaggy sandy hair, and hazel eyes that just dared you to take him on, take

SINS OF ARROGANCE

him down a few pegs. A prospect that appealed far too much to David. It had been a while since anyone had even remotely piqued his interest.

After Robin— He cut off that train of thought cold. He didn't look back. Just moved forward. What currently lay ahead was keeping Pittsburgh PD's biggest problem child from rocking the boat.

"I don't think I need to impress upon you the seriousness of this situation," Commander Montgomery was saying as David tuned back in, his face rigid, his voice patrician. "Your demotion and reassignment should have been enough to do that for you."

"Yes, sir." Eliot didn't roll his eyes. The intent was there, however. Unmistakable.

David was sure the commander read it as well, but he chose to ignore it. "Good to hear. Now, Lieutenant Logan will show you your desk and introduce you to your partner. You have any problems you take them to him. I don't want to see you in this office again, Eliot, you understand?"

"I'll do my best, sir."

"I expect no less. Gentlemen."

It was an easy dismissal to read.

David led the way to a corner desk grouping where a petite woman with close-cropped coppery curls sat hunched over. She chewed on the end of a pen, focused on something in front of her. Part of David felt guilty for assigning her Eliot as a partner. David liked Scotty. She was a good officer and a genuine person, fiercely loyal, and a hell of a cop. She

SINS OF ARROGANCE

deserved better.

“Still working on the *Times*, Detective Scott?”

“I suppose you’ve been finished for hours now, eh, Lieutenant?” She looked up from her crossword with a cheeky grin, then noticed Eliot. “Who’s the newbie?”

“Your partner.”

“Is he now?” Her eyes ran up and down. “Not hard on the eyes, but the question is, can he pull his weight?”

“That remains to be seen.” He kept his tone neutral. “Detective Brigid Scott, meet Detective Carver Eliot.”

“It’s Scotty.” She held out her hand. “Can I call you Carver, or do you prefer all the title hoopla like the good lieutenant?”

“Carver’s fine.” Eliot shook her hand.

At least he had some basic manners.

“Since Detective Scott can’t go into the men’s locker room,” David continued, “I’ll show you your locker.”

“You know, you can break that rule any time, Lieutenant,” Scotty teased. “I won’t mind.”

“I doubt the commander would appreciate the harassment suit, however.” His lips barely twitched in what passed for a smile from him. Emotions were damning in this profession, especially as high and fast as he’d risen by twenty-eight, and he’d worked damn hard to cultivate a façade worthy of his position. “As you were, Detective.”

Scotty never took the distance the wrong way. “Yes, sir.” She grinned and put her feet up on the desk, going back to her puzzle.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Eliot followed him down the hall. “Business seems pretty slow around here.”

“Which means we’re doing our jobs.” David didn’t look back at him. “This isn’t Major Crimes, Detective. We’ve got the day to day work of policing, and everyone works together. We don’t have enough people here for anyone to be a prima donna about their caseload. You’re coming in on a quiet day. Be grateful. There won’t be many of them.”

“You trying to tell me something, Lieutenant?”

“Yes.” He turned, finally having had enough of Eliot and his attitude. He still kept an outward appearance of calm. “I know your record, Eliot. I know your history. And I won’t have it interfering with the work we do here. If you start to look like a problem, I’ll fix it.”

“So no *tabula rasa* then?”

David wasn’t amused. “You should have been off the force for your last stunt. But you’re here, which means somehow you’ve managed to retain a few highly connected friends along the way.” He leaned in close, catching the faint, spicy scent of Eliot’s cologne. Pleasant and subtle— David tamped down the flare of lust. *No*. “Know this, Eliot. You fuck up this time, and no one will save you. I guarantee it.” Turning on his heel, he continued down the hall. “Locker room is this way.”

Eliot mumbled something, but David chose to ignore it. The sooner the man fucked up again, the better.

They didn’t talk much after that as David found Eliot an empty locker and then handed him off to Sergeant Domini for all the transfer paperwork. He could feel Eliot’s glare follow

SINS OF ARROGANCE

him down the hall when he left them.

“Well?” Montgomery was waiting in David’s office.

“Well what, sir?”

Montgomery closed the door behind him. “Don’t be coy, Lieutenant. You know his record. I’m supposed to salvage his career. Is he worth it?”

This was one of the reasons David valued working in Zone Six, even if it was a step down from his last position. Commander Montgomery respected him and showed it, treated him as an equal without ever crossing the line of command. David couldn’t be less than honest with him. “I honestly don’t know. I need to see his fieldwork first. He doesn’t respect hierarchy, but he seems willing to play the game. From his record, he’s a strong investigator, but this is his fourth OMI hearing, and the first one that wasn’t due to a brutality charge. Right now, he’s worried about keeping his job. What he’ll be like when he feels more comfortable is anyone’s guess. I’m betting he didn’t learn anything from this transfer, though.”

The commander nodded. “I think you’re right. Find a way to get through to him.”

“Sir?”

“One of the perks of my job, Lieutenant. I get to delegate the distasteful jobs. This one’s all yours. If anyone can get through to him, it’s you.”

David frowned. *Wonderful.*

“Here.” Montgomery held out a folder to him.

“What’s this?”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Routine domestic for Scotty and Eliot.” He smiled. “No time like the present.”

At least it would get Eliot out of the station for a few hours. David saw nothing wrong with that. “I’ll keep you apprised, sir.”

Reentering the station proper, he made a beeline for Scotty’s desk.

“Please tell me it’s a B and E this time.” She batted her eyelashes. “Pretty please?”

Again, he had to fight back a smile. “Domestic, sorry, Detective.”

“The fourth damn time this week.”

“You should be able to swing by Primanti’s when you’re through.”

That cheered her up. “I suppose I’ve got to take the newbie along, huh?”

“That’s the general idea.”

“Well, at least it’s not Monday.” She sighed and began flipping through the file. “Hey, Lieutenant?”

“Yes, Detective Scott.”

“You ever wonder why we get stuck with the screw-ups here?”

Because Zone Six was where all the hopeless ones ended up. That wasn’t to say they didn’t have good, solid cops working here, but a good portion weren’t even close to that. “We’re just lucky,” he said finally.

“Must be.” Scotty shrugged. “I’ll let you know how it goes.”

CHAPTER 4

“So, what did you do?”

Carver and Scotty were on the way back from a call later that afternoon, the last remains of lunch scattered across their laps. Thankfully, Scotty wasn't a vegetarian or had annoying eating habits, so they had stopped off at a local sandwich shop she knew so she could introduce him to their specials. Carver thought he was due for a heart attack after that monstrosity, but he kept popping potato chips while Scotty drove them back to the precinct.

Carver had had worse partners than Scotty. He'd never had that bias some cops had about women officers, so he was able to appreciate that she was a good cop. Better than him. She'd

SINS OF ARROGANCE

done all the talking at the domestic dispute call, convincing the husband to let them in, allowing Carver to play brick wall while she talked to the wife in private. Her voice had a soft Midwestern lilt to it that came through when she wasn't being all brash and sassy. But the grin when she was made up for it.

"Or are you going to make me guess?" she prompted.

He was surprised she didn't already know. Hell, most of the tri-county area knew by this point. "I got caught banging a prostitute."

"Not the best thing you could do for your career." Her full lips curved wickedly. "But hardly worth a demotion, let alone a transfer to the division in the back end of nowhere."

"This particular prostitute also happened to be a fairly key witness in one of the cases I was on."

Scotty winced. "Ouch."

"Fortunately, there was plenty of other evidence for the case to move forward on. Meaning I ended up here instead of on the unemployment line."

"Do you always have such poor control over your libido?" She grinned at him, obviously unconcerned. "Should I be worried about my reputation?"

"Nah, I think your reputation's pretty safe." Especially since the prostitute in question had been six-two and hung like a fucking horse. She'd find out about that part soon enough, if he knew how office gossip worked.

"Good, because my boyfriend's got a hell of a gun collection, and I'd hate for him to have to show it to you the hard way."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yes, ma’am.” Carver laughed and popped another chip in his mouth. “So,” he went on, his mouth still full, “what’s Logan’s story? He always such a hard-ass?”

“Hard to say. Came a couple of years ago from Zone Four, but he never really talks about himself. I think he actually asked for the transfer.”

“To the West End? Why, did he lose a bet?” He’d had David Logan’s number from the minute the man had walked into the office. Logan had been impeccably dressed in a suit that must have cost a week’s worth of Carver’s newly reduced salary, shirt pressed, tie carefully knotted and not so much as a crumb on the jacket. His dark hair was trimmed short without being buzzed, and Carver suspected the man got a manicure once a week judging by the quality of his hands. Another ass-kissing ladder climber, just like Buggy Connors. With considerably more class. It didn’t help that the guy looked younger than Carver by at least three years. The idea of someone like that requesting a transfer to the back of beyond seemed out of character.

Scotty seemed as surprised as he was. “No one knows. Rumor has it he lost someone not long before he made lieutenant. He was a real climber, made sergeant faster than anyone ever, got his bars almost as soon as he was eligible. And then stopped. Like whatever had been driving him on was gone. Maybe he just got tired of being asked why.”

Interesting. The thought that the cold lieutenant actually had a heart was hard to process.

Lieutenant Logan was in the corridor when they came in.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Any problems?”

“Only if you call a complete lack of success a problem.”

Scotty shook her head at Carver’s flip answer and gave a better response. “She wouldn’t roll on him. Insisted that after spending a night in lockup, he had seen the error of his ways and would never do her wrong again.”

The lieutenant seemed to expect that, although his tightly controlled expression gave nothing away. It made Carver wonder what it would take to shake him loose. Dangerous territory for a man who wanted to keep his job.

“Not unusual in a domestic violence case. Still, we had to try.” Logan’s eyes narrowed slightly. “How is your new partner working out?”

“As long as he can keep his urges to himself, I think we’ll be fine.”

“That’s good to hear.” Logan didn’t sound convinced.

Wise man. Carver knew it was only a matter of time before he did something to earn the lieutenant’s ire. Intentional or not.

* * *

Everything went pretty smoothly those first few weeks. It probably didn’t hurt that Carver was on his absolute best behavior, crossing every T and dotting every I, following procedure closer than any rookie would. He was also man enough to admit it was only a matter of time. Good behavior and toeing the line just weren’t in his nature.

Time ran out just shy of his first month in Zone Six.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Scotty and he had tracked down the suspect in a string of muggings. All was going well, until the kid gave them the slip and they had to chase him.

Carver caught up with the little bastard near the back of one of Pittsburgh's particularly unsavory alleys. The kid took a swing at him, which meant Carver felt justified in using force against him. Unfortunately, acceptable force was just a bit too little for Carver and things sort of exploded. While he didn't do any serious harm, his subduing of the suspect would raise a few eyebrows. One of whose would certainly be Lieutenant Logan's. Logan who never missed a thing. Every time Carver turned around, the lieutenant was watching him, gray eyes intense and looking for any indication Carver had stepped out of line. And here was the perfect case. *Shit.*

"You ever think of giving anger management a try?" Scotty commented wryly, jarring him from his thoughts.

"I have. It just never took."

"So I see."

Back at the station, Carver hauled the kid out of the back seat and shoved him ahead of him into Booking. He felt more than saw Lieutenant Logan tracking them as they came in. "Now sit your ass down"—he shoved the kid into a seat, clamping one end of his cuffs around the arm—"and wait for the nice sergeant to take your picture."

"Detective Eliot."

Here it came.

He glanced at Scotty, who just shook her head, before turning to find Logan standing in the doorway to his office,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

back rigid as always, hands loose at his sides. “May I speak with you, please?”

“Sure thing, Lieutenant.” For Scotty’s benefit, under his breath he muttered, “I regret that I have but one life to give for my country.”

She snorted.

“Yes, sir?” He managed to be polite as he stepped into the office.

Logan leaned back against his desk, arms crossed. It didn’t make him look any more relaxed. “That boy looks like hamburger.”

“Does he, sir? I hadn’t noticed. I was more concerned with him not getting away.”

“He was a purse snatcher, Eliot.”

“A crime’s a crime, sir.”

“So you think violence is an acceptable solution?”

“No, sir. But it’s what I had available.”

“I see.” He actually seemed to think on that. “Thank you, Eliot, you can go.”

Carver could see the whole squad room watching them through the glass wall of Logan’s office. No hiding anything. They all thought he was being reprimanded again. Hell, there was probably a pool on how long he’d last. He just grinned cockily as he yanked open the door and swaggered back to his desk.

“What happened?” Scotty asked. “What did he want?”

“We were just discussing procedures. Nothing major.”

Glancing back at the office, Carver frowned. To be honest,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

he wasn't really sure what had happened, either.

CHAPTER 5

David let Eliot stew for the remainder of the day, until after the rest of the shift left. The man expected some sort of reprisal. It was the predictable response to his actions earlier. However, David was pretty certain the secret to controlling a man like Carver Eliot lay in not being predictable. Keep him off balance and you might just stand a chance of getting through.

He approached Eliot as the man was leaving. “The day’s not over yet, Detective. Training room. Ten minutes.”

Eliot looked at him as if he’d grown a second head. Good.

“Don’t be late,” David added before heading off, hoping he hadn’t misjudged and that Eliot’s curiosity would get the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

better of him.

Eliot arrived in the training room just shy of the ten-minute mark. David had been warming up on a punching bag for the few minutes he'd been waiting. He carefully shifted his position to hide his satisfied smirk at Eliot's surprise. The man probably thought David lived in his well-tailored suits. Little did he know.

"Sir?" Eliot prompted.

"Get some gloves on."

"No, sir." The response showed he had some sense.

David faced him finally. "You'd rather do this bare knuckled?"

"No, sir. I'm not hitting a senior officer. I like what's left of my job."

"Then prove it." David retrieved a pair of gloves from the floor and threw them at Eliot. Actually, Carver now. Good distinction to make. "Off the clock. No harm, no foul. Come on, Carver," he goaded, something Carver also didn't appear to have expected from him. "You know you want to take a swing at me."

"Oh, yeah? And why is that, *David*?" He shoved his fists into the gloves.

He shouldn't like the way Carver said his name so much. "Because I'm good-looking, successful, young. Everything you're not."

Carver's temper was rising. He snarled. "You aren't that much younger than me."

"Yeah, but you'll never see this side of thirty again, will

SINS OF ARROGANCE

you?”

Carver swung without a second thought. David easily evaded him. Too easy.

“I don’t think you need to worry about hitting a senior officer,” he taunted.

Carver double fainted before striking again. Still David moved in time.

“Telegraphing every move. You’re hardly a challenge, Carver.” Lightning quick, David landed a punch to Carver’s gut, doubling him over and propelling him back. “And easily distracted.”

Circling around while he recovered, Carver sought out any weakness David might have, clearly giving away his intentions. David decided to play into it, favoring his right hand over his left to see if he could draw Carver in. Feinting again, Carver shot a hard cross at the left side of David’s head.

David met it and countered with an upper cut that left Carver staggering.

“Nice try, Carver, really.” David barely swayed as he waited for Carver to recover. “But not everything is as it seems. You see what I want you to see, and you never question it, do you? You see and you react. Thinking never gets in your way.”

“Fuck you.” This time Carver charged at David, catching him around the waist and slamming him back against the padded wall behind them.

The impact jarred them both. Carver was already at a physical disadvantage against David, and doubly dazed on top

SINS OF ARROGANCE

of it, making it easy for David to reverse their positions.

David smirked at him. No challenge whatsoever. “When the rules don’t suit you, you steamroll straight through them. Sometimes it works. But generally”—he ignored the thrill of finding Carver every bit as hard as he was—“you end up screwing yourself.” Then he stepped away. “Now, come at me once more.”

Again, that stunned look, like David wasn’t falling in line with his expectation. It was a good look on him, softening the too hard angles of his face. Then he was in motion again, nearly taking David by surprise. Nearly. David had to give Carver credit—he was a determined bastard.

They sparred for the better part of an hour. David never let up for a moment and by the end of it, Carver seemed to be catching on, almost thinking before he acted. It was probably just his survival instinct kicking in. But it was better than no progress at all.

Finally, Carver landed a left cross to David’s jaw, snapping his head back. So the brash fucker could hit if David gave him enough motivation. *Damn.* He worked his jaw. Hopefully, it wouldn’t bruise too badly. Carver’s bruises made sense from earlier today; David’s own really wouldn’t.

David pulled off his gloves. “About goddamned time.”

“Wait. That’s it? I hit you once and game over?”

“For today.” David dropped the gloves in the nearby bin and headed for the showers, leaving Carver to ferret it out if he could.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

* * *

Montgomery asked him to stay after morning meeting the next day. "I understand you're doing some one-on-one mediation with Detective Eliot." He sounded more amused than concerned, which made David flush.

He kept his composure. "Violence seems to be the only thing he understands, sir. It seemed better to give him a way to channel it than to risk another brutality charge."

"That's very...noble of you, Lieutenant."

"I'm not trying to be a martyr, sir." Montgomery's amusement irritated him. "I'm just doing the job you gave me."

Montgomery could read him too well, blue eyes twinkling. "No need to get defensive, Lieutenant. I just wanted to remind you that not much goes unnoticed around here. I know you like your privacy, but if you're pursuing more than a professional relationship, you might want to keep it off the premises."

David ground his teeth. "I'm not *pursuing* any kind of a relationship, sir. I'm trying to teach Eliot some control."

"So that's what they're calling it these days."

Closing his eyes, David drew on every reserve he had to remain calm and cool. He looked at the commander again. "It's professional and nothing more, sir."

Montgomery's amusement didn't diminish. "As you say, Logan."

The conversation wasn't unexpected. They were a small division and not much went unnoticed. Damn it, Montgomery

SINS OF ARROGANCE

should know better than to make an accusation like that toward him. David had been nothing but professional his entire career. He had never hidden his sexual preferences, but the two never mixed. Never.

* * *

Unfortunately, once an idea took root, added in with the latent attraction, David found the continuing sessions with Carver quickly spiraling out of the professional arena.

David's behaviors didn't change. He still arrived at work half an hour before day shift started, talked with the night sergeant to get the rundown on any leftovers from the night before and whether they could expect any surprises, then got his coffee and settled in at his desk to catch up on paperwork before the shift briefing. It didn't matter how focused he was on the work, though, he was always aware the minute Carver walked in the door.

Eliot would swagger in like he owned the place, loudly greeting anyone he passed, flirting just within the bounds of propriety with the female staff. David had the sense the man was trying to build allies for the inevitable screw-ups he would be facing. But it wasn't his boisterous presence that alerted David. He just *knew*, as surely as a wild animal could sense an impending earthquake, the moment Carver arrived. The fine hairs on the back of his neck stood up, sending a frisson of awareness just short of arousal across all his nerve endings.

His reactions during their sparring sessions were much

SINS OF ARROGANCE

easier to explain.

Carver was by no means buff. David would be surprised if the man ever even ran for a bus. However, he was still in good shape, with a lean, rangy build that disguised his strength. When they fought, David kept his mind focused on the goal of the sessions—to channel Carver’s aggression and to help him with his control. It seemed to be working. Carver’s day-to-day work performance lacked the violence he’d shown before these sessions started. As mentally satisfying as the results might be, David’s body was concerned with much more physical issues.

The sly looks from Montgomery didn’t help matters. Until recently, David had had no trouble with Montgomery. He did his job, ran a tight ship, and was a damn fine commander. Montgomery needed to lay off. David was fully in control of the Carver situation.

Then the dreams started and he didn’t need sly looks to feel uncomfortable around Montgomery.

* * *

David stands in the middle of the workout room, dressed just as he is every morning, the sounds of precinct life continuing all around him.

Commander Montgomery is there. He doesn’t say anything, but David can feel him watching, waiting for something to happen. Irritated, Montgomery says, “You know what you’re supposed to do.”

David does. He shrugs off his jacket and loosens his tie,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

slowly undressing with the deliberate care that had been pounded into him for so many years. Finally he's naked, only the inch-wide leather collar, *his* collar, remaining around his neck.

Montgomery paces around him, studying him critically. David feels exposed, but doesn't flinch, even when the commander rests his hand on David's shoulder. When the hand slides down his arm, he doesn't resist, even when it's drawn back behind him.

The feel of cold steel around his wrists is welcome.

"On your knees, son," Montgomery commands, and David obeys, just as he's been taught. "You know what comes next, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you want it?"

"Yes, sir. Please."

"All right then." He pulls a blindfold out of his pocket and covers David's eyes with it.

David's mouth is already watering.

Then Montgomery's cock is there, waiting for David's attention. David obliges, reacquainting himself through taste and touch. Faintly salty and oh-so-hard. David does his damndest to curry his commander's favor.

"That's it...you know just what I like."

It isn't Montgomery who speaks but Eliot. Carver. Arrogant as ever and so smug at having David kneeling before him.

"Such a good little cocksucker." Fingers stroke soothingly

SINS OF ARROGANCE

through his hair, encouraging him on, only tightening if he tries to get too creative. “Simple, David. That’s it.”

Carver soon shudders, grip turning almost bruising as he comes. David never knows if it is reward for a job well done or punishment for bringing things to the end.

When the blindfold is undone, David blinks against the brightness, wondering if this time Carver might return the favor.

But Robin is standing there, looking so disappointed in him. Robin tears the collar from David’s throat and throws it aside. “I trained you better, boy...”

* * *

Every time, David woke up gasping and felt like his heart had been torn out all over again.

It was too real, too compelling, every single time. He was almost certain he would know the taste and feel of Carver’s cock if he ever got the chance to compare, and the look of disappointment in Robin’s face was all the more terrible in light of the fact he could never make it up to him now.

The reminder of Robin gave David another idea, one that, if he justified it just right, could be one more tool in his campaign to salvage Carver Eliot’s career.

As long as he didn’t look at his motives too closely.

CHAPTER 6

It became a bit of a ritual for them. Neither of them said anything about it, and Carver certainly didn't mention it to Scotty, but once a week, after the day watch had gone home and the night watch was well into their duties, Logan and Carver met in the workout room to spar.

It felt good.

Not just because he got to hit a superior officer with impunity. It felt good to channel all his aggression and frustration into his fists and let it all go without consequences. Plus, he was getting better at it, hitting Logan with more frequency, avoiding him more often, learning to read his tells and anticipate his next move. They didn't talk much, just

SINS OF ARROGANCE

pounding on each other, neither of them holding back until finally Logan would call it. It was never a surrender on his part, just an end of their time together.

Beyond that, or maybe because of it, this reassignment wasn't turning out so bad. Scotty was a good partner. She didn't take his shit and kept him in line without being a bitch about it. She even had him home for dinner with her a couple of times, where he discovered her boyfriend Rick was just as big as she had promised, and with as big a gun collection as she'd warned him. What she hadn't mentioned was the fact he was an elementary school teacher. Big softy. He and Carver got on like a house on fire. "It's because you're a big kid." Scotty had laughed.

The caseload was another matter. Crime was crime, Carver knew that, but a constant diet of B and E, domestic disputes, and vandalism got boring. He missed the high profile work in Major Crimes, and, for the first time, started to regret his misstep. If he could straighten up and get his act together, maybe he could get back there, taking Scotty with him. She'd be great in Major Crimes.

Even he knew it was a pipe dream. He hadn't lost control lately, but he knew it was only a matter of time, no matter how much the sparring sessions with the lieutenant helped. They brought with them their own frustrations. Whether it was intentional or not—and the egotistical part of Carver was certain it was—David Logan seemed to be coming on to him with each session. Nothing overt, mind, just the way David looked at him sometimes, the way he didn't quite pull away

SINS OF ARROGANCE

when Carver got him in a clinch, and how, more often than not, he discovered David every bit as hard as he was. Carver had gotten himself off more than once thinking about it. Potential mutual attraction wasn't the kind of thing you confronted a superior about, particularly if you wanted to keep your job. Even if you wanted what said superior seemed to be offering. Not that Carver was saying he wanted David.

Still, he really looked forward to their weekly sessions.

Carver stumbled into the communal showers after a particularly rough session, grateful for the cold water sluicing over his sweaty skin. Logan had the privilege of rank and so got to use the private shower with the more reliable hot water. Carver didn't care. The cold was good enough for him.

Except this time, Logan followed him.

He lifted his head out of the spray to find the man standing in the doorway, a towel slung around his hips, just watching Carver shower. Carver noticed, with surprise, a large tribal pattern tattoo wrapping around Logan's waist on one side, presumably to curl up his back as well. The straight-laced lieutenant didn't strike Carver as the tattoo type. He had a clean, athletic build that Carver couldn't help but find attractive.

Carver turned around and began washing his hair, not hiding his own nudity from his supervisor. "Like what you see?"

Logan's expression didn't change. "Come here."

It wasn't a request. Carver bristled and purposefully kept to his routine. "Off duty, *David*, remember?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

"I said, come here." His tone remained the same.

Smirking, Carver glanced back and said flatly, challenging, "No."

"Have it your way." Logan stalked forward, something in his presence suddenly so threatening Carver couldn't take his eyes off him. Hands at his waist, Logan undid the towel and dropped it on the damp tiles, making it pretty obvious what he had in mind by the size of his hard-on. That athletic chest narrowed down to fine hips, the smattering of dark hair guiding Carver's eye right to Logan's cock, bobbing slightly with each deliberate step. He stopped just out of reach of the spray, tracing light fingertips along Carver's arm, making all the fine hairs there stand at attention. Thank God, Carver hadn't been wrong. David Logan had been coming on to him, and right now Carver couldn't think of anything bad about that.

Fingers curled around Carver's wrist, Logan unexpectedly wrenched his arm up over his head, and Carver felt cold steel on his bare skin as the lieutenant cuffed him to the showerhead pipe with a pair of bracelets that seemed to appear out of nowhere. Logan cranked the cold water up full blast and held Carver under it, then shut it off.

Shivering, Carver shook the water out of his eyes and glared at the man. "What the fuck was that for?"

"Just getting your attention."

If the cold water hadn't, the way Logan pressed into him to kiss him commandingly certainly would have. It was half assault, half exploration, and Carver was too surprised to

SINS OF ARROGANCE

resist, opening his mouth to the demand of Logan's tongue, pushing back, demanding more. It wasn't until Logan pulled away that Carver realized his other hand was now cuffed to the pipe as well.

"Okay, this isn't even funny," Carver insisted, jerking at the chains, starting to feel the vague panic of being set up. He could probably get free, but it would mean ripping the plumbing from the wall. But he'd do it if he had to. He was not going to get humiliated by some bastard officer, no matter how fucking sexy he was. "What's your game, Logan?"

"David," Logan scolded. "Off duty, remember? I'm following your example. I'm using the tools I have available."

Logan dropped down to his knees, his hands flat on Carver's thighs, spreading them slightly as he watched Carver's response. Carver groaned. "Isn't this sexual harassment or something?"

"Off. Duty." His nose nudged against Carver's stiffening cock before his hot tongue flicked out to curl around his balls.

"Oh, fuck." It was good. It was so very good.

Logan—*David*, Carver quickly corrected—chuckled. "That you have to earn."

"What the hell is— Christ!" he cried out, a shot of pure pleasure cascading out from where David's mouth surrounded his right testicle. He swallowed hard and tried again. "What the hell is this supposed to be then?"

David moved to the left side, repeating his actions. "Feels good, doesn't it?" His tongue traced along Carver's sensitive perineum before coming back to slick up the length of his

SINS OF ARROGANCE

cock to suck the tip in, short and hard.

Carver didn't even try to lie. "Fuck, yeah."

David released him with a faint pop as his lips came together. "This is a case example."

Carver groaned. "Example of what exactly?"

Pulling away, David got to his feet. "It's an example of what you get when you behave yourself." Without warning, he stepped to the side before a steady stream of ice-cold water pounded down on Carver. It was over before Carver could cry out. David ran his fingers almost obscenely around the cold water knob. "And what you can look forward to when you step out of line."

Carver shook water out of his eyes, the ice bath doing nothing to cool his lust. "Since when did torture become an accepted management tool?"

"Since you came into my precinct. You don't fool me, Carver." He curled his hand around Carver's erection, palm heating the cold water that lingered there. "You're loving this. This is what you've needed for a long time." He leaned closer to purr in Carver's ear. "Someone to put you in your place."

Carver swore and struggled again, but he couldn't deny the surge of arousal that suddenly made him ache. "I could report you."

David tore open a condom he'd retrieved from the shower ledge, rolling it on his own cock in one practiced motion. Dimly, Carver realized David had set this whole thing up, but he really didn't care at the moment.

"You could." Bending down, David picked up the bottle of

SINS OF ARROGANCE

conditioner Carver had left on the floor and squirted a large shot into his palm. "But you won't." He started coating his cock with the thick cream.

Damn it, Carver could almost taste what was coming. "Why not?"

"Because you know no one would believe you over me." Turning him to face the wall, David pressed up against his back. "And because you want this."

Carver groaned, resting his forehead against the tile.

Any question Carver might have had about the lieutenant's sexual preferences were answered by the familiar way he handled Carver, no hesitation as his fingers found their way knowingly into Carver's ass, easing the path the way a first time fucker wouldn't think to. He bit back a moan as David's slick cock slipped between his cheeks, head grazing over the tight iris of muscle concealed there. Anticipation made his knees give briefly. Wrong place, wrong time, wrong man, again, and yet Carver still couldn't say no.

Teeth tugged at his left earlobe. "Tell me you want this, Carver," David said. "Tell me you want me to fuck you so hard that every time you look at me for the next month, you'll feel me buried balls deep in your ass."

David's heavy breath on the back of his neck told Carver David wanted it, too. "Christ, stop talking and do it already!"

"Not until you say it." He ground up closer, cock sliding over Carver's balls in a frictionless caress. "Beg for it."

There was an implacability in his voice that warned Carver he was going to regret it if he didn't. It was too much, too

SINS OF ARROGANCE

sudden, overwhelming all of Carver's defense mechanisms. "Do it! Please, David, please fuck me!"

David stroked the hair off Carver's neck. "There, that wasn't so hard, was it?" With a shift of his hips, he began working his cock into the tight clench of Carver's ass.

Jesus, it felt amazing.

Carver braced himself the best he could, feet gripping the slick tiles, forehead resting against the wall and fingers wrapping around the handcuff chains as if his life depended on it.

"Just let me in, Carver," David crooned, as though to a reluctant lover. "Then you can relax, and I'll handle the rest."

Carver was anything but reluctant.

Inch by inch David worked his way in, breaching Carver by gradual degrees until his balls nudged heavily against Carver's.

"Let go. I've got you." David's voice was soothing in its even, commanding tone. "Let go, Carver."

"Jesus." With a long, shuddering breath, he surrendered, and instantly David filled him, hipbones firm against Carver's ass, arms wrapped around him, keeping him from swaying too far in the manacles.

"Don't fight me, Carver." David began rocking them. "Trust me, let me lead you, and I'll make it so very good for both of us."

The friction of the agonizingly slow penetration and withdrawal was overwhelming. The quick fucks in restrooms and dark hallways and the back seat of cars hadn't prepared

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver for this level of attention. David was fucking him like he planned to go on this way all night, regardless of who might come by to see. The risk of humiliation seemed insignificant now next to the fear David might actually stop, leaving Carver desperate and wanting.

He tried to increase their speed, desperate for more, but David pinned him to the tiles.

And stopped moving completely.

“Try that again and I’ll leave you here for day shift to find.” The raggedness of David’s breathing somehow intensified the threat. “Do you trust me to give you what you need?”

He could lie and play the expected role, but that wasn’t Carver’s style. “No, I don’t.”

“Honest answer. At least you’ve learned something.” David withdrew and returned with excruciating slowness, leaning heavy against Carver’s back. “And eventually you will learn to trust me.”

“Doubt that,” Carver mumbled.

David’s hand slipped between the wall and his stomach, moving down to wrap firmly around his cock. “We’ll work on it.”

Much to Carver’s imminent relief, David began to fuck him again, picking up the pace just enough to almost satisfy him.

By the time he shifted to long, deep strokes, Carver thought he would go insane.

David’s fingers dug into his hip, his other hand jerking

SINS OF ARROGANCE

hard on Carver's cock, adding pleasure on top of ecstasy as each thrust grew harder, more impatient. It was getting to David, Carver could tell, and he fought to hold back his own release to savor the full brunt of David's.

When David finally came, shuddering hard and fingers digging deep enough to bruise into Carver's hip, Carver gave himself over with a satisfied grunt.

Regaining his senses as David withdrew, Carver realized that the man had been right about one thing. He was going to be feeling David all month. Okay, maybe a week, but still... And to his surprise, Carver was rather pleased with the thought. It had been too long since he'd been fucked this well.

He turned in the cuffs and leaned back against the wall. "So, our right and proper lieutenant just couldn't wait to get a piece of the bad boy."

David ignored him and turned on the shower, moving just close enough to invade Carver's personal space as he quickly scrubbed. Carver watched the flex of his muscles as he washed, the strong arms that were enough to pin him, the hollows in his neck that Carver was now desperately curious to taste. Christ, he was getting hard again already and David hadn't touched him.

When he finished, David reached around Carver and retrieved a small set of keys from the ledge, then unlocked him, stepping away, cuffs dangling from his right hand, an unmistakable reminder.

"Stop dropping your right elbow when you hit. You'll get a lot more force that way." Sage advice dispensed, David

SINS OF ARROGANCE

walked out of the room like it was any other night and he hadn't just thoroughly fucked Carver.

The water turned icier, jarring Carver into action. He washed up and turned the shower off. Shivering, he walked into the deserted locker room and had a feeling that things were about to get a lot more interesting.

CHAPTER 7

David didn't sleep that night. He had crossed a line and there was no going back. Fucking Carver in the showers was better than he'd imagined. So much for scratching the itch and moving on. He hadn't realized how much he had missed the give and take of domination and submission. That part of his life was dead and buried along with Robin. Tonight had been a weak moment, nothing more. He'd been lying to himself thinking that submissive training would be good for Carver's control issues.

Punching his pillow, he rolled over again and tried to get comfortable. *What a fucking mess.* Contrary to what he'd told Carver, there was the possibility if the man were to file a

SINS OF ARROGANCE

complaint, he would be taken seriously. Even screw-ups like Carver Eliot deserved protection from harassment. But Carver had seemed to enjoy the encounter as much as he had. David hoped that was enough. Back to being strictly profession, sparring sessions aside. He couldn't stop those; they were helping Carver, and stopping them would be an admission of guilt.

The only thing to do was pretend tonight hadn't happened. Easier said than done when Carver's needy groans still echoed in his ears.

* * *

The next morning he ignored Carver. Or tried to.

The automatic awareness seemed finer tuned today, getting David hard at just the scent of the man's aftershave. Even if he wasn't the one wearing it, which made for a few uncomfortable moments for David.

He could feel Carver watching him. Waiting. Wondering. If nothing else, he appeared to have learned some restraint. David could feel the need to act vibrating off Carver every time David came near, but he never said a word, never did anything untoward. He just...waited.

God, that kind of power shouldn't be such a turn-on.

"You all right there, Lieutenant?" Scotty's voice jarred him out of his thoughts by the coffee machine.

"I'm fine, Detective," he replied without snapping. Barely.

"Uh-huh." She poured herself a cup, took a sip, and grimaced. "Apparently staring at it doesn't make it taste any

SINS OF ARROGANCE

better. I think I'm going on a Starbucks run. Want me to grab you something?"

The coffee did taste like shit. Four cups had done nothing for his current state of near unconsciousness. Fishing out his wallet, David handed her a ten. "As large and strong as they can make it."

Scotty smirked. "Just my type."

She ducked out of the office before he could reprimand her. Glancing over, he found Carver watching him. Apparently, wiry assholes were his type. *Damn it.*

David took the substandard coffee to his office to tide him over while he hid. Yes, he was man enough to admit he was hiding from Carver Eliot. It was better for both of them.

* * *

Life returned mostly to normal over the course of the next week. The dreams stopped, so that was something. Unfortunately, David still got a hard-on every time Carver or his aftershave came near. It could have been worse.

Carver entered the training room that night fairly vibrating with excitement. David didn't feel far off that himself. He'd made up his mind, though, to keep things purely professional, tempting as it was to slam Carver up against the nearest wall and shut him up the only effective way there was.

To David's surprise, Carver lasted most of the session before confronting him. Maybe Carver was learning some restraint. "So, that was it?" He caught a glancing blow off David's shoulder and quickly dodged the return snap.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Play it cool; play it close. Like always. “You were expecting more?”

Carver’s face showed the briefest flicker of hurt. “I wasn’t expecting anything. I just thought...”

David smirked. “At least I got you thinking. That’s progress.”

“Very funny.” Carver emphasized the words with a one-two volley that made David dodge back.

“Keep your left up,” was David’s only response.

The banter was too easy, and it was fascinating watching Carver struggle with his need to act versus his curiosity of how this would play out. It was an aspect of going down this path that David had never considered, how enforcing your will on another person, no matter how willing, changed them. Once upon a time it had saved him, but he’d never considered it from the other side before.

He stayed far away from the group showers that night.

And every time after. Especially when the dreams started up again. Being a superior officer, he had no right to go anywhere near Carver on a nonprofessional level. He also should have stopped the sparring sessions, but he’d always had a slightly masochistic streak.

“I think there might be hope for Eliot yet,” Montgomery observed one day.

“Sir?”

“He’s still a cocky little shit. No cure for that. But he might have gotten a lot farther if he’d behaved like this for the majority of his career.” He looked pointedly at David. “You

SINS OF ARROGANCE

should be proud of that.”

“The department is always my primary concern, Commander. Having him out of control wouldn’t have done any of us any good,” David replied evenly.

“I think it might be doing you some good, too. Hell, I’m even beginning to think you’re as human as the rest of us.”

“How do you mean, sir?” *Shit*. If he’d given anything away...

“This is the first time since you came here that you’ve actually engaged with any of the other officers. Oh, I know”—Montgomery waved off David’s protest—“you’ve always been friendly enough, but you’re distant from them, Logan, and the men feel it. They respect you, but you’re not one of them.”

“I can’t be an officer and ‘one of the guys,’ sir. You know that.”

“Bullshit.”

That surprised him. “Sir?”

“Hell, son, even I go out with them for drinks once in a while. You don’t have to be their best friend, but you don’t have to be so damn distant, either. Eliot’s shaking you out of that. You’ve stepped down off your pedestal and are getting your hands dirty. The others see that, so see you a little differently. It’s good for you. Makes you a better officer.”

David’s lip curled. “Does that mean they’ve stopped calling me Ramrod?”

Montgomery chuckled. “No, I think you’re stuck with that. Just like they still call me Full Monty. Thank God only a

SINS OF ARROGANCE

handful of them still know why.”

“It’s still better than Ramrod.”

David couldn’t tell if Montgomery’s look was speculative or not. “You could do a lot worse. I’ve found embracing the nickname helps matters considerably. When it stops pissing you off, it loses its power and they move on.”

“I’ll keep your advice in mind.”

Montgomery glanced towards Carver’s desk. “It holds true for a lot of things.”

David didn’t let his eyes follow. “I’ll try to remember, sir.”

He had the feeling the commander was laughing at him.

CHAPTER 8

Carver stands, teeth gritted, under the icy deluge from the communal showers. Even he could realize something had to be wrong with him if cold water only served to heighten his arousal.

“The usual deterrents are wasted on you, aren’t they, Carver?” David says after he shuts off the water. He runs the flat of his tongue up Carver’s neck in one smooth swipe.

Carver shivers, but not from the cold. “Just figuring that out?” he says with more bravado than he feels. It’s contrary to every one of his instincts, but something about David makes Carver want to roll over and do whatever he wants.

“Hardly.” David brings his teeth into play, and all Carver

SINS OF ARROGANCE

wants to do is beg for, “More. Harder. Now.”

“My my, isn’t this a pretty picture?”

Carver’s eyes spring wide and he sees Lucas leaning against the wall, all lean, well-defined lines and so gloriously naked.

David chuckles, turning back to glance at Lucas. “You do like to live dangerously, Carver, I’ll grant you that.”

“You don’t think it’s worth it?”

“Maybe.” David pulls away, leaving Carver bereft as he turns to Lucas instead. Lucas looks smug before he drops his head the half inch it takes to capture David’s mouth. Carver tries to go to them, but the handcuffs keep him trapped.

David’s hand twines through Lucas’ black hair, tugging him lower, while his other wraps around Lucas’ huge prick. Jesus, it’s so fucking hot, and if Carver could just get free, he’d lean back and jerk off to the show. But he can’t, growing more and more frantic when David drops to his knees to begin swallowing Lucas’ cock.

Lucas strokes David’s hair, watching Carver the whole time. “Was it worth it, Carver? Getting busted in rank just for ten minutes with me?” His fingers tighten, trapping David’s head. “Would it be worth losing your job for this?”

Carver swallows. “I don’t know. Would it?”

Lucas’ face grows ecstatic. “Oh, yes.” He moans, and suddenly Carver hates him.

He knows just how good David’s mouth feels, more talented than the stick-up-his-ass lieutenant has any right to be. But he also wants Lucas’ dick all to himself. It wasn’t

SINS OF ARROGANCE

often he wanted to blow a guy, but there were exceptions. Lucas is one of them

David takes Lucas all the way in, and Carver dies. At least they'd angled themselves so Carver could see everything. Though that might be more of a curse than a blessing.

He barely chokes down his plea. Sick fuckers, leaving him chained here, helpless, with nothing to do but watch.

"That's it, right there." Lucas is in ecstasy, and Carver wants nothing more than to kill the bastard. But not before he comes. What a fucking gorgeous sight it is, even if he didn't fully get to appreciate it the last time with Buggy looking on...

* * *

Carver sat bolt upright, blinking against the weak morning light.

"Motherfucker." He groaned, slamming the off switch on his bleeping alarm clock. "Always when things are about to get really good."

Today was going to be a nightmare.

* * *

"Good morning, Detective."

Carver didn't wince at the controlled tenor voice behind him. Pivoting on one heel, he faced David full on. "Good morning, Lieutenant. Sleep well?" Leading question if ever there was one.

To his surprise, David flinched.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Well. Well, well, well.

"Fine." His tone gave away nothing more. "Thanks for asking. Is your partner in? I have a run for you."

Oh, this was too good. David was avoiding Carver now. "Not yet. I expect her any minute, so I can take it."

David looked skeptical.

"I'm not going to go it alone, if that's what you're worried about. Believe it or not, I am capable of following basic procedures."

David handed over the slip. "Even dogs can do that."

Carver gaped at him.

"What?"

"Was that a comeback, Lieutenant? I'd say witty, except it wasn't."

He stalked off, leaving Carver to smirk in his wake. So ol' Ramrod *was* human after all. Wasn't that interesting?

"Okay, I'm worried already."

Carver turned to grin at Scotty. "It's a very good morning, Detective Scott. Shall we go make Pittsburgh safer for its denizens?" He waved the assignment at her.

"You're in too good a mood, Carver. Should I be worried about the sky falling this morning?"

"Nope, not the sky. Come on." He headed towards the door. "We can grab some coffee on the way. My treat."

"Okay, that's it. I'm dreaming."

He grinned at her wickedly. "Then you have crap dreams, Detective Scott."

"You can stop with the Detective Scott anytime, Carver."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

You're starting to freak me out."

He just chuckled in response.

* * *

The day only got better from there. Their assignment, a report of a stolen moped, was quickly resolved and they were back at the station well before lunch, giving Carver plenty of time to make the ever stoic Lieutenant David Logan as uncomfortable as possible. Nothing too overt, mind. He wasn't confident enough to test how secure his position had become.

Considering how regimented David was, it was easy enough.

Carver bumped into him coming out of the break room, barely catching the coffee David had just gotten. "Careful there, Lieutenant," he chided, holding the cup and David's hand a moment longer than he needed to. "Wouldn't want a stain on that nice white shirt."

He was standing at a urinal doing his business when David made his afternoon trip to the men's room. Neither of them said anything, but Carver grunted and nodded, not making any attempt to hide himself behind the porcelain.

The only thing that caught Carver off guard occurred at the end of the day.

"Meet you at the bar, Carver?" Scotty said, gathering up her things.

"Yeah. Shouldn't take me too long. Think you can hold off?"

She grinned. "You know it's better if I get a head start.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Less chance of a hangover for you that way.”

“Ha ha.”

“I don’t suppose you want to join us, do you, Lieutenant?” she called behind him.

Carver turned, jumping when he saw how close David was. The bastard wasn’t supposed to be able to sneak up on him.

David frowned for a moment, eyes darting briefly to Carver before returning to Scotty, then he nodded. “I suppose it wouldn’t hurt.”

Scotty looked as stunned as Carver felt. “Come again?”

“That’s a yes, Detective Scott.”

Was he actually smiling? Okay, it was faint, but unmistakably a smile.

“First Carver being all cheery. Now you accepting drinks with the crew. I might have to play the lotto tonight.” She gave David a brief salute and headed out. “See you boys there.”

Carver whirled on David the moment Scotty was gone. “The hell kind of game are you playing?” He glanced at the clock—off duty. “David?”

David wasn’t fazed. “No game, Detective. It was pointed out to me that the men might find me more approachable if I socialized with them occasionally.” His expression hardened. “I leave the games to you.”

“Games? Me?” Carver snorted. “You might want to remember who started what here, before you make statements like that.” Closing his file, he stood. The work would keep

SINS OF ARROGANCE

until tomorrow. “If I started playing games, Lieutenant, you wouldn’t know what hit you.”

So there.

He made his way to the exit.

“Do you really need another reminder of discipline, Carver?”

His body immediately responded to the threat, the promise, in David’s words. Covering his reaction with a smirk, he glanced back at David. “I just might at that.”

“That’s too bad.” David shrugged and followed him, pausing when he would have passed. “I guess I’m never going to know what it feels like to have you come in my mouth. Pity.”

David’s hot, very talented mouth. Jesus, fuck.

Comeback. He needed a comeback fast, but his brain just wouldn’t work.

“Nothing? How disappointing.” David sighed and continued past.

Carver chased him out to the parking lot. “What the fuck do you want from me?”

“What I want”—David glared at him over the top of the door of his late model Mercedes coupe—“is for you to get some control and be the officer Commander Montgomery thinks you can be.”

“Bullshit.”

“It’s not my fault if you believe otherwise.”

Not his fault...right. Carver leaned dangerously close. “So you fucking me in the showers was all about improving my

SINS OF ARROGANCE

performance, was it?"

David's lips pressed into a fine line.

"Nothing to say, David? Don't trust yourself?"

"I don't trust you not to take whatever I say and twist it to your own ends."

"Aw, come on," he goaded. "Try me."

"I already did."

David was in the car and pulling away before Carver could respond.

"Bastard." If David did actually show up to the bar, he was in for a rude awakening.

* * *

David was playing with fire and he knew it. Carver's patience was running out, and David was going to lose control of him, no matter how much Carver wanted him. Joining the day shift for drinks was one way to keep him off base, but David knew his own restraint only extended so far. One beer was the most he could allow himself. One beer and no private "conversations" with Carver.

The latter would be the harder to manage.

Scotty was just turning from the bar with a tray of drinks when he walked in. "Hey, Lieutenant, you actually came! Come on and sit down. You can have Baker's beer."

"Hey!" Baker protested from a crowded table in the back.

"Privileges of rank, buster." She winked at David and started weaving deftly through the crowd.

"I'll get the next round," David offered to make up for it.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Nearly a dozen pairs of eyes focused on him.

Too much?

Baker laughed. "Christ, Scotty, whatever you did to get him to join us this time, remember it for the next." He dragged a chair over. "Have a seat, Lieutenant."

"Thanks." He took the seat, feeling more uncomfortable than he had in years. Considering what he'd done during those years, joining his co-workers for drinks should have been a breeze.

David settled into the background as best as he could, participating in the conversation just enough not to be rude.

Then Carver showed up.

"Will wonders never cease." He dropped down beside Scotty. Retrieving his wallet, he pulled out a twenty and handed it to Scotty. "I thought for sure I was going to win that one."

"That's me," David deadpanned, never blinking as he watched Carver. "A constant surprise."

Everyone else at the table laughed. Carver just returned David's look.

Conversations started up again around the tables they had dragged together. Carver was instantly drawn in, one of the group, while David remained on the fringes, watching them all.

Watching Carver.

"I was reigning champion at the bar near my previous assignment," he was saying.

"Bullshit," Scotty countered. "You and darts? I just don't

SINS OF ARROGANCE

see it, Carver.”

“Hey, my aim is dead-on.”

“More like deadly.”

“You don’t have the focus,” David chimed in before he could stop himself.

Carver’s smile was feral. “Was that a challenge, Lieutenant?”

“For you, maybe.”

Their group erupted in catcalls and whistles.

Baker rubbed his hands together. “This night just gets better and better. My money’s definitely on the lieutenant. Scotty?”

She looked between David and Carver. “Can’t bet against my partner.” She sighed. “How much, Baker?”

“Well, you do have that nice crisp twenty on you.”

“I ain’t betting twenty on darts.”

“Afraid you’ll lose?”

“Hold on.” Dirk McGuire perked up. “You two can’t have all the action. The rest of us want in, too.”

“There’s no action to get in on,” Carver protested.

That cinched it for David. “Once again, Eliot proves he’s all talk.”

Carver’s eyes narrowed. “Okay then...”

David could tell Carver was fighting not to finish that sentence with David’s given name. At least he still showed some discretion.

“You think you’re so great, Lieutenant? Put your money where your mouth is. I win, I get your parking spot for a

SINS OF ARROGANCE

month.”

Like a Greek chorus, everyone watching oohed.

“And if I win?”

Carver hesitated.

“If I win, you have weekly sessions with the department counselor for a month.”

The bravado was back in place. “Seeing that you won’t, I think I can agree to that.”

“Pride before the fall, Eliot.”

“You haven’t seen me throw.”

Having already discarded his tie in the car, David slipped off his jacket and rolled up his sleeves. “Just be grateful it isn’t pool.”

“Think you’re pretty good with a stick and balls, do you?”

Their audience snickered, but David didn’t bat an eye. “I’ve left grown men weeping, Detective.”

They were skirting a line here, throwing such obvious innuendo around in front of co-workers. Orientation slams weren’t unheard of in their line of work, though, and as they were just this side of good taste and avoiding anything direct, they were safe.

That only made it more arousing.

It turned out that Carver wasn’t all talk. He did have some skill when it came to throwing darts. Not enough to challenge David seriously, but enough to make things interesting.

“Maybe I should’ve added washing my car into the deal,” Carver boasted after taking the second round in a row. They were playing best out of seven.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“You really need to learn when to stop.” David nailed a bull’s-eye and earned a look of wide-eyed surprise from Carver.

They only got wider when the other two hit in perfect proximity.

Scotty put her arm around Carver’s shoulder. “Did we mention that the lieutenant here is last year’s interdepartmental darts champion?”

Carver glared at her. “I think you forgot that part.”

“Whoops.” She didn’t look the least repentant. “You owe me that twenty back if you lose, partner.”

“I don’t owe you anything, traitor.”

She stuck her tongue out at him.

“Not too late to back out, Detective,” David offered.

“I never back down.”

“You ever think that might be part of your problem?”

“Leave the psychoanalysis for the counselors, Lieutenant. You suck at it.”

His dart bounced off the bull’s-eye wire.

“Nice try, Detective. Might want to work on your follow-through.”

Carver pursed his lips, biting back a likely “fuck you,” and threw. He landed just to the right of center. Close but not close enough, and David took that round, along with the next three.

“Dr. Rimera will be expecting you seven-thirty sharp on Monday.” David finished his beer and grabbed his coat.

“My shift doesn’t start until eight!”

“At least you’ll be on time for once.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver glowered.

"You leaving already?" Scotty asked.

"Sorry, Detective Scott. You really shouldn't have bet against me."

She grabbed a disgruntled looking Carver around the neck.

"Well, someone's gotta look out for Carver, don't they?"

"I suspect Detective Eliot isn't the type to appreciate being taken care of, isn't that right, Detective?"

"I don't know, with Scotty on the job, I don't mind so much," Carver replied.

No, that wasn't jealousy he felt.

Scotty shook her head and told him pointedly, "Remember Rick and his collection?"

"You mean the giant and his arsenal?"

She snorted. "Just wait until I tell him that."

They seemed to be taking no notice of him, so David took the opportunity to slip away quietly.

Carver had other ideas.

David had just unlocked his car when he heard Eliot's voice behind him. "Lieutenant."

"Detective." He didn't turn around and started to open his door when Carver's light but surprisingly solid weight settled against it, preventing him. "Detective, you will remove yourself from my car door at once."

"No, David, I don't think so."

Still, he didn't look at Carver. "This is neither the time nor the place."

"That's where you're wrong. There's no better time or

SINS OF ARROGANCE

place.” He snorted. “‘Time nor place.’ Jesus, you sound like my grandfather. Just how long have you had that stick up your ass?”

“Good night, Detective.” He yanked on the door again, hard enough to dislodge Carver momentarily.

Carver threw his full weight against it again, blocking his exit. “Not good night. Not just yet.” Then Carver was in front of him, trapping him against the car.

“You’re crossing a line, Detective Eliot. And you need to stand down now.”

“Off duty, David.” He ground his hips forward, eliciting an unintentional groan from David in response. “And, as you’ve already established, off duty there are no lines.”

“There are still lines, Carver. You just can’t see them.” With a skill born of years of police training, David grabbed Carver and slammed him face first onto the hood of the car, ignoring the dangerous temptation of Carver’s well-displayed backside. “Until you learn that, until you trust others to tell you what the limits are and stay within them, you’re never going to amount to anything.”

“I suppose you’re the one to teach me that.”

“Someone needs to. I’m not having you fuck up this department like you have everything else in your life.”

Carver snorted. “You give me way too much credit.”

With a last aggravated shake, he released Carver and opened the car door. “Go home, Carver. You aren’t going to find what you’re looking for here.”

Carver turned to face him. “What do you know about what

SINS OF ARROGANCE

I'm looking for?"

"You aren't that hard to read, Detective."

"Fuck you, Lieutenant. I know you want me."

"This isn't about sex. The sex is a tool to get you under control. Anything more than that is..."

"Unprofessional?"

He glared at Carver. "Goodnight."

"Wait." Carver's angry voice had softened, making David pause. "I have been good lately. Haven't beaten anyone up or anything. Don't I deserve something for that?"

So tempting. "You've got your job, Carver. Be grateful for it."

This time when he got in the car, Carver didn't try to stop him.

David pulled away, tuning out the part of his brain that wished Carver had.

CHAPTER 9

Carver wasn't obsessed. He didn't waste his time on obsession. However, he would admit he was just slightly fixated on David Logan. Every so often, he could crack through that stoic façade, but never long enough to make the good lieutenant lose control. There had to be a way to get power back in this situation, a weakness to exploit.

Nothing.

They still had their weekly sparring sessions, but David was professional the entire time, avoiding unnecessary close contact, goading Carver on like always, but effectively avoiding the trap himself.

"You're a fucking robot," Carver told him during one

SINS OF ARROGANCE

session. No one could shut down that completely.

David just laughed, then landed a one-two punch that dropped Carver onto his ass.

The next week, David didn't show. Carver stood in the empty training room for a full ten minutes before the fact finally registered.

"Oh, no, you don't." If David wasn't coming to him, Carver was going to David. He just needed to find him.

He started with Watson, the night sergeant. "Evening, Darcy. Is Lieutenant Logan still around?"

"No, he signed out about"—she checked her book—"half an hour ago. What are you still doing here?"

"Just putting in a little overtime. Off the books," he added before she could check her log. "He didn't say where he was going, did he?"

"Old Ramrod?" She snorted. "Hardly. Although I did hear you guys got him to loosen up enough to buy drinks. Something about ice water in hell."

"Yeah, that's us. Bringing about Armageddon. Thanks."

Next stop, Ramrod's office. He got a couple of odd looks from the night shift when he let himself in, but at this point, he didn't care.

Unsurprisingly, the desk was clean. Not just clean, but clear. The computer monitor sat there, a penholder, stapler and tape dispenser, but that was all. No pictures, no sticky notes with reminders, no day planner. Bastard probably kept it all in his robot head. He went through the drawers quickly, but there was none of the usual clutter of any other person's desk: no

SINS OF ARROGANCE

personal bills or printouts, not even any restaurant menus to give him an idea where David might frequent. There was nothing here to give him any idea who David was when he wasn't being Lieutenant Logan.

Maybe he never was anyone else.

No, he definitely was someone else. The man in the showers a few weeks ago wasn't the starched lieutenant Carver had come to know. He had been, well, human. And ever so briefly, again when he joined them for drinks. There was a man beneath the well-oiled machine, and Carver was going to get to it, come hell or high water.

Carver's eyes fell on the neat stack of phone directories under the phone. The bastard was probably unlisted, but it was as good a shot as any.

Eight D. Logans. *Fan-fucking-tastic*. And no guarantee that anyone of them was the man he was after.

After tearing out the page, Carver slammed the book shut and carefully restacked the pile. Time to play detective.

* * *

Carver sat behind the wheel of his Mustang, watching the dark house. He'd gone the easy route and just called the eight numbers. Three of them had been answered, two had connected to voice mail systems belonging to women, one to an older man with a gravelly voice on his message, and two had rung without being answered. He'd driven to the first one, over in the North Side, but given that one up as soon as he saw the tricycle in the front yard. There was no way David Logan

SINS OF ARROGANCE

was a family man, no matter how private he was.

Which had led him to this house in the East End, in the artsy neighborhood of Friendship, and another place he would not have figured as home to David Logan.

The house was big, three floors at least and most likely a basement as well. There was enough of a yard in the front that Carver was willing to bet there was a carriage house in the back. Even considering the lower housing values in the area due to thirty years as a slum lord heaven, this place was well outside the range of a cop's salary. Carver began to think his detective skills had failed him.

No point in worrying about that now. He climbed out of his car and crossed the street. Time for the door-to-door approach.

Carver rang the bell and waited. He should probably work on a cover story. Really, though, what was the point?

He was debating the merits of ringing again when the noise of locks being undone came from the other side. A moment later, the door opened, revealing a stony-faced David Logan.

"Done all right for ourselves, haven't we?" Carver said by way of greeting.

David's eyes narrowed. "You really have no concept of lines, do you, Eliot?"

"You stood me up tonight."

Obviously exhausted, David rubbed his face. "I'm sorry. I meant to tell you and it slipped my mind."

"You always sit around in a dark house?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Only when I’m asleep.”

“Already? It’s only...” Carver looked at his watch for the first time all night. “Shit. Eleven-forty-five. Sorry.”

“No, you aren’t. Are we done? I’d like to go back to sleep.”

He should apologize and go home. Morning was going to come too soon as it was. But he had come all this way and never just walked away. “Why?”

“Sorry?”

“Why did you bail on me tonight?” Christ, he sounded like a jilted girlfriend.

“I had things to do. Contrary to popular belief, my job isn’t my life.”

“David, if you had a life, you wouldn’t have been in bed already.”

“Nice life *you’ve* got, Carver, stalking co-workers.”

“I dropped by to find out why you stood me up. That’s not stalking.”

“Did you track me down through the phone book?”

Um...

“Go home, Carver. Get some sleep like a sane person.” He started to close the door.

Carver didn’t catch it until it was almost too late. “You’re a chicken shit. That’s why, isn’t it?”

“Carver, not everything I do is about you.”

“No?” He stepped up on the doorsill, taking a chance by curling his hand around the back of David’s neck. “Tell me you don’t want this.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Then he took another chance.

It was a slow kiss, more exploratory than demanding, and Carver felt it right down to the bottom of his boots, even if David didn't. David's mouth was warm and soft from sleep, malleable under Carver's mobile kiss. David's hands brushed up Carver's chest in an intimacy that nearly had Carver on his knees, then came to rest on his shoulders. He didn't surrender, but he didn't pull away, which was enough for Carver.

So Carver pressed his advantage, deepening the kiss and moving closer. David's flannel sleep pants concealed nothing. David couldn't deny this if he wanted to.

"Invite me in," Carver murmured against David's lips.

"No." But he made no move to get away.

"Goddamn it, David, you want this as much as I do. Don't be such a fucking martyr and ask me in."

"What if I do?" His mouth never moved away from Carver's, each word a caress in itself. "What if I let you into my house, and we fuck like animals all night? Then what?"

Carver groaned at the thought. "Jesus, who cares? Let me in!"

David's mouth opened, and suddenly Carver was lost in a surge of desire David's demanding, commanding, overwhelming kiss inspired. When David pulled away, Carver couldn't think.

"I care. Goodnight, Detective." It took only a slight shove to trip Carver off the doorsill and shut the door in his face.

He stood there, dumbstruck and staring at the door as it sunk it what had just happened. "Goddamn it! David!" He

SINS OF ARROGANCE

surged at the door, kicking and pounding on it in a lust-fueled fury. “Open this fucking door! We’re not done here!”

The porch light went out.

Carver redoubled his efforts. “David! Let me in, you sonofabitch!”

“Shut up!” a shrill voice cut across the dark street. “People are trying to sleep!”

“Fuck off,” Carver shouted back and kicked the door again.

“I’m calling the cops!”

He whirled and cursed into the night, “I *am* the fucking cops!”

It was tempting to break the door down, but if David hadn’t already called in a cruiser, the nosy neighbor would. He was pissed and he was desperate and he really didn’t have any other choice.

He slammed back into his car, ground it to life and peeled out in a squeal of tires that took two months off their life. It did nothing to satisfy his aching erection or the feeling David was just fucking around with him.

CHAPTER 10

David was beginning to wonder if maybe he hadn't made a mistake last night. He knew not inviting Carver in had been the right choice. But from the way Carver was prowling around the station, surly and spoiling for a fight, David thought that maybe right wasn't the best choice. He could have taken one for the team, as it were. Hell, he might have actually gotten some sleep out of it. *Right*. Things would have only ended up more fucked up than they currently were.

He was beginning to question the wisdom of his plan. Carver had seemed to respond well to it initially, but now they were coming up to the wall of his restraint, David could feel it fraying. Carver was still trying to get his own way rather than

SINS OF ARROGANCE

trusting David to give him what he needed. Maybe David had held out too long, withheld the carrot while applying the stick, to use a woefully appropriate metaphor. It was the only way he knew how to do this, though.

That his own desires were tangled up in it didn't help.

Thankfully, Commander Montgomery gave them both a distraction.

Morning call was its usual rowdy time as Sergeant Komerski brought them up to speed and handed out assignments for the day. Everyone quieted noticeably when Montgomery took her place at the podium. "Good morning, children," he said with a wry smile.

As one, the entire room singsonged back, "Good morning, Commander Montgomery," before breaking out laughing.

This was a trait David envied in the commander and wished he could emulate himself—the ability to connect with the men without ever losing their respect. Not one single person in the room thought less of the man, even when he broke out in a playful grin.

"Nice to see everyone's in good spirits. And thank you, Sergeant, for keeping the rabble in line."

There was a mixture of booing and applause that quickly quieted. "As you may have noticed, stats for carjackings in our zone have gone up dramatically in the last few months. Intel is still looking for patterns in times, types of vehicles and frequency, but as you can probably guess, we're suspecting this is an organized effort. I would ask all the patrols to keep an eye out for any new towing or auto body activity on your

SINS OF ARROGANCE

routes, and, Detectives, question more closely in both carjackings and general car thefts. Just because no one was in the car when it was taken doesn't mean it might not be connected.

"Every piece of extra information we can provide Intel will make all our jobs easier. Any questions?"

There weren't.

"All right, then. Thank you all for your attention."

Everyone was shoving chairs back and heading out even before Montgomery stepped down from the podium.

"Carjackings...at least it makes a change from domestic cases. Christ, I'm getting sick of playing marriage counselor," David overheard Carver remark to Scotty.

"Anything so long as you stop prowling around like a caged tiger. What's with you today?" she asked.

Carver glared at David. "Just a bad night all around."

"Well, cheer up. Maybe we'll find the guy and you can let out some of that aggression."

David almost felt sorry for the perp.

* * *

There were no breaks in the case that day, the next or the many that followed thereafter. So things continued on, with David carefully avoiding Carver and feeling like he was watching a ticking bomb.

Then it was time for their weekly sparring session, and Carver cornered David in his office a half hour before shift was over.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“So what’s the excuse this week?”

“Excuse?”

“You aren’t going to show tonight,” he growled. “You could at least give me the respect of trying to make up a decent lie this time.”

“Who says I’m not going to show?”

“I say.”

“Then I guess you’ll be disappointed.”

Carver actually hesitated. “You’re kidding.”

David shrugged. “Unless you have other plans. I’d understand if you did.” Unlike some people, his tone implied.

“I was going to be fighting someone tonight either way.” His grin was feral, his eyes glittering a threat. “It was just a question of how much alcohol would be involved.”

“You drink too much, Detective.” He turned back to his paperwork. “You should talk to someone about that.”

“I do. My bartender.”

David glared at him over the top of the file. “Dismissed, Detective.”

* * *

Carver was waiting for him in the training room, already warming up on the bag. David really didn’t think Carver’s promptness was a good sign.

“At least I won’t have to worry about getting hit,” David said as he joined Carver.

“You should be so lucky.”

“You have no focus tonight, Carver. We both know how

SINS OF ARROGANCE

well that always turns out for you.” He slipped his hands into his gloves.

“Oh, I’m feeling really focused at the moment.”

David turned and almost didn’t get his head out of the way as Carver’s first punch whiffed past his ear with enough force to make David take this much more seriously. Carver had brought all his frustrations to the mat, both professional and sexual, and he was determined to get some of his own back.

Fortunately, David had some of that, too.

He buried his fist in Carver’s stomach before Carver could pull back enough to block, driving him out into the center of the mat. “Poor sportsmanship to start before your opponent’s ready, Carver.”

“Fuck sportsmanship.” There wasn’t any of the playful, challenging banter this time. Carver was pissed, and that gave him all the focus he needed. David blocked a right, dodged an upper cut and walked right into the right cross Carver had been setting up. His head rang from it, but Carver didn’t give him any time to recover.

A quick one-two followed and David was on his knees.

“Time,” he called, resisting the urge to cover his head. He couldn’t show weakness.

Carver had been ready to hit him again and only just pulled out of it. “You always do call it when you’re starting to lose.” Tugging his gloves off, he turned to stalk toward the showers.

David reacted on pure instinct. He lunged, tackling Carver to the mat.

“What the fuck?” Carver tried to buck him off, but once he

SINS OF ARROGANCE

got rid of his gloves, David managed to wrestle him into submission.

"We're barely five minutes in. Do you honestly think I'd call it this early?"

"I was kicking your ass."

"No, you were *being* an ass."

"Fuck you." Carver began to struggle again. However, after shifting his weight, David put a quick end to that. "Fuck you," Carver said again, but lay there.

"I think we've already established that fact. Now how about you tell me why you're acting like a maniac." *Aside from the obvious.*

Far be it from Carver to avoid the obvious. He bucked up, his hard-on undeniable. "I'm tired of playing by your rules all the time."

"Then quit."

"You'd like that, wouldn't you? Then you could go back to being a nice, safe little robot."

The accusation stung. "Those are your choices, Carver. Play by my rules or quit."

"No, I'm not quitting, but I sure as hell better get something in return. Even dogs get rewarded for obedience."

"Are you saying you want to be treated like a dog?" The thought held way more appeal than it should.

"You know what I mean, David. You gave me a very nice example a few weeks ago of what I get when I'm good and what I get when I'm bad." He smirked. "Then you chickened out. Are you sure you're not the one who wants to quit?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David ignored the challenge and the subtle, inviting movements of Carver beneath him. “I’d think getting to hit me and keep your job would be reward enough.”

“I’d think getting to fuck me however you wanted would be invitation enough. Christ, David, I don’t care anymore if I’m good or bad. Just give me *something*.”

It would be so easy to give Carver that something, lean down and— David crawled off Carver and got to his feet.

“Coward,” Carver said as David retrieved his gloves.

“Restraint.” David faced Carver again. “Now, are we done? Or are you ready to keep going?”

Carver rolled to his feet with animal grace and snatched up his gloves. “Since that’s the only satisfaction you’re going to give me tonight, yeah, I’m ready.”

Much to David’s surprise, he found Carver improving. While earlier he’d landed punches due to sheer unpredictability, now he landed them with precision. Instead of baiting Carver like he usually did, David found he actually had to work at avoiding Carver and getting his own punches in.

“Have you been practicing?”

Carver snorted. “Please. Who are you talking to?” Right cross, upper cut, feint, and a left jab that David just avoided.

This time when David called “Time” nearly an hour had passed and they were both breathless.

“Thank God.” Carver groaned and pitched his gloves into the bin. “Fucking machine.”

The fucking machine wanted to collapse. Instead, David

SINS OF ARROGANCE

said, “You know, you can call it if it’s too much.”

“Like I’d give you the satisfaction.”

David had stripped and turned on the shower before he realized he was in the regular showers, having followed Carver in.

“In need of an extra cold shower this evening, Lieutenant?” Carver took up residence in the stall beside him.

“Off duty, Carver.”

“Might as well be fucking on, with you and your goddamned restraint.”

It was too late to turn around, so he would just have to brazen it out. Very careful not to look at Carver in all his wet nudity, David focused on washing quickly. “If you had more restraint, you might get further.”

“In my job? Or with you?”

“There’s nowhere to go with me, Carver.” He deliberately began washing his hair.

“Yeah, because you’ve already been there.”

His eyes closed against the soap, David’s only warning was the warmth of Carver’s hand brushing down his stomach before it cupped David’s balls with fierce assertion. “Wouldn’t mind going there myself.”

“Don’t, Carver.” That only missed stern by a mile.

Carver glided his other hand along David’s cock, which grew harder with Carver’s continued attention. Cold showers were an utter myth.

“You sure about that, David?” Carver pressed flush against his back. “I think you’re confused.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Then Carver began to stroke him, and David was forced to brace himself against the wall.

“Tell me to stop, David,” Carver whispered against his ear. “Tell me you don’t want me to fuck you.”

“It’s not the same thing,” David ground out.

Chuckling, Carver tightened his grip and worked David with more intent.

He didn’t need to tell Carver to stop, not when he could shove the man off and kick his ass. He should stop him somehow.

Fuck, he already hated himself. “Don’t stop.”

Carver’s tongue lashed along David’s neck, as intimate as the hand around his cock. “You won’t regret it. I promise.”

He already did, but it felt so good. Carver’s palm was slightly calloused, just rough enough to add glorious friction to each stroke. Carver’s own cock lay against David’s ass cheek, prominent and unrelenting, promising exquisite things to come. David was lost, and this reckless, out of control man was making it seem worth it.

“I got four tickets to the Steelers home opener. You want in?”

Voices in the locker room did what the icy cold water couldn’t. In an instant, Carver was on the other side of the stall, faced away from the door and whistling innocently. David blinked hard, trying to focus on the fact he was suddenly alone, cold water pounding where Carver’s warm skin had just been.

David finished washing, switched off the water, and

SINS OF ARROGANCE

managed to grab up a towel before he ran into the other officers.

“The water not working in the good showers, Lieutenant?” Baker asked when their paths crossed.

“No, it’s fine. I just didn’t believe it was so bad over here.”

Aubrey joined them, smirking. “You do now, I bet.”

David grimaced. “And then some. See you tomorrow.” He headed into the locker room proper. No more sparring sessions with Carver. That had been too fucking close for comfort.

CHAPTER 11

Carver could still feel David's cock in his hand.

Even now, sitting behind the wheel of an unmarked with Scotty in the seat next to him, he could feel the solid weight of it, every vein standing out against the fine surface, responsive to his every caress.

The thought of it was going to kill him.

He flexed his hand, trying to drive the sensation away. It didn't help that the taste of David's skin lingered on his tongue.

"So what do you think?"

Scotty brought him back to the confines of the car.
"Hmm?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

"I knew you weren't listening to me." She shook her head. "I said, what do you think about competing for the station in the intra-department league?"

"Doing what?"

"Oh, we're backing up that far in the conversation, huh? In boxing, you idiot. You and Lieutenant Logan have been working out so much, I thought maybe you'd like to put some of that aggression to good use, department pride and all that."

"And a chance for you to win back your twenty dollars."

"Well, yeah."

He grinned. "Might not be such a bad idea. Though you should consider wagering more than twenty."

"You're that sure of a bet, are you, Carver?"

Movement across the street and three cars down caught his attention. "Radio in, Scotty. I think our carjacker finally slipped up."

Carver watched a young man, clean cut and collegiate looking, walk down the line of parked cars, moving not quite hesitantly, but not with the sure steps of someone who knew which car was his. More like someone checking out which one to steal. As soon as Scotty finished her report, they both got out of the car, keeping it casual, but never taking their eyes off him.

He didn't notice them until the last minute, his slim jim already under the window seal. "Lock yourself out?" Carver asked jovially.

The thief jerked and stepped in front of the door. "Uh, yeah, but I've got it now. Thanks."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“You sure?” Carver pulled out his badge. “I can probably help.”

The guy bolted.

“Why do they always run?” Carver grumbled as he and Scotty took off after the perp.

“Come on, Carver, you were dying for a run today, weren’t you?”

Carver just frowned and picked up his pace. Christ, maybe taking up running wasn’t such a bad idea.

They turned down a narrow, rundown street and a flash of metal in the jacker’s hand caught his eye. Much smaller and considerably more deadly than the slim jim.

“Scotty, get down!” He dragged her behind a nearby car a moment before the kid turned and fired.

The gunshot ricocheted down the street, but Carver was already after the guy at a dead run. Scotty cursed, and Carver could hear her struggling to get up.

The jacker turned down an alley with Carver close at his heels, making a beeline for an empty lot at the end. Fortunately, a chain link fence stood in his way. The perp took three steps to climb the fence surrounding it, but Carver just vaulted it, using the momentum to crash into the other man, bearing them both to the ground.

“Son of a bitch.” He slammed his fist into the side of the guy’s head. “Think you’re such a big man with a gun, do you?” He struck again and heard bones crunch under his fist. “Not so big now, are you, you fucker?”

“You have the right to remain silent.” Scotty’s own

SINS OF ARROGANCE

revolver cocked close to Carver's ear. "Get off him, Carver. You have the right to an attorney."

"Fuck that." Carver pulled back again.

"Carver, get the fuck off him. Now."

Suddenly they weren't alone, as three squad cars screeched into the lot, uniformed officers swarming out with their sidearms drawn. With a growl of frustration, Carver stood up and backed away.

"You're a fucking idiot, you know that, Carver?" Scotty swore at him as the uniforms led the carjacker away. "You could lose your badge for that. One more and it would have been brutality."

"He shot at you."

"Yeah, that's what the bad guys do. So what kind of guy are you?"

It was a stupid question on her part, but he understood she was sincere. She just didn't know him well enough.

His first thought, though, wasn't fear of a brutality charge. It had finally happened, and he hadn't even intended it. He'd lost control, and David was going to have his ass for it. And not in the good way.

They were silent on the ride back, the jacker loaded into one of the black-and-whites. It took twenty minutes to book him, by which time his lawyer had shown up, looking harried and aggravated.

Probably pulled away from an afternoon round of golf. Carver's heart bled. The evidence was overwhelming for attempted theft, but what they really wanted was a link to the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

bigger ring. However, the kid wasn't talking.

After three hours of interrogation, the attorney called a halt. "My client has told you everything he knows, Detectives. He's confessed to the crime and told you all he knows. It was a joy ride gone wrong, nothing more. This interview is over."

Carver and Scotty waited while the guard escorted the kid out, followed by the lawyer. It wasn't until the door shut behind them that Carver kicked the table with a curse. "Son of a bitch! That fucker's going to get off with a misdemeanor and community fucking service. Joy ride, my ass! He had a fucking pro's tool!"

"It happens, Carver. You know that. All we can do now is keep an eye on the kid and see if he leads us anywhere."

"Scotty, I swear to God—"

The room's intercom crackled to life. "Detective Scott," David's voice came through cold and professional, "may I see you in my office, please?"

They both looked toward the two-way glass, knowing he stood there behind their reflections. Scotty gave a thumbs up, while Carver turned his back on the window and winced. "Shit, here it comes."

She patted his shoulder. "I'll see what I can do."

Carver knew it wouldn't help.

He followed her up from holding and headed to their desks to start on the paperwork for the bust, biding his time until Logan called him on the carpet. Scotty emerged ten minutes later.

"He doesn't want to see you," she informed him when he

SINS OF ARROGANCE

started to get up.

“What?”

“Logan wanted my confirmation of events.”

“That’s it?”

“Our carjacker isn’t going to risk trying to bring charges. And you did stop. You’ve gotten lucky again, Carver.” Surprisingly, she seemed relieved by it.

He didn’t feel lucky.

CHAPTER 12

David felt betrayed.

He shouldn't. Carver did what Carver would, without thought or remorse. Even so, David had really thought he'd gotten through to him. The fact he could do something like this felt like betrayal. Like his physical desire for David wasn't enough to make him change his ways.

Like he didn't want David after all.

David crushed that thought down. This wasn't about his wants and needs or Carver's. This was about helping him be a better cop by using his libido against him. If that hadn't worked, David needed to find something else, or give up on the man entirely.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Lieutenant, my office.”

He suspected the latter wouldn’t be an option.

He closed the door behind him in the commander’s office and took a seat.

“What happened out there today?” Montgomery asked without preamble.

David started to recite the particulars of the case, but Montgomery interrupted him, leaning forward on the desk. “Not that. What the hell happened with Eliot? I thought you had him under control.”

“So did I.” Maybe if he’d let Carver have his way the other night... No, Carver had been getting his way for far too long. He’d only started to show some of his potential when David forced him into line. Maybe he needed to try harder.

“Lieutenant?”

“Sorry, sir. I thought it was working. Especially with him seeing the psychologist on Mondays.”

Montgomery smiled. “I was impressed with that move. Speaking of which, you’ll be representing the department in the tournament this year.” Light and then back to business. “Is there any more you might be able to do with Eliot?”

David had plenty of ideas of what more he’d like to do with Carver and to Carver, very little of which involved curbing his behavior. “Channeling his aggression really seemed like the best bet. That’s not something you can eliminate. Unfortunately, it’s probably a matter of it being too little too late. Carver...Eliot’s bad habits are too ingrained.”

“So you’re giving up on him?” Montgomery’s tone was

SINS OF ARROGANCE

indiscernible. It could have been a casual question or an accusation. Sometimes you just couldn't tell with the commander.

"I think he may have given up on me, sir. A backslide like this..."

"Rome wasn't built in a day, Lieutenant. Give the man a break. The fact this is the first incident in three months says a lot. Whatever you were doing was working. Maybe he just needs a reminder."

Things had been going well until David had started second-guessing himself, his motivations. But if the method worked, why question what was behind it? There was no avoiding Carver, but if David kept things on his terms... "You have a point, Commander. Perhaps we both need a reminder."

Montgomery gave him a curious look.

"My methods have grown...lax in recent weeks. Improvement breeds complacency."

"Now you're starting to worry me." Montgomery shook his head. "Relax, Logan. Eliot's suspended for the next three anyway, so you'll have time to work on your methods. In the meantime, see what kind of damage control you can do. He's a good cop, and that bust today could be an important lead in this case. Let's see if we can get him back on track, hm?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir." He knew when he'd been dismissed and headed to his office for his jacket. He hesitated, then grabbed a pair of handcuffs out of the drawer as well.

He stopped at the desk on the way out. "Watson, can you log me as off the next couple of days? I've got some PTO I

SINS OF ARROGANCE

have to use up before it goes away.”

“Sure thing, Lieutenant. Anything fun planned?”

He didn’t change expression. “Depends on your definition of fun.”

CHAPTER 13

Carver knew he should be glad that all he got out of this was a three-day suspension. He could have been out on his ass altogether, all of his second chances more than used up. He'd been doing so well and... *Fuck it, what's done is done.* He had never dwelled on things before and he sure as hell wasn't about to start.

Heading to his kitchen, he retrieved a beer from the fridge. He'd just cracked the can and was about to crash on his sofa in front of whatever mindless drivel was on TV when there was a knock at his apartment door. He wasn't shocked to find David on the other side.

"Lieutenant."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“David,” he corrected, stepping inside. “We’re off duty, Carver.”

“I’m beginning to think you never are.”

“You don’t think, Carver.” David grabbed Carver’s beer and took a long swallow, his eyes never leaving Carver’s face.

“Fine. Whatever. Is there anything else?” Carver frowned as David pretty much finished off his beer. “Besides stealing my alcohol.”

“You have better taste than I thought. Though you really should get bottles.” David handed him the empty and headed deeper into the apartment, giving it a disinterested once over. It wasn’t anything impressive—beige walls and modern furniture with a couple of black-and-white prints of the city to break up the blankness of the walls. Just a step above “I could care less” bachelor chic.

“What, you figured I lived in some hole?” Carver asked, tired of waiting on David to get things moving.

David’s fine lips curved in a satisfied smirk. “It wouldn’t have surprised me.”

“Happy to exceed your expectations. But that still doesn’t tell me anything about why you’re here.”

David walked across the room to stand almost toe to toe with Carver. His eyes held a dark intensity when he replied, “Discipline, Carver. Have you completely forgotten the warning I gave you in the showers?”

Carver had done anything but forget. Christ, he’d tried everything he could to remind David. “Was that a warning? I thought it was a booty call.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“I don’t bring handcuffs to a booty call.” To emphasize his statement, he pulled a pair of stainless steel cuffs out of his pocket and held them up for Carver to see.

He was assaulted by memories of being chained to the showerhead, David pounding into him... *Fuck*. A simple metal object shouldn’t have so much power over him. Ignoring his arousal, Carver said disdainfully, “What makes you think I’m going to go along with this? In my own home, no less.”

“Because I know you, Carver. You want it. You haven’t stopped thinking about it.” He almost sounded pleased. “I still expect one hell of a fight. You’re not the type of man who goes down easy.”

Carver held his ground. “I’m not going down at all.”

“You’ll do whatever I tell you to.”

“Or what? You’ll have my badge? Thanks, I needed grounds for a harassment suit.”

He was startled when David shoved him backwards. “Off. Duty. This has nothing to do with the job. This has to do with you learning to control yourself. You could’ve killed that man today. You’re completely out of control, and you don’t even care.”

Carver shoved back. “Why the hell do you care?”

“Because someone should. And I’ve been there.”

The stony faced, unwrinkled lieutenant hadn’t known an out-of-control moment in his life. People like him were born in control. “Right.”

Setting the bracelets on the table, David slipped out of his

SINS OF ARROGANCE

suit coat, folding it with deliberate care before throwing it over the back of the couch. He unbuttoned his cuffs and rolled his sleeves up with practiced precision. “It takes years of practice, Carver. You can’t make something of yourself being a hothead.”

His right fist slammed into Carver’s gut with blinding speed, sending him stumbling to the ground.

“When you focus all that anger, all that rage, you can use it instead of having it use you.”

Enraged, Carver surged up from the ground to slam into David.

David sidestepped him neatly and elbow-checked him, knocking him back down.

“You son of a—”

David didn’t even wait for him to get back up, grabbing Carver’s arm out from underneath him and wrenching it up behind his back. “You see?” He bent low to speak in a dangerously soft voice. “I can stop you. I can control you. All without beating the shit out of you.”

Carver tried to twist out of his grip, but David only yanked his arm up farther.

“There’ll be none of that.” His breath puffed warmly against the vulnerable skin of Carver’s neck. “You have to earn your freedom, Carver. Prove to me that you can handle it.”

“Or what, you’re going to keep me locked up until I do?”

“Three days’ administrative leave. No one will miss you. I can, you know. And there wouldn’t be a damned thing you

SINS OF ARROGANCE

could do about it.”

“You’re forgetting one thing, David.”

“What’s that?”

Carver slammed his head back. David released him with a cry of surprise and what Carver hoped was pain. Spinning, he tackled David to the floor.

“I fight dirty.” He lunged down and caught David’s mouth in a brutal, punishing kiss.

David fought him, and Carver savored it, pinning him to the worn carpet while he plundered David’s mouth, the friction of their bodies rubbing together racing straight to Carver’s cock. Suddenly David flipped him and began to pull away, but Carver continued the roll, trapping him beneath him again, and gave him a feral grin. “Nice try, Lieutenant.”

“*David*,” he snapped, trying and failing to buck Carver off. For once, Carver had the advantage.

“Don’t much like having the tables turned, do you?” His eyes caught on the handcuffs resting innocently on the coffee table. The trouble would be going for them without giving up his current advantage.

David smirked up at him. “Give it your best shot, Carver. I’ll always come out on top.”

Carver looked from the cuffs to David’s gray, mocking eyes. He didn’t telegraph it, but nonetheless when he lashed out to grab the cuffs, David was there as well, using leverage and surprise to throw Carver off, reaching for the steel at the same time Carver did.

They both came up with one bracelet.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David yanked, and suddenly Carver was in his arms, this time the recipient rather than the instigator of a brutal, demanding kiss. David's free hand came up to tangle in Carver's hair as Carver responded, mouth open, tongue thrusting in demand, in promise. Neither of them relaxed their hold on those cuffs for an instant.

Time to play dirtier. Carver worked his free hand between them, down to the waistband of David's finely tailored trousers. He got his fingers just behind David's belt when David broke the kiss with a rough, "Oh, no, you don't," and tripped Carver onto his back. Carver managed to retain his hold on both belt and cuffs.

It was a struggle, but he unfastened David's belt and popped the button before David yanked his wrist away.

"You're no fun, you know that?" He tried to twist free, but David had physics on his side again.

Bastard.

"It's not about fun, Carver. The sooner you figure that out—"

Carver thrust his hips upward, grinding their cocks together. "Feels like you're having fun to me."

"Why, because I'm hard?" Matching Carver's motions, David ground down, making Carver groan. "I get hard for a good cup of coffee in the morning. Don't flatter yourself."

"Hey, if all it takes is coffee, there's a Starbucks around the corner." He kept rocking, growing desperate for the friction they'd created.

David's knee came up, dangerously close to Carver's

SINS OF ARROGANCE

genitals, pinning Carver's hips to the floor. "You'll have to do better than that."

"I can't do much at the moment," Carver said wryly. "Except talk. But maybe that's what you want. For me to talk." He tested David's hold on him. Yeah, looked like talking was all he had at the moment. "What should we talk about? Oh, I know. How about what a good cocksucker you are? Quite the skill, I'll grant you. Did you climb the ranks on your knees, David?"

David's eyes narrowed, but his voice remained even. "Hard work and long hours, Carver. Two things I doubt you know much about."

"Yes, I'm sure it is hard work, kneeling down for the sergeants and bending over for the captains and doing unspeakable things to jaded lieutenants. Late nights spent doing whatever it took to curry favor."

The ferocious grin on David's face was enough to make Carver regret his words. "But I'm not the one under a jaded lieutenant at the moment, am I, Carver? Too bad for you it's not going to help your career any."

"Which means I have absolutely no incentive to try to please you."

"There's plenty of incentive. You have no idea how miserable I can make your life. Off duty."

"But not on?"

"You don't need my help there." The chain of the cuffs cut into Carver's fingers where he fought to hold on as David twisted to free them. "At the rate you're going, you won't

SINS OF ARROGANCE

even be a cop anymore in another month or so.”

Carver snarled and tried to buck David off with a lack of success. “Screw you, Logan.”

“Is that an invitation?”

“That’s what you intend to do, isn’t it? You sure as hell didn’t need an invitation last time.”

“So you’re saying I can take whatever I want, however I want?”

The question distracted Carver just enough David won the struggle with the handcuffs.

“You make it so easy, Carver.” David was entirely too smug as he snapped one end of the cuffs around Carver’s wrist.

Carver acted on impulse, grabbing at the cuffs in a fit of desperation. No one was more surprised than he to hear the *snick* of steel on steel as the bracelet closed around David’s wrist.

Startled, David tugged on the chain that now connected the two of them. “What do you think this will accomplish?”

Unwilling to admit it had been an accident, Carver gloated. “Standoff. Now we’re both stuck.”

“The key’s in my jacket pocket.”

“Your jacket that’s over there?”

David glanced over to where his coat draped over the back of the couch, then back down at Carver. “You think you’re pretty clever.”

“Yeah, I think I am.”

With a sudden move, David flipped Carver over,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

wrenching his cuffed arm up his back and trapping it between them, David's erection now grinding against Carver's ass. Crap, he was going to be taking it again.

To be fair, he liked being fucked, a lot. However, it was the principle of the matter. Letting David fuck him again would keep the balance uneven, and Carver didn't like that at all. His current position, unfortunately, left him with no options. Well, next to none.

"Always from behind with you, is it?" he asked, grinding up into David. Christ, the man had to be pure muscle; he was a solid, undeniable weight. "Can't bear to look the man you're fucking in the face, can you?"

"You really think I'm an idiot, don't you, Carver?" The warmth of David's breath on the back of his neck made Carver's hair stand on end. "I don't think for one moment you're going to lie there and take it. No matter how good our cocks would feel against each other."

That imagery Carver hadn't even considered, and the thought of it made his mouth water. "What if I did?"

"You like being in control too much, Carver. You couldn't lie there and take it, even if you wanted to."

The challenge was clear. And Carver had always been a sucker for a challenge. "What have you got to lose? You've got physics and self-control on your side. Or don't you think you can handle it?"

"That's not the point."

"No? Then what is?"

"The point is"—David's tongue stroked the tendon on the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

back of Carver's neck, making him groan—"that you have to learn how to control yourself. And I'm going to teach you."

"I can control myself. If I want to."

"Not likely."

"Oh, yeah?" Carver stopped struggling. "I'll prove it."

"How?"

David was just a dead weight behind him; it'd be easy enough to throw him off, but Carver didn't. He just lay there. "Let me see you when you fuck me, and I'll let you do whatever you want."

"What guarantees that you're not playing me?"

"Absolutely nothing. I'd say my word, but we both know how little that's worth." More seductive than resistant now, he rolled his ass against David's hard-on. "But wouldn't you like to know what it's like when I play nice?"

"This isn't about the sex either, Carver." Nevertheless, David let him turn over, settling in the crook of his legs. The pressure felt as good as Carver had expected.

"Maybe not. But the sex is going to be incredible."

David temptingly coasted his lips over Carver's. "Let me get the key."

"No." Before he could move, Carver caught David's shoulders, keeping him in place. "You don't trust me. Leave them on. A reminder to both of us."

"Tiger by the tail." David's voice dropped to a register that made Carver's skin vibrate.

"Yeah." Shoving his hand up under David's shirt, which had worked loose of his slacks during the struggle, Carver

SINS OF ARROGANCE

drew claws down the bare skin along David's spine. "But which one of us is the tiger?"

David smiled with too many teeth. "Easy. It's whichever one of us is the more dangerous." He thrust his hips up in mimicry of what was to come.

Perhaps David's control wasn't as natural as it seemed. The idea held far too much appeal for Carver's comfort.

He slipped his hand beneath the waistbands of David's trousers and boxers—no, briefs, definitely briefs—and dug his blunt nails into the firm muscle there. David had a very nice ass, and Carver decided that somehow, whatever it took, he was going to get a go at it, have the lieutenant at his mercy. But he could bide his time.

"What are you waiting on, David?"

"Who says I'm waiting?" He teased again at Carver's mouth before drifting along his jaw line back toward his ear. "Since you have so much control, I think I'm just going to take...my...time." Each word was accentuated by a suckle, a nip, and a slow, swirling lick that would make Carver crazy if he let it.

He fought down the need and caressed David's back. "My floor isn't the best place for a slow seduction."

"I didn't pick the location." David started making his way down Carver's neck.

Carver didn't rise to the bait. "There are worse places."

Worrying the vulnerable skin just over Carver's pulse point, David replied, "Many of which you've explored firsthand."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yeah, I have.” No point in denying it.

He felt David’s lips twitch, but couldn’t tell if it was a frown or a smirk. Suddenly, David pushed up off him. Before Carver could protest, let alone ask what was going on, David gripped his wrist and pulled him to his feet. “Bedroom?”

“End of the hall.”

David nodded once and led the way. He tugged at the cuffs. “You sure you don’t want to take these off?” He grabbed his jacket as they passed the sofa. “It’s going to be hard to get our shirts off with them on.”

“It’s not getting you out of your shirt that I’m worried about.” Carver chuckled as he allowed himself to be led docilely to his own bed.

The room was a mess, with clothes and shoes scattered around, accented by the occasional coffee mug and empty beer can. “You live like a pig, Carver.”

“I live like a guy, David. You should try it.” Catching him at the foot of the bed, he started undoing David’s already loosened tie. “You spend so much time bottled up and buttoned down, one of these days you’re going to explode.”

“I know how to channel my energies.” He dropped the coat on the cluttered dresser and turned back to Carver, jerking his T-shirt free of his jeans.

“Really? Because from where I stand, you haven’t gotten laid in a long, long time.”

“Haven’t I?” David tugged Carver’s shirt over his head.

“A quick fuck in the showers hardly counts. That doesn’t even take the edge off.” He slipped the buttons on David’s

SINS OF ARROGANCE

shirt out of their holes, one after the other, the cotton like satin beneath his fingers. *Top of the line everything. Bastard.*

“Don’t presume you know anything about me, Carver.” He shoved Carver’s opened jeans down to expose he wore nothing underneath. “You think you have me all figured out, but that’s just what I want you to see.”

“Oh, yeah?” At last, Carver was able to slide the zipper down on David’s slacks and push them free, leaving them both standing there with only David’s underwear between them, their shirts dangling from their bound wrists like a banner. “Then show me the truth.”

David seemed startled by the offer, studying Carver’s face, and to Carver’s surprise, he found himself hoping David would find what he was looking for.

“Not tonight.” David disappointed him, but soothed the rejection with a slow, exploratory kiss.

He gradually pulled back, alternating between deepening the kiss and withdrawing. When David spoke again, his voice hoarse and seductive. “Learn to control yourself and maybe you’ll get to see.” He moved quickly, spinning around behind Carver, their linked arms serving to effectively trap Carver against his chest. “But, for now, you don’t deserve it.”

“Going to punish me, are you, David?”

“No.”

Teeth closed almost painfully on the skin just beneath his ear, soothed briefly by a hot tongue, before teeth again, a little harder.

“First, I’m going to give you a chance to redeem yourself.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“And if I don’t?”

David’s hold tightened. “Trust me, Carver, you want to redeem yourself. The alternative won’t be pleasant.” A smile far from kind curved against Carver’s neck. “For you.”

Frankly, Carver wanted the latter option, curious as hell about what David would do. Something told him that while he might not particularly like it, he wouldn’t exactly hate it either. Self-preservation and the greater chance of gratification on his end won out.

“How would I go about this redemption?”

“I’d like to see just how good a cocksucker you are, Carver.”

“Bit of a risk for you, isn’t it?”

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” David unwound from around Carver, then looked at him expectantly.

Carver managed to glare back as he sank to his knees.

He was gratified to find David’s cock rock hard when he shoved the high quality briefs down off his hips. Whatever game David was playing, he was just as turned on as Carver was. The tip glistened with moisture, and Carver flicked out his tongue to lap it away.

David groaned in encouragement.

He wanted to take this slow? Carver could do slow. With deliberate care, he traced his tongue around the ridge of David’s cock head, teasing at the seam before suckling on the end. David’s bound hand wrapped around Carver’s wrist, and Carver found it the most natural thing in the world to return the grip, his other hand supporting David’s length as he

SINS OF ARROGANCE

explored it in minute detail.

The fingers of David's free hand threaded through Carver's hair, light and exploratory. No guidance or restraint, yet, but the promise hung heavy in the air between them. If Carver pushed things too far, David would take back control. There was something oddly freeing in the thought.

He didn't take David's length in his mouth. Not yet. Instead, he ran his mouth down the shaft, learning him by taste and touch. He took a brief detour down to David's balls, testing their weight and shape and texture, before making his return journey on the opposite side.

David's hips jerked when Carver reached the head again, wrapping his lips around it and swallowing David shallowly.

He earned a gasped, "Jesus, Carver," when he began to torment the sensitive places he'd discovered as he began to take more of David's cock into his mouth. Slow and steady, Carver withdrew almost all the way before descending again a little farther each time. At about halfway, he started bringing David's balls into play, seeking out the right combination of sensations that would make David twitch just so.

Not once did David tighten his hold or try to take back control. He seemed perfectly fine with what Carver was doing. Which meant that Carver had to push things farther.

With David's cock now under the control of Carver's mouth, Carver let his hand drop to run his thumb along the tender skin between sac and anus, pressing down harder with each pass, then teasing at the tight ring of muscle, barely penetrating, promising all the things he wanted to do if David

SINS OF ARROGANCE

let him. Let him. Christ, he was already surrendering to the man. But it felt good. It felt safe. David wasn't trying to screw him in any but the literal sense, and he knew whatever passed between them would remain there. It had been a long time since he'd felt safe with a partner, and there was an eroticism to it that was incredibly powerful.

"Please," he begged, his mouth still around David's cock, his thumb slowly fucking David's ass. "Please let me fuck you."

"Control, Carver," David insisted, his throaty voice evidence of his own fight for control.

"Then come for me. At least give me that much. God, you're a fucking machine."

Growling in displeasure, David pulled his hips away, using the grip of their wrists to pull Carver up. The feel of their bare cocks rubbing against each other was almost enough to get Carver off.

"Not yet, but I could be. I could bend you over and fuck you, Carver, without mercy and without satisfaction, just like a machine would. But you don't want that. You wanted to look into my eyes when I fucked you, remember?"

His cock ached at David's raw words. "Please." He was past caring if he begged.

"Get me ready for you."

Carver tugged David toward the nightstand, quickly retrieving lubrication and condoms.

"Hold on," David said, as Carver started to shut the drawer. He sorted through the contents, smirk growing more

SINS OF ARROGANCE

pronounced while he examined the set of beads, a couple dildos, gag, a pair of nipple clamps, and one sizeable vibrator. “Rather self-sufficient, aren’t you, Carver?”

“It gets me by,” he replied nonplussed.

“Not anymore.” Taking a condom from Carver, David ripped it open with his teeth and shoved the rubber back into Carver’s hands. “From now on, the only time you touch any of that is for my benefit.”

“Not likely.” Carver got the condom in place and rolled it down.

David stopped him. “Self control. Remember? You’ll do as I say or you won’t get what you want.”

“What do you know about what I want?”

“I know what you want right now.” Pushing Carver back onto the bed, manacled hand supporting him now, David leaned close enough to breathe in his ear. “You want my cock up your ass.”

“Oh, fuck.” Carver nearly creamed himself in the shudder of ecstasy from that promise. “Do it.”

“Say it, Carver.” David was implacable. “Promise me.”

“I promise! I promise, just please give it to me!”

“Good boy.” He released Carver’s wrist, letting Carver scramble to finish with the condom and roughly smear gel over the rigid shaft beneath the latex. “Maybe if you’re very, very good, I’ll let you use the vibrator on yourself while I watch. I’m really curious how well you take it.”

From now on, he’d be thinking of David when he did.

Though there wasn’t much he could do and not think of

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David at this point. God, he was pathetic, but David was under his skin. And no one had done that for a long time.

Dangerous territory that. Carver was going to steer well clear of it. Tugging David closer, he said, "Just fuck me, please."

"I could get used to 'please' from you." David chuckled, moving between his legs.

The sad thing was, so could Carver. Especially if David kept looking at him like that.

He couldn't let David know that, though. "There's a lot better than 'please' coming if you just don't stop." The words came out more petulant than snarky, making Carver curse.

"No, Carver." Already David was shoving Carver's legs up, rolling his ass forward to make him more vulnerable. He wrapped his fingers around his own cock until they came up coated in lube. "You aren't to make a sound."

"But—"

Slick fingers tested the tight muscle of Carver's hole. "Not a sound. You so much as breathe too loudly and I'll stop."

"You're a sonofabitch, Logan."

"And you're going to learn control, Eliot. Even if it kills you."

At this rate, death might be preferable.

He bit back his retort. *Might as well start now.*

"Nothing to say?" With a smug look, David worked two fingers inside Carver, quickly followed by a third. "You're just aching for this, aren't you?"

He was. The memory of David filling him, fucking him,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

had gotten him through too many nights the last few weeks, and having David so close was killing him. He wanted to scream and curse, beg and demand, just roar out his need. Instead, he bit his tongue, smashing his eyes closed to savor what crumbs David chose to give him.

“See?” David murmured into his ear, pressing Carver’s leg back and rotating his hip as he got closer. “That wasn’t so hard.”

David’s cock was, though, as it replaced his fingers, pressing home in incremental thrusts designed to drive Carver insane.

“I’d have figured you for a top, but you like taking it too much.” He felt David’s lips curl in pleasure. “But we both know you don’t need to be on top to top.”

Carver seriously doubted that David ever bottomed, regardless of his position. Hell, it was a rare day when Carver did. Even when he took it up the ass, he still made damn sure he was the one running the show. The only exception before now was Lucas. Carver chose his partners based on their willingness to see to his pleasure. He wasn’t selfish per se, but his needs *always* came first. Because of that, he tended to avoid anyone too willful. He liked being the alpha. Yet with David, even though Carver still wanted to control things, David aroused his curiosity enough that Carver was willing to go along.

Carver’s choked laugh became a low groan as David finally slid all the way in. Who was he kidding? He was going along with this because David wanted him to. He just wished

SINS OF ARROGANCE

he could figure out why what David wanted was so important.

David rose up on his arms, the cuffs keeping Carver's wrist close. "Look at me, Carver," he commanded, voice low, with just a fine edge of threat to it.

He did, looking up into steely gray eyes, and suddenly he knew why. Because when David looked at him, he saw something worthwhile in Carver, something no one else seemed to see when they were so busy using his body and listening to his crap. David seemed to give a shit about him, and that was enough to make Carver submit to him.

"David." The low groan was out of his mouth before he realized he was speaking.

"Not a sound, Carver." Thankfully David didn't stop, withdrawing at the same agonizingly slow pace before returning again, his balls heavy against Carver's ass. "This is what you wanted. Me fucking you while you looked into my eyes. Do you like what you see? Don't look away, Carver, because you're going to see all of it."

He couldn't have looked away if he wanted to. David's fine features twisted now in ecstasy as he moved faster, shoving Carver's legs farther apart, driving deeper until that perfect control of his shattered with a roar of pleasure caught behind gritted teeth. He froze, rigid and motionless, as he shot into Carver. Carver wanted to scream in frustration, but didn't dare make a sound for fear of whatever punishment David might demand.

He had to trust David to take care of him.

Which was what David had wanted all along.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

At last, David withdrew, still with that focused control that drove Carver crazy, and, unwinding to cuff length, reached for his jacket. Carver breathed a sigh of relief when David unlocked himself, but then, to his surprise, David pulled Carver's arms up and cuffed them together around three pillows behind his head. Instinctively, Carver started to protest, but remembered David's command at the last second. Instead, he just glared.

"When you keep your mouth shut, Carver, you're really not unattractive."

He glared harder. Somehow, he was going to pay David back. After he proved to David he could do this. Carver could never resist a challenge.

"Now what do I do with you?" David tilted his head in consideration. "I meant what I said earlier. I could leave you here and no one would know. And you're so close. Right on the edge. I probably don't even have to touch you to get you off."

Carver sure as hell hoped David would touch him. He needed something.

David returned to the bed, crawling up and kneeling casually between Carver's outspread legs. "This really is a good look for you. But you were made for wanton, weren't you, Carver?" He smirked. "Since you behaved yourself so well earlier, you can speak long enough to ask me one question. One question only. And I'll answer it, regardless of what you ask."

The whole thing smacked of a setup. But one question to

SINS OF ARROGANCE

be answered, no matter what? Carver couldn't resist. If he were smart, he'd ask something neutral. Carver had never been good at playing it smart. Playing it smart was boring. There was something he wanted to know, had been dying to know, since their encounter in the showers.

"What's with the tattoo?" he asked, surprised at how hoarse he sounded.

But not as surprised as he was by David's reaction. He didn't look angry exactly, but definitely upset. Either way, it was the kind of look that guaranteed Carver had just bought himself the next three days bound to his bed. Still, David should have known better. Carver was nothing if not unpredictable. David had left himself open if he'd thought he could predict Carver's question.

Carver kept his mouth shut, keeping to the rules regardless of how much he'd just fucked up.

David began casually fondling Carver's balls, his touch gentle and negligent, all the more overwhelming for that. "My mentor gave it to me," he said answered, thoughts a million miles away. "A long time ago, it seems like."

"What happened?"

That seemed to bring David back to his senses. "I said one question. Don't make a habit of disobeying me."

"Or else what?"

"Or else you won't get what you really want."

With that warning, David ran his tongue up the exposed vein on Carver's cock, blowing a stream of cool air after it. There was no way Carver could have held back his groan of

SINS OF ARROGANCE

pleasure if he'd wanted to.

"What I want is to bury myself in your ass," he insisted.

"You're a greedy son of a bitch, Carver Eliot." He lapped at the tip the way Carver had. "You'll take what I give you and be grateful for it."

Before Carver could protest, David swallowed him down, taking him all the way in from base to tip. With David's hot mouth surrounding his cock, tongue roving expertly, Carver was grateful all right. Very, very grateful.

David worked him fast and without relenting, bringing him back to the edge, so close that just a little bit more—

"What the fuck?" he protested when David pulled away, fist gripping the base of Carver's cock hard.

"You will take what I give you and be grateful," David repeated, tone even, but his eyes were dancing.

Carver was tempted to call David all sorts of things, but held his tongue. He had to play by David's rules here. Which didn't mean he had to like it.

"This is about what you need, Carver, not what you want. Understand?"

Revenge was going to be so very sweet, whatever it was.

"And what do I need, David?" If he said control, Carver was going to kick him. Though, based on David's position, kicking wouldn't do much beyond making Carver look like a fool.

"You need whatever I want."

To Carver's amazement, David grabbed the other condom that they'd left on the mattress, ripped it open with the same

SINS OF ARROGANCE

dexterity he had shown with the first one and began rolling it down Carver's length.

"You'd better not be teasing, David, because I swear to God—"

David's eyes were as fierce as his grin as he slicked up Carver's cock with lube, the remnants going into his own ass as he prepared himself. It was about the hottest damn thing Carver had ever seen.

"Fuck me," he breathed.

"I've already done that, remember?" David moved astride Carver, grabbing his cock and guiding it into place. Carver shuddered in anticipation. Then David's voice dropped to a low, resonant rumble. "You are not to come until I say so." With that, he thrust down, taking Carver inside all at once.

"Oh, fuck." Carver clenched his fists so tight his blunt nails dug painfully into his palms. It was barely enough to pull him back from the edge. When David clenched tight around him, Carver whimpered.

"Not until I say so."

"Jesus Christ, you're a fucking sadist." But if this was pain, Carver never wanted it to stop.

"No, I'm a hedonist." He tightened and rose at the same time, stripping Carver's cock with a fierce grip before descending again. "I want to take my time, savor the feel of you inside me. This is about my pleasure, Carver, and if you come now, I won't get what I want. And you know what that means."

Carver's fingers curled around the chain of the cuffs, the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

steel biting into his wrists. "I don't get what I want."

"That's right." David continued his slow ride, thighs clenching, toned stomach flexing with each stroke.

"But what if what you want is what I want?"

David's eyes were almost black when he looked down. "So much the better."

His words held such promise. There was something almost liberating about their situation, being so beholden to David. It wasn't anything he'd ever wanted, but he was beginning to think it might be what he needed.

Resolved, Carver did his damndest to hold out against the torture of David slowly fucking himself. The sight of him and the sensations... Carver's body tensed again as he fought against his climax.

Then David's hand slipped back and down between Carver's legs, fingers working their way inside once more. It was too much being fucked again on top of everything else.

"I can't..." he pleaded. "Please, David..."

"Not yet," David insisted. "Jesus, Carver, not yet."

That fine control was failing. David's face was twisted, teeth bared, eyes smashed shut, his skin flushed as soft grunts escaped him on every stroke. If he could just hang on, he might finally see what he'd been wanting for so long, David Logan out of control.

It was pure agony holding out; the kind of agony Carver knew he would be craving from now on every time David got close. But he would do it. He would show them both just how much fucking control he had.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Although David might be right. It might kill him first.
“Come for me, Carver.”

At first, the words didn't register. Then he thought he'd imagined them. David was going to drag this out forever. It was nothing more than wishful thinking on Carver's part. *But, Christ...*

“I said come, Carver.”

And he did, his body responding automatically, shuddering hard as finally, finally he got release. David gave a groan of incoherent pleasure before spilling hotly on Carver's stomach.

Carver lay there utterly boneless. He'd had intense experiences before, but every one of them paled in comparison with what David had done to him.

David withdrew with caution, his winces evidence Carver wasn't the only one who would be remembering tonight for the next few days. He threw out the two used condoms and then cleaned Carver up with an old PAL T-shirt Carver had left lying on the floor, tossing it into the laundry hamper before settling on the bed next to Carver, leaning back against the headboard.

“So,” David said softly, sounding unexpectedly vulnerable, “do you still want me to uncuff you?”

Carver shook his head with the last remnants of his energy. “Three days, you said. No one will miss me.”

When David stroked his head, Carver was grateful.

CHAPTER 14

The hot water from Carver's shower felt good on David's aching muscles.

Three years as a celibate had left him out of shape for last night's exertions. He was going to be feeling that for a while in some not entirely pleasant ways.

It had been worth it.

The image of Carver, willing and pliant beneath him, had been one of the most soul satisfying moments in his life. He'd done it, he'd gotten through to him, and in taming him, David had a good chance of saving him.

David didn't acknowledge the fact that he might be saved in return.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Turning off the water grudgingly, he stepped out of the shower and reached for one of the less dirty towels hanging on the bar. The bathroom was cluttered and unkempt, dark mildew sneaking into the corners where apparently no one looked. At least Carver rinsed the toothpaste and razor stubble out of the sink. The whole room was just one more indication of Carver's lack of control, and one more place David would have to retrain him, now that he'd let David in.

David was looking forward to it.

Clean and shaved, he wrapped the damp towel around his hips and headed back to the bedroom.

Carver was still asleep, sprawled out on his stomach like he owned the whole world. David was just grabbing for his pants when he noticed Carver reach out to the bed beside him, searching for something, growing more frantic when he didn't find it. He sat up with a jerk.

"Looking for something?"

David was far too pleased to see Carver's shoulders relax before he rolled over. "You still here?"

"Your bathroom is a hazard zone," he replied, fastening his pants.

Carver smirked. "Didn't keep you from using it, though."

"Needs must." Scanning the room, he found his shirt and slipped it on. "I expect it well on the way to being spotless by the time I get back."

"Sorry, what was that?"

"I have some errands to run. While I'm gone, you'll clean your bathroom."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yeah, right.” Carver rolled his eyes, crawled out of bed, and headed into the bathroom to relieve himself. He didn’t close the door.

David added that to the ever-growing list of Carver’s bad habits.

When Carver emerged, he glared at David. “You’re serious.”

“Have you known me to be anything but?”

“It’s my bathroom, not yours, David.”

“But seeing as I’ll be using it, I’d rather not risk contracting some disease from it.”

Carver cocked his head at an amused angle. “So you’re coming back?”

“That’s what I said.” He slipped his belt through the loops of his slacks.

“I figure after last night... Never mind.”

“Carver, even after last night, do you really think you’re safe to let loose on the general public?”

His lip curled up into his characteristic smirk. “Depends on what for.”

“Now that you’ve submitted to me—”

“Hey, now, I never—”

“Now that you trust me,” he overrode Carver’s objections, “we can get on with the real work, which starts with this apartment. It’s getting cleaned, Carver. Thoroughly. If you do a very good job of it, there’ll be a nice reward in it for you. Understand?”

Carver tipped his head the other way, his grin getting even

SINS OF ARROGANCE

broad. “Do I get to be on top?”

“Clean your apartment and find out.” Feeling pretty cocky himself, he sauntered close enough to grab Carver’s hair and yank his head back for a short, brutal kiss he knew would capture Carver’s attention even as it turned David on. “I’ll be back in a while.”

Carver caught him just as he started to pull back, drawing the kiss out a bit longer. David knew he shouldn’t allow it, but...

Finally, Carver released him. “I suppose I’m not going to like the consequences if I just roll over and go back to sleep, am I?”

“Do you really want to find out?”

“I don’t think I have any cleaning stuff.”

“You can be a smart man, sometimes. I’m sure you can figure out a way to get your bathroom clean, scrubbing bubbles or no.”

Carver just made a noncommittal noise and David headed for the door.

“Hey, David?”

“Yes, Carver.”

“Not that I’m telling you what to do or anything, but while you’re out, you might want to pick up some food. Unless you’re a fan of ramen, that is.”

David’s gut twisted. *Ramen*? God, this was going to be an uphill battle.

The worst of rush hour traffic had cleared, allowing him to get across the river without much delay. After picking up the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

mail and the paper, he let himself into the house.

His plan was aggressive, but he didn't dare give Carver a chance to back out now.

Grabbing a sports bag out of the hall closet, he climbed the stairs and went into his room. Packing was easy, as regimented as his habits were. Socks, underwear, a spare robe, one suit already in a protective bag, two dress shirts and an extra pair of shoes all went neatly into the duffel, followed by his shaving kit, shampoo, body wash and cologne, as well as a couple of surprises from his own bedside collection. When he was satisfied with the bag, he changed as well. If the jeans didn't get Carver's attention, nothing would. Considering the job ahead, he definitely didn't want to be wearing good clothes. He slung the bag over his shoulder and headed back downstairs, stopping only to grab a couple of things out of the maid's closet before dropping the lot into the trunk and heading back out.

Next, he stopped by the supermarket, picking up the basics, as well as an assortment of vegetables and a couple steaks. Carver was going to eat well for probably the first time in his life. *Ramen...Jesus.*

David pulled into Carver's complex just before noon. Nearly three solid hours. If Carver hadn't made any headway in the bathroom, well...

There had been headway, but David wasn't sure it had been in the bathroom.

The living room was a disaster, the floor covered with bed linens and dirty laundry, the couch piled with clean clothes,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

unsorted and unfolded, the furniture all askew. David was gratified to hear the dishwasher running, but suspected it was only half full and the dishes unrinsed before they went in. Carver was right—he lived like a guy. David once again thanked his stars he'd been taught better.

He set the groceries on the kitchen counter and dropped his bag next to an overburdened chair. “Carver?”

From the bedroom, he heard a loud thump before Carver began cursing a blue streak. David followed the noise.

He found Carver half hidden by his dresser, which now stood pulled away from the wall.

“Carver?”

Another thump. “Jesus fucking Christ.” His head appeared around the corner and his glower turned even more dire when he spotted David. “I hate you.”

“This doesn’t look like the bathroom, Carver.” David fought back a grin.

“Gee, what was your first clue?” He sat back, revealing a ratty T-shirt and sweats covered with streaks of dust. “The bathroom, however, got sidelined when I realized nothing short of industrial solvent would cut through the top layer of grime. So I opted for the bedroom, figuring cleaning something would earn me a few points. I hoped.”

“You call this clean?” Actually, it was a huge improvement over the room he’d left this morning. The bulk of the dirty clothes in the living room had obviously come from here, leaving the floor clear and revealing a worn armchair in the corner. All the trash was gone along with the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

dishes, leaving most of the surfaces clear and relatively dust free. Even the bed was made, for probably the first time in a year.

“Give me a break. This took all morning.”

“I can believe it.”

Carver stood up and leaned back against the dresser. “I made the bed.” His voice had gone low and husky. “Clean sheets and everything.”

Feeling playful, David went to him step by slow step. When his mouth was bare inches from Carver’s, he said in the same tone, “I got lunch meat and decent beer.”

“Really.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Okay, you win.” With a wicked grin, he brushed past David and headed for the kitchen.

David smiled and followed.

“Wow, in bottles and everything,” Carver said dryly as he poked through the bags. He pulled out the vegetables, grimacing. “If it’s green, I don’t eat it. Nice try.”

David started unloading the groceries. With Carver’s fridge and cupboards bare as they were, at least he didn’t have to struggle to find space. “You will.”

Opening one of the bottles, Carver downed a considerable portion of the beer inside. “It really does taste better this way.”

“Did I say you could do that?” David grabbed the bottle from him and proceeded to drink down half of the remaining. Warm but good. Much better than the piss water Carver had been drinking. David waved at the food. “You touch none of

SINS OF ARROGANCE

this without my say-so. Can you cook?"

"I'm not a complete idiot."

"I don't mean the pre-packaged, heating up kind. I mean real cooking."

"Yes, I can do real cooking." His eyes narrowed. "Cleaning and cooking...I'm not your fucking wife."

"You'd make a horrible wife, Carver. But you *are* my sub and you'll do the chores I assign to you to the best of your ability and in a timely manner."

"Hey, now, I never agreed to—"

David silenced him the most effective way possible.

Unchained, Carver Eliot was a force to be reckoned with. His hands were instantly in David's hair, dragging him closer for a brutal, hungry kiss. David let him. It would only help. Relaxing, he let his body press into Carver's, the thin fleece of Carver's sweats doing little to hide his erection. It felt good, made David hungry for it, but that would have to wait. "You like this, Carver?" He arched against Carver for emphasis.

"Fuck, yeah."

"You want more of it, don't you?"

"What do you think?"

"I can give you more, Carver. I can give you last night again and again and again. It would be so easy. Submit to me, let me help you, and it's yours."

"I'm not a sub, David."

"No? Tell me you didn't enjoy it last night when I took control, took all those pesky decisions away from you for a few hours."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver was silent.

David stepped back, hiding his own reaction to their separation. “Or we could go back to what we’ve been doing the last few weeks if you prefer. Up to you, Carver.”

“All or nothing, is that it?” Carver shook his head. “That’s too much to ask of anyone.”

“Too much to ask of you, you mean,” David said neutrally.

“No, David, anyone. There’s got to be a period of adjustment and— I can’t believe I just said that.” He scrubbed his face. “You know what? Forget it. I’m grimy; you’re a bastard. Let’s leave it at that, yeah? And speaking of grimy, I need a shower.”

David shoved the bucket of cleaning supplies across the counter to him. “Make sure you get the corners when you’re done.”

The look Carver shot him was pure hate, but David was gratified when he grabbed the bucket and stalked off, cursing under his breath.

Whistling, David opened another beer and began putting away the groceries.

* * *

Carver surveyed the bathroom. God, it really was disgusting. It hadn’t bothered him before, so it sure as hell shouldn’t be now. Sorting through the various supplies, he acknowledged that the state of the bathroom only mattered because David said so. *Fuck that*. What bothered Carver most is he knew David was right.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

A sub, him. Was sex with David really that good?

Deciding it was in his best interest not to answer, he retrieved a bottle of super high-powered shower cleaning solution and started spritzing the walls. The strong chemicals instantly assaulted his senses. "At least I might get a decent high out of it."

"Not without doing serious damage, you wouldn't."

He glared back at David, who leaned casually in the doorway. "You're not going to watch me clean?"

David shrugged. "Seeing how little experience you have, you might require instruction."

The thought of David instructing him in anything should not be such a turn-on. He turned his back on him and continued spraying. "Admit it; you just want to see if the towel falls off while I'm cleaning."

"I admit nothing."

Holy crap, was he *flirting*?

"Although you have to admit, a towel is fairly unconventional wear for scrubbing a bathroom."

"I wasn't about to put those disgusting clothes back on."

"At least we agree on that."

Okay, he could take that a couple of ways. Carver looked back at him.

David wrinkled his nose as he shook his head. "You aren't going to need your clothes the next few days."

Yeah, the towel really wasn't doing him much good right now.

Still, he needed to wear something. If this shit cut through

SINS OF ARROGANCE

soap scum and mildew, he doubted it would feel too great if it landed on his dick. Carver frowned. "Should I be wearing gloves with this stuff? Or a hazmat suit?"

David's laughter filled the small, tiled room. "You'll be fine, Carver. Though that's something else we need to discuss."

Setting down the spray bottle, Carver picked up a sponge. "I'm not getting a fucking manicure, so don't even go there."

He barely had time to blink before David was behind him, hauling him back into a vice-like grip. David's breath was hot against his cheek. "I'll go wherever I please, Carver. And you will follow. That's how this works." David ran his tongue along Carver's neck, making him shiver. "A manicure doesn't make you any less of a man."

Then he was gone. Taking Carver's towel with him.

"Okay, that's just dirty pool!"

So why was it so much fun?

* * *

David thought that at last he had found the real key to controlling Carver. Keep him turned on enough he wasn't paying attention to what he was doing.

David was enjoying the process.

The bathroom wasn't immaculate by the time Carver finished, but it no longer made David's skin crawl to go in there.

He was lying on Carver's bed, pretending to read a book when Carver emerged, freshly re-showered and making a

SINS OF ARROGANCE

beeline for his dresser.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“Getting dressed.” The “duh” was implied.

David turned the page in his book, not looking directly at Carver. “No, you’re not.”

Carver had another T-shirt and pair of well-worn sweats in hand, a combination that he could pull off better than anyone had a right to. “I’m sure as hell not wandering around the house bare-assed naked.”

“Yes, you are. Put the clothes back, Carver.”

“Fuck you, David.” Carver slammed the drawer and started to dress.

“Not if you get dressed you’re not,” David informed him.

“Normal people don’t walk around the house with nothing on!”

“You don’t consider me a normal person?”

Carver snorted. “Uh, no. There’s no way you walk around any way but fully dressed.” He eyed David’s jeans. “And pressed.”

“How I dress isn’t the issue.” He got up and stalked toward Carver. “What’s at issue is that I gave you an order, and you’re going to obey it.” Without preamble, he reached down to fondle Carver’s bare cock.

“Jesus.” Carver groaned, eyes closing before he opened them again to glare. “Just how easy do you think I am?”

David slid his hand loosely up Carver’s hardening length. “Very.”

“Yeah, fuck you, too.” He closed his eyes again, lost in the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

feel of David's hand. "If I promise not to get dressed, do you promise not to stop?"

Leaning close enough to rest his chest on Carver's, David murmured in his ear, "I think I could do that."

Carver dropped his clothes to the floor and tried to pull David closer, but David stepped away.

"Put them away properly. You didn't clean up this pigsty to make a mess of it the first chance you get."

"Fine." Carver bent over, offering an unobstructed view of his ass, which had a greater effect than David would ever admit. He stood up with a smirk. "But I'm not going to iron them."

"Carver, you barely iron your work clothes."

"Ah, so you do notice I iron them."

"It's either that or you need to find a new cleaner. And I have a sneaking suspicion you've never been to one in your life."

Carver ignored him, folding his T-shirt with Gap-like efficiency.

"You need to do that fresh out of the dryer next time."

"I'm surprised you're not making me re-wash all my clothes so they meet your standards." He put the clothes away, then looked at David. "You're not going to, are you?"

David just smiled.

"That's too anal even for you."

"You have no idea, Carver. Besides, we've got the rest of today and two days after that. What did you think we were going to do with all our time?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Heedless of his nudity, with a natural nonchalance that had been so difficult for David to master, Carver closed the distance between them and, catching David by the waistband, pulled him close enough to kiss. "I think you promised a repeat of last night. Again and again and again..."

He was overpowering, and it took all of David's restraint not to throw over his plans and spend the rest of the afternoon giving Carver what he wanted. "Work first. Play later."

"Damn it, David—"

"I'm proud of what you've done so far, Carver, really." He kept his voice low and sultry. "I know how hard it is for you to change your ways. What you've done this morning deserves a hand job, you're right." He went back to caressing Carver's cock, earning a pleased hiss. "But is that all you want? Wouldn't you rather go for what's behind door number three?"

He could tell Carver was fighting with his impulse control. A bird in the hand, or in this case a cock, was always the sure thing. David had intentionally kept the future possibilities vague, knowing Carver's creative imagination was filling in all sorts of ideas all on its own.

Finally, Carver opened his eyes. "You know, I really hate you."

"Yeah, tell me that when I'm buried balls deep in your ass later." Now he did indulge in one fierce, dominating kiss, hand tightening around Carver's cock briefly before he tore himself away with more composure than he felt. "Now back to work."

Carver reached for his dresser drawer.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“No, Carver.”

He glared. “Bastard.” But he abandoned the drawer. “What’s my next task, master?”

Despite the insolent tone, but more likely because of it, David’s cock twitched at Carver’s words.

“Bathroom and bedroom are passable for now. Unfortunately, your living room has become a disaster because of it.”

“That shit had to go somewhere.”

“And now it had better all go where it belongs.” David then added, “Where it belongs, not where you think it belongs.”

Carver glowered at him before stalking out of the room.

Taking a deep breath, David adjusted himself. As frustrated as Carver was, David wasn’t far behind. The rush of breaking this stubborn-willed man to his wishes was incredible. It was a fine dance to keep him willing without satisfying him enough that he would walk out. David’s libido, long left idle, was now revving on all cylinders as well because of it. He was going to have to give some ground and soon or he was going to lose his own control and ruin the whole thing.

By the time he followed Carver out into the living room, Carver had filled a basket with dirty laundry and was standing with it in his arms, looking disgruntled. “I have to take this down to the laundry room.”

“So?”

“So, you won’t let me put any clothes on.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“That could be a problem.”

“You’re just determined to be a dick about this, aren’t you?”

“Oh, give it here.” David took the basket and the bottle of laundry soap, rolling his eyes at the store brand label. “Quarters?”

“There’s a change machine in the laundry room.”

David stuck out his hand. “Wallet.”

“Fine.” Carver grabbed it from the kitchen counter and slapped it into David’s hand. “Don’t spend it all in one place.”

“Knowing you, you’re over your credit limit on all your cards anyway. Ten minutes, Carver. I want to see progress in here.”

“Yeah? Or what?”

“Depends on the progress.”

Carver frowned at the disaster surrounding him. “Ten minutes. Right.”

Leaning close, David whispered in his ear. “The sooner you start, the sooner you’ll be done. And who knows”—he caught the bottom of Carver’s ear with his teeth—“you might end up surprising us both.”

Carver grumbled something unintelligible in response.

David didn’t bother to hide his grin as he headed out.

CHAPTER 15

Ten minutes. Shit.

Carver ran his hands through his shaggy hair and tried not to think about the fact he was naked as he planned his next course of action. He'd never get that laundry put away in time. *Okay, fine.* Dirty laundry in two garbage bags stacked by the front door for the next trip. Clean clothes on the dining room table. Trash and recycling mixed in a third bag and shoved in the closet with the water heater. He hoped he'd remember it was there before the food in it rotted enough to remind him. A quick run of the vacuum over the carpet and straightening the furniture. He grabbed a dishcloth from the oven door and wiped his face, then used it to wipe down the coffee table and

SINS OF ARROGANCE

television. He was just stuffing it in one of the dirty laundry bags when David came back.

“Hey!” Carver jumped out of the view of the hall. “You could warn a guy.”

David dropped the hamper by the door, but didn’t close said door. “Carver Eliot shy...who knew?”

“I’m not shy,” he snapped, using the miniscule dishcloth to shield himself as he reached over and slammed the door shut behind David. “Mrs. Edsel across the hall is a horny old bat and won’t let me forget the one time I made the mistake of passing by her shirtless. The fact I’m gay only seems to add to the appeal.”

“And this was before you started working out regularly.”

“Kicking your ass—” David raised an eyebrow. Right, so it was his ass more than David’s, but he had some pride still. “Sparring with you once a week is hardly a regular workout.”

“For you it is.”

“Whatever. Just knock next time, all right? Please?”

David got that small half smile Carver was coming to know so well. “Well, since you asked so nicely.”

“Great. Thank you. Glad that’s settled.” Carver rolled his eyes and turned away.

David caught his arm.

“Yes?”

David’s eyes scanned the room. “I’m not going to get any nasty surprises if I open your closets, am I?”

Since the water heater wasn’t technically in a useable closet, Carver felt safe in replying, “See for yourself it you

SINS OF ARROGANCE

don't trust me."

"I'll give you the benefit of the doubt."

"Magnanimous."

"I try." He looked around the room, making Carver wince in awareness of the layer of dust on everything and the corners of the room still waiting to see a broom. "Not bad for ten minutes," David surprised him by saying.

"Yeah?"

David shrugged.

Feeling brave, Carver edged closer. "Do I get my reward now?"

David met his bold gaze squarely. "Just because you're naked, you think you're going to get laid, don't you?"

He trailed a hand down David's chest, eyes continuing down to enjoy the firm bulge in David's oh-so-sexy jeans, "I think keeping me naked is more for your benefit than mine."

"Really?"

It was Carver's turn to shrug.

"And what if I said I wasn't getting undressed today?"

He hadn't considered the possibility. "Then I'd think I did all this work for nothing."

"Is that the only reason you do things, Carver? When you know you're going to get something out of it?"

Why lie? "What's the point otherwise? You can't tell me you're doing this just for my own good."

David didn't say anything.

"I know it's not just for the sex. It's got to be something more with you." Carver considered him for a moment, then

SINS OF ARROGANCE

nodded. "You get off on the power of all this. Bending me to your will. I'm right, aren't I?"

David didn't move, didn't speak. He just stared at Carver until Carver began to wish he hadn't said anything. When he finally asked, "What if I do?" it was a relief.

Carver backed up against the couch and rested his hands there. "Go ahead. Bend me."

David followed him. "You know what that means, right? My will, not yours. Whatever I want. Not you. Me."

Jesus.

"Turn around, Carver."

He did without hesitating, and David's hand on the back of his head shoved him lower so he bent over the couch, his ass shoved out against David's hard-on. His hand stayed in place as his other one undid his pants. Carver groaned at the feel of David's hot, hard flesh between his cheeks.

"This is what I want, Carver," David insisted, even as Carver heard the familiar tear of paper and foil. "Whether or not it's what you want is entirely coincidental. Do you understand?"

Eager, desperate, Carver nodded.

"I can't hear you." The slap on his ass accompanying the admonishment only ratcheted up Carver's arousal even higher.

"I understand!"

David caressed the spot he'd just smacked. "That's better. You'll answer me from now on when I ask you a question."

David's cock was now probing for entrance, and God, how Carver wanted it. He risked losing it to turn and warn through

SINS OF ARROGANCE

gritted teeth, "I won't call you master."

David chuckled. "I wouldn't believe you if you did."

"So long as we're clear." He turned back, bracing himself on the arm of the couch, one thought running through his mind: Thank fuck. He was finally going to get off.

"You are not to come, Carver. No matter what, no matter how intense the desire. You do not come."

Goddamn it. He dug his fingers into the worn material of the couch.

"Think you can handle that, Carver?"

His cock was right there. So damn close. "If you don't make it worth my while, I swear to God, David, I'll kill you."

That laugh, rich and deep, should not have the effect it did on him.

"David, just fuck me." He groaned. "I need *something*."

"Oh, I'll give you something, all right."

And he did.

Neither one of them had any lube, so they had to rely on the thin film clinging to the condom to ease David's entry. But Carver didn't want easy. At this point, he didn't care if he was torn and bloody when this was over, just so long as David didn't stop. He didn't, forcing his way in inch by slow inch, Carver's muscles clinging to him with each encroaching thrust until finally Carver could feel David's balls and the threat of his jeans zipper against his own testicles.

Only then did David stop.

"God damn it, David," he begged, desperate. "Fuck me!"

"No, Carver." He leaned down, pulling Carver's hair

SINS OF ARROGANCE

firmly but steadily to bring his ear up to David's mouth. "Fuck yourself."

For a moment, Carver thought David was denying him again, but then he got it. While David held himself rock steady, Carver used the leverage of the back of the couch to withdraw from David before shoving back onto him again. "Christ."

"Again."

He did. And again. And again. Quickly, Carver found a rhythm that seemed to satisfy David and very nearly satisfied himself. So long as he focused on David, he might just be able to do what David wanted. Hell, taking the edge off somewhat was better than nothing at all.

David's hands settled on Carver's waist, providing balance only. He left all the work to Carver, who was more than willing to do it. It was exquisite agony holding back the orgasm that had been building inside him all fucking day, but it was worth it to feel David's long length bury inside him over and over, as though making a home there, grinding the shape of his head against Carver's prostate until he wanted to scream from it. He felt sweat beading up on his lip, trickling down between his shoulder blades in a fine line, but he held out, determined to show David he could do this, that he could be worthy of this.

He was too far gone in pleasure even to consider the danger in such thoughts.

It startled him out of his fugue when David grabbed Carver's hips and slammed him backwards, grinding into him

SINS OF ARROGANCE

with a shuddering jerk that telegraphed through Carver, nearly sending him over the edge. He had to bite down on the inside of his cheek to fight back the rush of release threatening to overwhelm him with David's orgasm. He was panting when David finally stepped back, pulling out of him, now limp and sated, one hand trailing down Carver's damp spine.

"You did good, Carver," he said, his voice smoky with satisfaction. "Now go take a cool shower."

Carver was halfway to the bathroom before he realized what he'd done. When he glanced back, David had a satisfied smile which had little to do with his orgasm.

Stepping in the shower, Carver didn't even bother testing the temperature, just turned the cold on full. He barely managed to bite back the scream as the icy water pelted against his skin. Still, it was considerably warmer than the department showers.

"Bad association, Carver." He dropped his head against the tiled wall. "Bad, very bad."

His erection, which had started to go down with the shock of the shower, was back in full force. David had probably counted on this.

If Carver made it through the next two days without committing homicide, it was going to be a miracle.

CHAPTER 16

The room was dark save for the soft amber light given off by the few glowing candles scattered about the room. They made David's eyes glint and Carver's skin glisten as David moved.

Carver had to work hard to breathe. He had lost all connection to his body hours ago, his shape defined now by David's touch alone. Sweat ran in tickling threads along his arms as he lay slack, limp on the bed, held in place by the handcuffs that were back in place like a second lover, holding his arms above his head, his legs spread wide and tied, pillows supporting his knees and lifting his hips.

He whimpered as David bathed his exhausted limbs

SINS OF ARROGANCE

tenderly with a cool cloth before trickling fresh water into Carver's mouth, soothing his parched, ravaged throat. "One more time," he encouraged. Carver tried to shake his head, but could barely move. "Just one more," David repeated, his soft voice intense.

The words had lost all meaning; he had used them so often. After the third time, Carver had begged him to stop. After the seventh, he had wept with desperation. David had simply murmured soft words of sympathy and encouragement and begun again.

Carver had lost count after that.

David's hands bladed over Carver's spent muscles, pulling any last remaining tension out and away from him. He had no way to signal his pleasure, no sounds left to encourage David to stop. As he had already done dozens, hundreds, thousands of times, David began building him back up.

Every time was the same. David stroked Carver's whole body gently, lovingly, leaving not an inch of skin untouched. Sweet oil had eased the friction the first time, but in no time Carver's own perspiration became all the lubricant David needed. He circled in, over chest and thighs, spiraling in on his genitals. Each time he stroked with his palms and thumbs over the length of Carver's cock, cupping his balls, massaging generously, comfortingly, coaxing Carver to full erection despite himself, before easing Carver's cock into his mouth for a slow, almost casual blow that made Carver shake. Each time he slipped two fingers past the tight iris of muscle, caressing, promising, as Carver writhed and twisted against

SINS OF ARROGANCE

his bonds.

Every single time, just as Carver was about to crash into blissful release, David pulled back, letting Carver's frenzy recede like waves on the sand.

It was torture by ecstasy, and Carver was at David's mercy. He prayed yet again that David would release him, let him come so he could remember who he was again. But he knew what David was doing. He was giving Carver exactly what he wanted, and guaranteeing Carver would do anything David asked.

It was working.

Carver could feel it building again as David worked him, rising up along the column of his spine, squeezing his heart, lungs and muscles, soft guttural moans the only sound he was capable of. This time, oh, please, God, this time he was so fucking close he could feel it rising monstrous behind his eyes, preparing to rip him apart.

Oh, God, yes, this time *now!*

David's hands pulled away to coast over Carver's stomach and thighs, easing him back from the brink yet again.

Carver let his fingers unclench from around the chains of the cuffs, forced himself to draw in deep, ragged breaths. He opened his eyes to see David hovering over him.

"One more time," David murmured gently, urgently.

"David, no," he managed to whisper, but David's hands were already moving, coursing over him, down the length of his sensitized body and along his legs.

He realized David was untying him.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David's mouth joined his hands as he freed Carver's ankles, taking his time moving back up with soft caresses and lingering kisses at all his sensitive places.

The contact grounded Carver, brought him back into himself. He responded, albeit weakly, knowing that this time would be different.

David let his mouth linger on Carver's for the first time in hours as his deft fingers coasted up to find the key still in the lock of the cuffs and free him. Carver let his arms fall to drape around David's shoulders as David moved between Carver's legs, already sheathed to slide into him with as much tenderness as David had used all night. Carver sighed in relief, rolling his hips in time to David's movements as he built Carver's climax, his own need making David tremble.

Carver felt him tighten, heard him groan a soft, "Oh, God, Carver!" and shudder deep within him. His own release followed immediately, with no hesitation on the brink as he came hard, staring up into David's rapt, satisfied face.

David didn't move for a long time afterwards, just supported himself on Carver, almost half holding him. It was comforting for a change, not to have his partner just roll over and climb out of bed, and Carver closed his eyes to enjoy it, his arms still loosely around his lover.

But anatomy was not on their side. Finally, David slid off, removed the condom with a deft twist to toss it in the trash, and lay back down, pulling Carver back into his arms.

When he was able to speak, Carver's voice came out cracked, hoarse, broken. "You're a bastard."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David's lips pressed against his forehead, but he didn't say a word.

"Bastard," Carver muttered again, nestling his head against David's chest.

CHAPTER 17

Walking into work three days later, Carver could still feel David everywhere, his body pleasantly aching at the memory of being pushed, tested and so thoroughly fucked. David had given no ground, demanding Carver's unquestioning obedience and rewarding it with ecstasy like he had never experienced. He was left so weak and vulnerable that when David had insisted on bathing him as a last act, Carver had allowed it. David was ruining him for other men, but Carver couldn't find it in him to care.

He'd barely set foot on the squad room floor when he heard the commander bark his name. "Eliot, my office. Now."

He didn't stop to set his coffee down, just turned and

SINS OF ARROGANCE

followed.

Montgomery was already sitting behind his desk when Carver shut the door behind him. David was standing next to the desk, as ramrod straight as he had been the first time Carver had been in this office, no trace on his face of his role the past few days.

“Last chance, Eliot,” Montgomery snapped, barely looking up from his paperwork. “Next time you’re out.”

If he hadn’t been completely mollified by the events of the last few days, the look from David would have been enough to cow him. “Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.”

“Now get out.”

He glanced at David, but still got nothing from him. *What the hell?*

Scotty was waiting for him at their desks. “Well, well, the prodigal son returns.”

“I wasn’t off by choice, you know.” He dropped down into his chair and started sifting through the files scattered across it. God, he was a slob. Only halfway through straightening it did he realized what he was doing. *Fucking David Logan.*

“You look relaxed,” Scotty observed.

“Sorry?”

“Not many people come off of forced leave looking like they went on vacation.”

Carver snorted. “Believe me, Scotty, these last three days were no vacation.”

“Right.”

It was tempting to tell her how he’d spent the last three

SINS OF ARROGANCE

days, show her the marks from David's fingers on his ass and the purplish-black bruises from his mouth along Carver's shoulder. Just thinking about them made him hard all over again. He didn't think he could get through talking about them.

Scotty saved him from the temptation. "Well, since you had such a tough time, why don't you come out for a drink tonight? I'll even buy first."

"Like I'm going to argue with free beer."

"What about you, Lieutenant? It's Friday night. Want to make it two for two?"

Carver's head snapped around to find David standing right behind him, silent as a cat and looking pleased with himself, now Carver knew how to read the signs.

"I'll have to check my schedule, Detective," he said, his voice neutral. "I have an appointment this evening, but then I should be able to stop by."

She grinned. "Keep this up and you might start to lose your reputation as a hard ass."

"Oh, I doubt that." He handed her a file. "Your assignment, Detectives. Domestic dispute."

Lovely.

Suddenly David was in his personal space, making every hair on his body stand on end. "And you have sparring this evening." His voice was intimate and commanding even just above a whisper. "Don't make me find you."

Jesus. Something so small and Carver was already eager to roll over and show his belly. What the fuck had happened to

SINS OF ARROGANCE

him?

And why did he love it so much?

“Ready?”

Scotty’s question came from nowhere, and he realized the encounter with David had taken only seconds, but had completely flooded his awareness, making him miss the fact David was already back in his office and sitting down. Scotty apparently hadn’t noticed anything.

“Yeah. And I’m driving.” He needed to focus on something, anything to distract him from what David might have in store for that evening.

Scotty tossed him the keys. “It’s been a while since I felt the rush of near certain death, so why not.”

“Christ, I’m not that bad,” he grumbled, leading the way out.

“Carver, the only thing worse than your driving is your temper.”

“You do know how to make a guy feel welcome, don’t you?”

“I do my damnedest.”

* * *

“I don’t believe it,” Carver said as they walked into the station that afternoon. “The wife didn’t back down.”

Scotty chuckled. “See? This job can surprise you.”

“Who knew?” Tossing his coat over the back of his chair, he started to sit down, but stopped. David stood in the doorway to his office, watching him, inscrutable as ever.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yoo-hoo, Carver.”

Carver blinked, focusing on Scotty. “What?”

“You just going to stand there all day?”

Oh. He sat. David had disappeared. This was so not good.

Glancing at the clock, he saw there were still about two hours until shift’s end. *Two hours until sparring.* Two hours until Carver could hopefully get some of his own back.

“You want to give the report, or should I?” Scotty asked.

“To Da—the lieutenant?” *Shit.* “Um, you.”

“Chicken.”

“I am not.”

“Uh-huh.”

“I’m not a chicken, Scotty. You just...get along with him better than I do.”

“Believe what you want.” She got up. “At least this way I can ask him why the hell he can’t seem to take his eyes off you today.”

“Wait, what?”

Scotty just grinned wickedly and headed to David’s office.

God damn, but that girl was trouble. Good thing he liked her.

She was still grinning when she got back.

“So did you ask him?” Carver pretended to focus on the report he was typing.

“God, you’re so easy to jerk around, Eliot. I know you’re in trouble, but do you really think he’s still watching you, waiting for you to slip up?”

Actually, he was hoping David would be watching him for

SINS OF ARROGANCE

other reasons. Carver didn't want to be alone in this, whatever this crazy thing was he and David had going on. "Maybe."

"Give the lieutenant a break, Carver. He's not that bad."

"I know."

"Oh, really?" Scotty had that smile again.

Giving up on the report, Carver just leaned back in his chair. "Okay, out with it."

"Let's just say while you were out I finally got the dirt on how you got demoted." She leaned against the desk next to him. "Your old partner Connors was in."

"How was good old Buggy?"

"Frankly? Disgusting. And more than eager to turn on you when he found out I was your partner."

"And?"

"And I think you're a crazy sonofabitch, which is nothing I didn't know already. Some homophobic closet queen isn't likely to change my mind, for better or for worse."

"That's Buggy, all right."

"And I think you might have a crush on the handsome Lieutenant Logan."

She was good. "I don't do crushes, Scotty. Especially not with hard-ass lieutenants."

"So you've noticed his ass."

"Don't go there."

"I think you two would be pretty hot together."

"Okay, really don't go there."

"You might be good for each other. He's too uptight and you're...well, not even close."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Thanks.”

“I’m just saying.”

Time to change the subject. “So what did old Buggy want? Besides coming to gloat over my general misfortune.”

“You’re no fun.” She sighed, leaning back in her chair. “Um, something about trying to run a joint department investigation into the carjackings. Seems the same MO has been cropping up in their zone, too.”

“Couldn’t Tomczik and Montgomery handle the matter over the phone?”

“Who knows? Seemed to me like he was just looking for a chance to come over our way.”

“Sounds like Buggy. Why come under his own steam and make me miserable when he can do it on official business?”

“Well, at least you weren’t here.”

Yeah, he’d been much more pleasantly occupied. Scrubbing his toilet for sex. “Anything new turn up on the car ring while I was out?”

She shook her head. “Nothing so far. The kid you went down for still hasn’t led us anywhere. I told Connors we were watching him, and he’s going to see if the kid has any connections in Zone Two. If we can start to build a network, maybe we can find the center of it.”

“There’s got to be something more we can do.”

“Not until we get a break. Patrol is still on watch, and we’ve had some plainclothes going around asking quietly about no-questions-asked car parts. Hopefully, that will turn something. But those cars could be in Philly by now and the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

whole operation masterminded from there.”

“Or farther.”

“Or farther. New York’s only another hour beyond that, and Detroit is even closer. We just have to wait it out.”

“I hate waiting.”

“I know you do, poor baby.” She patted him on the back. “But in the meantime, about the lieutenant’s ass...”

CHAPTER 18

Carver hit harder and better that night than he had during all their previous sessions.

“Better watch it, Carver. You might become a half decent fighter in spite of yourself.” David ducked Carver’s left hook, right cross and laughed. “Or not.”

Instead of keeping on at David until he managed to land a blow, Carver backed off, seeming to think his next move through.

“You’ve been dying for this all day, haven’t you?” David aimed for Carver’s solar plexus and was blocked. *Nice.* Moving in close, he said, “Must feel good finally getting some of your own back. Three days of me telling you what to do

SINS OF ARROGANCE

and how to do it.” Left, right, left, left. Carver evaded him all but the last time. “But what’s really killing you is how much you enjoyed it.”

David didn’t see stars until after he hit the mat. Dazed, he blinked up at the ceiling.

“Shit!” Carver was down by him, gloves off. “David? Come on, David, say something.”

He didn’t say anything, just started laughing.

“David?”

He started to get up and thought better of it. A few minutes on his back wouldn’t kill him.

“David? Are you all right?”

“I’m fine,” he said at last, still breathless from laughter. “I told you what you could do if you focused.”

“Jesus Christ, you scared the shit out of me.” Carver helped him sit up with a gentleness that surprised him.

“I think we’re done for the night,” David admitted ruefully.

“Are you okay? Do you need me to get you to the ER?”

David caught his hand before he could reach for his cell phone to call an ambulance. “Carver, I’m fine. I just need to shake it off. Give me a minute.”

Carver slumped down on the mat next to him. “You know, hitting you was supposed to be a lot more satisfying.”

“Funny old world, huh?”

“Funny. Yeah, not so much. Are you sure you’re okay?”

“I’m fine, Carver. When did you become such a worry wart?”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“About the time you took my balls, apparently.”

With a quick glance to the door to make sure they were alone, David leaned forward. “Yeah, but I treat them very, very well.”

Carver snorted in response. “All depends on the moment.”

“You’re going out for drinks, I assume?” David asked, voice casual.

“Scotty’s buying my first round. I can’t say no to a free drink.” Carver gave him a sly look. “You going to shock the hell out of the department and show up for a second time?”

Carver plus alcohol in public...very bad idea.

“But if you’re feeling too woozy, I’d be more than happy to give that as your excuse.”

“You are not telling them you kicked my ass.”

Carver’s grin was all teeth. “So I did kick your ass finally?”

David glowered at him.

“And if you’re not there, I might slip back into bad habits. There’s just no telling, is there?”

He was on his feet and heading to the showers before David could think of stopping him.

* * *

“You bet against me?” Carver’s voice cut through the din of the Friday night crowd in the bar. “I’m your partner!”

David followed the voice to their table where Scotty was still laughing. “Oh, come on. Just from what I knew of your reputation, I had to. It was easy money. And I gave you a hell

SINS OF ARROGANCE

of a lot longer than anyone else did. You have to give me credit for that.”

Carver’s eyebrows drew together. “How much money?”

“I made seventy-eight dollars off you.”

He shoved his empty glass across the table. “Then you can keep buying, traitor.”

Everyone laughed, and Scotty good naturedly picked up the glass. “How about you, Lieutenant? Drinking tonight?”

“Well, if you’re buying...”

There was more laughter while Scotty waved down the waitress.

“What’ll it be?”

Scotty’s grin was pure evil. “A bottle of Cuervo.”

Carver looked green. “You are the devil.”

“Going to wuss out and go for beer, Carver?”

“Uh...” He glanced at David.

“It’s been a while,” David said, “but tequila and I have always been good friends.”

“Not going to let the lieutenant show you up, are you?” Scotty said to Carver.

“I hate you both now. And I’m going to hate you both even more in the morning. Count me in,” he replied grudgingly.

“And a *whole* lotta limes,” Scotty reminded the waitress, who was grinning as broadly as she was.

“Gotcha.”

“Just so we’re clear”—Carver leaned across the table—“I am *not* playing darts with you tonight.”

David schooled his features. “Pool, then?”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver looked at Scotty, who shook her head faintly. “No. Bastard.”

David grinned.

“Holy shit!” McGuire staggered back in his chair. “Ramrod just smiled! Are you feeling okay there, Lieutenant? Didn’t hurt yourself?”

“Nah.” Now it was Carver’s turn to get a little of his own back. “He just got hit in the head tonight. He’ll be back to his stodgy old self tomorrow.”

“Stodgy? You make me sound like I’m eighty.” David nodded to the waitress as she lined up the shots. The sooner he started in, the better.

Carver was looking at him.

“What?”

“I’d say closer to sixty.”

David cocked an eyebrow before taking up a slice of lime and licking the junction of thumb and forefinger with a deliberateness that got Carver’s undivided attention. He sprinkled a heavy pinch of salt on the damp skin and took up his shot. With a salute to the watching crowd, he licked off the salt, threw back the tequila and bit down on the lime all in one fluid motion.

A hush fell over the gathered officers.

“I think you’re in trouble again, Carver,” Scotty said, awestruck.

Carver just glared at him. “Is there anything you’re *not* good at?”

“I don’t play the violin well.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Rolling his eyes, Carver grabbed up a lime, licked his wrist with one broad swipe, added the salt, then took his shot in inelegant progression. It was very Carver, straight forward and no frills. And the last thing it should have done was turn David on.

“Geez, Carver, don’t even try to savor the experience.” Scotty shook her head and set up her shot with deft and practiced movements. She was a woman who knew how to take her tequila. Turning to David, she said, “Your turn again, Lieutenant.”

He knew he should stop after his third or fourth shot, but something told David he wasn’t done until the bottle was empty. He was going to regret it, maybe in an hour, maybe in the morning, but that didn’t stop him from matching the two of them shot for shot.

Predictably, Scotty was the last one standing.

“Now, you boys don’t want to get pulled over for a DUI, do you?” she chided them both, her eyes a little brighter for all that alcohol, but otherwise showing no ill effects. “You go out in the fresh Pittsburgh air, and I’ll call you both a cab.”

Carver pointed at her. “You’re a cab.”

“Oh, ha-ha. You’re a funny drunk, good to know. I’d have pegged you for an angry drunk. Or a horny one.”

He waggled his eyebrows at her.

“Come on, Romeo.” She pulled him to his feet and shoved him toward the door, ushering David after him. “You’ll make sure he gets home in one piece, Lieutenant? I would, but...”

“Don’t worry about it, Detective. It’s out of your way. I’ll

SINS OF ARROGANCE

take him home.”

“Thanks. I’ll call that cab.”

“And, Detective?”

“Yes?”

“Don’t ask me to do shots with you again. I don’t think my ego could stand it.”

She grinned.

Carver was waiting for him outside the door. David had just enough time to close the door behind him before Carver grabbed his lapel and dragged him around the corner of the bar into the grocer’s alley, out of sight of the traffic passing on the sidewalk. In the narrow confines of the brick tunnel, he pinned David to the wall, giving him no time to protest before Carver’s mouth was on his, hot and hungry, still tasting of salt and citrus, his wiry body grinding into David’s madly. “She’s right,” he said between kisses. “I *am* a horny drunk.”

So was David, apparently.

For once, he let Carver have his way, enjoying and returning his eagerness. David had just popped open the top of Carver’s jeans when Carver cursed. “Scotty’s calling us a cab.”

Meaning Scotty would soon be out front, wondering where the hell they’d gone. *Shit*. He pushed Carver away as if burned.

“Stupid.” He thunked his head against the brickwork. “Ow!”

“Sure, give yourself a concussion. That always helps.”

“Well, I’m already halfway there, thanks to you.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver closed in again, lips teasing at David's as he spoke. "I can make it feel better."

"Carver..."

Guiding him deeper down the narrow passage, Carver ignored his interruption. "I can make you forget all about the pain." He was already working David's belt with a dexterity that belied his drunken state.

"Scotty—"

"Will never find us back here." He suckled along the column of David's neck, loosening his tie and opening the shirt to access more skin. "If she even comes looking, she'll think we found another cab and left. Don't say no, David. You want this as much as I do."

And here was the regret. "We can't—"

Carver growled, a sound that went straight to David's cock. "Stop thinking for one goddamned minute, David." His hand forced its way into David's slacks to wrap around his hard-on, making them both hiss. The feel of it seemed to soothe Carver's aggression. "Just feel. Just feel good. Christ, you feel so fucking good."

"You're drunk and it's dark." Despite his words, David opened Carver's pants and drew out his cock with a rough jerk. "Anything would feel good to you right now."

Carver took both cocks in one hand and started jerking them together, shaking his head. "Not anything. You."

David was gone. There was no way he could stop this now, even if he wanted to. Instead, he took control of the situation, curling his hand around Carver's jacking them, enjoying the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

feel of their cocks sliding against his palm, and backed Carver the two steps it took to slam him against the other wall of the narrow passage. "I thought we agreed this was about my pleasure," he said on a growl.

"Oh, fuck." Carver arched against him, the threat in David's voice already enough to bring him close to coming. "What do you want? Don't make me stop. Just please tell me what the hell you want."

"Condom?"

Carver groaned. "Wallet. Back right pocket."

David left their cocks to Carver's control and fished out the wallet. Condom out, he shoved the wallet into Carver's jacket pocket and tugged Carver's hand away. In response, Carver started to turn around. David grabbed hold of Carver's dick, stopping him, and rolled the condom down its length.

"David, what—"

"My pleasure, Carver." Shoving his jeans and briefs to his knees, David braced himself against the wall beside Carver.

Carver moved behind him, curling his arms around David, even as his cock probed for entrance. "Your wish is my command."

David didn't bother to hold back a satisfied groan when Carver pushed into him. When he was all the way in, he stopped, his body trembling against David's as he fought for control. "Feel good?" Even his voice shook.

"Yeah."

"How's your head?"

"Not thinking about it at the moment."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver chuckled in the darkness. “Good. So, you going to let me steer? Or are you going to call the shots?”

The alcohol and the feel of Carver filling him had David drifting on ecstasy, forgetting all thoughts of domination and restraint for the sheer unadulterated now. “I think you can manage.”

Carver’s tongue stroked David’s ear before he nipped at the lobe. “I’ll try not to disappoint.”

“I have every confidence.”

But he was moving already, short, firm strokes that could only be called fucking and yet felt like so much more. Maybe it was the way Carver was holding him—protective, possessive—that made the difference.

When his hand moved back to David’s cock, he stopped caring.

Carver came first, his cry muffled against the back of David’s neck. A few unsteady strokes and David followed.

Much to David’s surprise, when Carver pulled out and removed the condom, he didn’t drop it on the ground. Instead, he carried it over and pitched it into the nearby dumpster. Turning back, he caught David watching him.

“What?”

David grinned.

“What?”

“I’m just trying to think what I could accomplish with you given more than three days.”

“Bastard. Do up your pants before we get caught for indecency.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“So we’ve broken you of littering and public nudity.” David did up his fly despite Carver’s instruction. “Will wonders never cease.”

“Yeah, well, you know what I wonder?”

“What’s that?”

Carver was in his personal space again, warm body pressed close. “I wonder how good those shots would have tasted off your chest.”

“You are an insatiable bastard.”

“No, I’m a horny drunk. What are you going to do about it?”

“Not feed you alcohol.”

Carver snorted. “You’re no fun.”

“Yet you keep coming back.”

“We’ve already established I’m not the sharpest light bulb at the inn.”

“Christ, that doesn’t even remotely make sense.” David laughed. “You’re going to be useless tomorrow, aren’t you?”

“And you’ll be perfectly pressed.”

“It’s Saturday tomorrow, Carver.”

“Pfft. I’ve seen your jeans, David.” Carver ran his hands along David’s thighs before tugging him close. “And they look much better rumpled next to my bed.”

Then Carver stepped away and shambled out of the alley, searching for a cab.

Hangover or no hangover, David was looking forward to the weekend and all that it was promising.

CHAPTER 19

It was a good weekend.

David arrived at the station Monday morning feeling more relaxed than he had in years. It was hard to keep a stoic expression, and the day shift seemed to be able to tell. Or it could be that they'd seen Scotty drink him under the table Friday night that accounted for the smirks that accompanied almost every, "Good morning, Lieutenant," he was greeted with.

Montgomery wasn't smiling. "Morning, Lieutenant. Can I see you in my office?"

It wasn't a request.

"Close the door, Lieutenant," the commander said when he

SINS OF ARROGANCE

entered the office. “We need to discuss Eliot.”

David’s blood ran cold. *Shit*. They’d been caught Friday night. He knew better than to go in that alley. Best to bite the bullet.

“Sir, I can explain.”

“I really don’t think you can, Lieutenant.” He handed David a file. “I just got this report from Intel.”

David realized he was letting his paranoia run away with him and took a deep breath before reading the file name. “Automobile Theft Pattern Correlation Multi-zone” and the year.

Surprised, he looked up at Montgomery.

“They found a correlation on our mysterious car theft ring.” Montgomery looked colder than David had ever seen him. “The thefts in our area started rising shortly after your protégé Eliot was transferred up the hill.”

“You think he’s behind this?”

“I don’t know. That’s what I want you to find out.”

“Carver’s a hothead, sir. He doesn’t have the focus to pull off something like this.”

Montgomery’s eyebrow arched up.

“Which isn’t admissible evidence, I understand that. But you’ve seen the detective...do you think he’d capable of heading up a carjacking ring?”

“It doesn’t matter what you or I think, Logan. We need hard evidence either way.”

“It’s not him.” David closed the file and stood.

“Objectivity is your strongest tool. Don’t lose that.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Have you ever known me to be anything but?”

“No. But you’ve never called anyone under your command by their first name, either.” Before David could defend himself, inwardly berating himself for the gaffe, Montgomery leaned forward. “I trust your judgment, Detective, you know that. All I’m asking is that you prove it.”

“Yes, sir.”

David took the thick file back into his office and shut the door, not glancing over at where Carver was joking around with Scotty in their usual morning routine. He couldn’t afford to be distracted, not now when it could mean Carver’s freedom, let alone his job. Sitting down and grabbing a pen and a notepad out of his drawer, he started reading the file.

It was long and tedious, dry facts and incomprehensible graphs and map after map of thefts by location, make, model, year, color, owner demographic, dealer, repair shop, any small detail they could think of. Intel’s goal was not to give the reader information from these. They were simply the documentation for the three-page summary at the front of the file, the one that posited involvement by someone on the police force, someone with substantive procedural knowledge and a reason to have shifted operations within the last six months. Carver was never directly named, but only an idiot would miss the implication.

David knew it couldn’t be him. It would be difficult to impossible to manage a car theft ring while spending three days stark naked and being trained to submit by a demanding Dom. Carver was barely out of David’s sight the entire time,

SINS OF ARROGANCE

and his cell phone never rang. And then he had only had one day back at work before the weekend, when he once again spent two days under David's watchful thumb. Even if David revealed that information, costing both of them their jobs, it still wouldn't exonerate Carver. "Conflict of interest," they would say, and Carver could still go down for this.

Montgomery was right. David needed proof.

Short of getting the kid they had in custody to roll over and give them a name... Couldn't hurt to try again, could it? And even if David didn't get a name, he might get something else.

Slipping the folder into his middle desk drawer, he grabbed up his keys and headed out.

"Watch out, Scotty, the lieutenant's on a mission," Carver called out as David passed by.

David didn't acknowledge him. He couldn't. He needed distance if he was going to do his job right and save Carver's ass.

* * *

The notes from surveillance said the kid, Andrew Healy, had a predictable routine, at least for the week they'd watched him. The current budget didn't allow for longer monitoring on such a tenuous lead, no matter how important the higher-ups made the case. Andrew left every morning for classes at the university at ten, visited a few of the academic buildings during the day, spent a lot of time in the library and the student union, and then came back to his apartment around six. They only saw him go out once, other than running for

SINS OF ARROGANCE

groceries, and that was on Thursday evening to go to a nightclub a lot of the students frequented. There he met a young brunette, who was described as “friendly,” and they partied until the place closed, at which time Andrew took the girl home with him. She left at six-thirty the next morning. Andrew didn’t appear until his usual time and spent Friday following his regular schedule.

David checked his watch. Nine-fifty-five.

Sure enough, five minutes later, young Andrew strolled out into the sunshine and headed toward campus. David didn’t follow. Instead, he waited for the kid to get out of view before heading into the apartment building.

Andrew had a first-floor apartment to himself. Unusual, but a lucky enough find in a college town. Expensive area of town, though. None of the reports had said anything about him having a job, and David was certain a scholarship wouldn’t cover this kind of a place. Maybe he had a roommate, although the reports hadn’t mentioned one. Just in case, David knocked on the door.

“Did you forget your keys?”

The door jerked open to reveal what must be the friendly brunette, dressed in a long T-shirt and probably not much on underneath, her hair a tousled mess and her face free of make-up, looking as startled to see David as he was to see her. “Oh, sorry, I thought you were Andy.” She tugged the end of her shirt down, which only opened up the neck more.

“No, sorry. I’m David Logan. I’m one of Andy’s TAs.” The cover story came easily. One of the benefits of his

SINS OF ARROGANCE

younger age was that he could slip into the university community as easily as the business one when he had to. He had done more than his share of undercover work at most of the area schools when he was a detective. It was one more skill not easily forgotten. "I was hoping to catch him."

"Nope, sorry. He just left." She started to close the door.

"The thing is"—he stopped her, not threatening but determined—"he borrowed a book from me that really belongs to Professor McGill, and I need it for tomorrow's lecture. You don't know where he might have left it, do you?"

She surrendered. "I don't know, but why don't you come in and look around? His desk is over there." She waved in the general direction of the back corner of the living room where a computer was set up on a pressboard desk. Andrew had spent more on the flat screen TV.

The girlfriend disappeared into the bedroom, but David could still hear her talking. "I just moved in two weeks ago, so I'm not sure where he keeps everything yet."

"Big step." David started poking around the apartment, looking for any kind of lead.

"Yeah." She stuck her head back out. "I think he just wanted sex on demand."

"And you?"

She shrugged and disappeared again. "The same, I guess. Plus this is a sweet place, if I can ever get him to clean up."

"I heard he got in some trouble with the law not long ago."

"Yeah." When she came back out, she was wearing a fuchsia mini and a brown belly shirt, which made David

SINS OF ARROGANCE

wonder why she'd felt shy in the T-shirt. Sitting down, she started pulling on a strappy pair of high heels. "He's lucky that cop took care of things for him. What the hell was he thinking, trying to boost a car with a gun in his pocket?"

"Cop?"

"Yeah." She picked up a pair of dangly earrings from the coffee table and started threading them through her ears. "He didn't tell me his name. Just said the guy squared things for him. I'm just glad he's quit that business now."

"Even if it means losing this place?"

"Andy said not to sweat it. But then Andy always seems to have something in the works." She shrugged. "It's a real shame he got caught. Other than the whole getting caught part." Her laughter was too high. "He could've sued the police for brutality."

"What? Oh, you mean a cop beat him up? He looked like he'd gone through a meat grinder."

"I know! How sick is it they let people like that be cops? Animals. Worse than the criminals, you know?" Blushing, she tugged on one of the earrings. "Sorry, you came here for a book, and I'm just talking away. Andy says the only time I shut up is when...well, yeah. How about I just go? You don't mind locking up when you leave, do you? Andy would have a fit if his precious plasma disappeared."

"I think I can manage." Sometimes it was almost too easy.

At the door, she hesitated. "You're going to be with McGill next term, right?"

"Unless the department does something drastic."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Good.” She beamed. “I look forward to it.”

As soon as she was gone, David pulled on a pair of latex gloves and powered up the computer. *If he was like most college kids...*

Sure enough, it booted up without requiring a password of any kind. David opened the browser and checked Healy’s favorites. Among the porn links and web comics, there was a link for Steel City Credit Union. David clicked on it, and it opened up to a log-in screen with the user id “ahealy” already in place and requesting a password. David took another chance. Consulting the notes he’d brought, he typed in Healy’s birth date.

His luck didn’t hold. A red error message appeared, warning him that two more failures would lock the account. He checked the desk drawer for a notebook before noticing the sticky note on the side of the monitor. \$=087139. David tried it.

The account summary page opened quickly, revealing the chaotic banking habits of a twenty-two-year-old college student. Lots of outgo, not much income, except for irregular payments over the past three months from a Faulsey Parts & Service, ending with a three thousand dollar payment last week.

David wrote down the name, turned off the computer, and left, locking the apartment behind him as promised.

Back at the station, he went to Baker’s and Moody’s desks. “I want you to see what you can find out about this business.”

Moody took the paper and read it before handing it to

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Baker. “Sure thing, Lieutenant.” He was already turning to his computer. “We looking for anything in particular?”

“Hopefully it’ll be self-explanatory. Just see what comes up. Full spread, gentlemen.”

He was startled to find Montgomery standing in his doorway watching him when he turned around. “Find something?”

“Nothing admissible, but hopefully it’s enough of a lead to get us started. Healy’s girlfriend confirmed there’s a cop involved. Apparently, this unknown officer promised to help Healy with his conviction. I’m going to check with evidence to make sure nothing’s been tampered with.”

“Give it to one of the men to do.”

“Can’t, sir. It was Eliot and Scott’s bust; it’d look suspicious if another officer were asking after it.”

“And you don’t know who to trust right now.”

“No, sir.”

“As you see fit, Lieutenant.”

It wasn’t until David was back in the safety of his own office that he dared to look at Carver. Fortunately, Carver was too engrossed relating a story to Scotty, all broad gestures and...happy. If Carver was the cop behind the ring—the pen in David’s hand cracked. *Damn it*. He needed to keep an open mind. Even more, though, he needed to be right about Carver.

He prayed Baker and Moody found something.

CHAPTER 20

Carver couldn't help grinning when he saw David waiting in the hall when he got home that night. "I hope you aren't expecting me to give you a key." Although there was a certain appeal to the thought.

"I need to talk to you."

David hadn't been that cold and stoic to him in more than a week. It felt like a lifetime, but it was definitely frigid enough to be a warning Carver hadn't expected. "So talk."

"Inside."

"Anything you have to say—"

"Inside, Carver. This isn't for public consumption."

Carver clenched his jaw. "Save it, David. I can get dumped

SINS OF ARROGANCE

out here in the hall just as well as in my apartment.”

“Carver, will you just open the fucking door already?”

That was enough out of character to pull Carver out of it. “Fine. Jesus, what’s your problem?” He pulled out his keys and opened the door. “I figured since you took half the day off, you’d be a little more relaxed.”

“I wasn’t off. I was working.” He shut the door behind him.

“On what?”

David didn’t reply, just looked around the apartment, frowning.

The dishes weren’t done from that morning, but everything else was in order. Christ, the apartment hadn’t been this clean when he’d moved in.

Carver wracked his brain, trying to figure out what he might have done wrong to earn David’s wrath. He came up with nothing. It had been a slow day. No chance for assaulting a suspect. He and Scotty hadn’t even gone out on a call. He’d been forced to do paperwork. Not just *do* paperwork, but get ahead on it.

He couldn’t take it. “What the hell did I do?”

“Faulsey Parts & Service. Does that ring any bells?”

“Yeah, it’s where I go to keep the Mustang purring along. What’s that got to do with anything?”

David turned on him, eyes flint like and hard. “How long?”

“What?”

“How long? Simple question, Carver.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

"I don't know. Since my early twenties, after Uncle Remo retired. I still don't understand—"

"Ever notice anything funny about their business?"

"Not really. They go through mechanics pretty fast, so I only really know Danny, the owner."

"What would you say if I told you they've been making some unusual payments to that car thief you beat up last week?"

"Then I'd say we need to look into them more closely."

"We are."

"What do you mean, 'We are'? That's my case, mine and Scotty's. If anyone should be looking into it, it should be us."

"You can't, Carver."

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"It means you can't. It means you have to keep as far away from this as you can, you understand?"

Oh, Carver was starting to understand, all right. "You think I had something to do with this, don't you?"

"No, I don't."

"Don't shit around with me, David. Someone does, don't they? Who? Montgomery?"

"It's higher than that."

"Jesus fucking Christ!" Carver paced, running his hands furiously through his hair. "What the fuck do they want from me? My head on a goddamn stick?"

"It couldn't have been you," David said, obviously impatient. "I know where you were when the last payment was made."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yeah, like you can tell them I was too busy getting your cock up my ass to be paying off some two-bit car thief. Get real, David!”

“I could tell them. It just wouldn’t do either of us any good.”

“I don’t know, darling of the department. You’d probably get off with a slap on the wrist. Hell, I’m sure they’d be ecstatic to have proof you’re actually human after all.”

David frowned. “I’m not the bad guy here, Carver.”

Which is why Carver slammed his fist into the wall instead of David. “Fuck!” He shook it out. Nothing broken, but it sure hurt like a bitch and only served to piss him off more. “I should’ve known they were just saving me for something else.”

“This isn’t a conspiracy, Carver.”

“No? Come on, David; give it to me straight. You wouldn’t be here all Ramrod Logan if it weren’t bad. What have you got?”

To his surprise, David answered. “We have the Faulsey connection. The occurrence of thefts in Zone Six increased forty-three percent within two weeks of your transfer, while they dropped off twenty-one percent in your previous precinct. And someone went into Evidence last week and made Healy’s gun disappear, so we’ve got nothing to hold over him to try to make him roll on his boss.”

“Meaning there’s a cop involved.”

“Meaning there’s a cop involved,” David agreed.

“Jesus.” The recitation took the wind out of Carver’s sails.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

He slumped down on the sofa. “Well, that explains why they transferred me instead of firing me. If they suspected me back then, they weren’t going to let their prime suspect out of their sight.”

“You’re giving the department too much credit for foresight. None of the Intel reports I received were dated earlier than a month ago. And no one’s naming you directly.”

“But it’s pretty obvious who they mean, isn’t it?”

David was silent.

“Goddamn it.” He rubbed his eyes. “Guess I’ll be giving some poor fuck at the public defender’s office the worst case of their career.”

“You’re going to give up just like that?”

“What the hell else am I supposed to do?”

David studied him for a long, silent moment. “I guess you’re right,” he said finally.

“About which part?”

“I guess I really did take your balls.”

“That’s not funny, David.”

“It’s not meant to be.”

“I still have my balls, believe me.” He grimaced. “But even I can see when I’m fucked. At least now I know why they didn’t take my job after the mess with Lucas. Maybe if I resign, it’ll all go away.”

“Then you might as well go in and confess, Carver. Resigning is as good as admitting your guilt.”

He surged up off the couch into David’s face. “So what in the hell am I supposed to do, huh? What do you want from

SINS OF ARROGANCE

me? Tell me, Lieutenant, because right now I'm not seeing any other way."

"Fight." David shoved him back a step. "Back." He shoved him again. "God, Carver, you fight every other stupid thing you come up against in your life, but the one time it's important, you roll over like a whipped dog."

"I'm not rolling over, I'm stuck," he stated. "I can't go near the case, so I can't try to clear my name. You won't let me resign. I'm stuck, David."

David just looked disappointed.

"There's nothing I can do. Christ, stop looking at me like that."

"Like what?"

"Like you wonder why you've been wasting your time with me. And you have, haven't you? There's no fixing me." Carver dropped back onto the couch. "I'm fucked, and you'd be smart to cut your losses before you're fucked, too."

"Is there anyone who might have a grudge against you?"

Carver glared at him. "What do you think?"

"I'm serious, Carver."

"You think I'm not? I've stepped on a lot of toes. About the only person who doesn't have a grudge against me is Scotty. And that's probably just because she's ahead cash-wise thanks to me."

David sighed and sat on the couch beside him. "For once in your goddamned life, Carver, think. There have to be a few people who stand out."

"Why do you care?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David looked like Carver had just slapped him. “You know what? You’re right.” He stood. “If you ever get your head out of your ass, Carver, let me know. Otherwise, I’ll see you at work tomorrow.”

The door slammed behind him.

Carver stared at it for a long time after David left. One more thing he’d fucked up.

After he fucked up, he moved on, didn’t he? He didn’t wallow. What’s done is done and it was a waste of time looking back. But just because he moved on didn’t mean other people did.

When you had a long list of suspects, you focused on the most likely. So, who was the most likely to want to fuck him over? Buggy? Nah, Buggy had already done him in once. And the man was too squeaky otherwise. Hell, he made David look flawed.

Murchison might have been biding his time. Carver had led the sting that took him down. But Murchison was no longer a cop.

If the man hadn’t just made captain, Carver decided that maybe old Mickey Odette might have a grudge. He’d been Carver’s first partner and Carver may have sort of taken more credit than he should on the case that earned him lieutenant. But Mickey was a good sport.

Minor slights hardly added up to setting him up for something this big.

It was also possible that he just got the short end of the stick.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

There had to be something.

Buggy had been by the station a few days ago. As many asses as that man kissed, he might have told Scotty something inconsequential. The man had an ear for gossip like no one else.

Carver sought out his mobile. Scotty answered on the second ring.

“What’s going on, Carver?” Scotty sounded breathless and not at all pleased to be interrupted.

“You said Buggy, er, Yuri Connors came by the station last week, yeah?”

“Who? Huh?” Her voice was muffled, but Carver could still hear her breathing heavily.

“Buggy Connors, my old partner. Remember? Sleazy, disgusting homophobe?”

“Jesus Christ, Carver, do you have to talk about him now?” The phone fumbled, and Carver thought he heard a man’s voice and then a hard slap.

“Scotty, are you okay?”

“Yes, Carver, I’m fine. I’m just...a little...busy right now. Oh, Jesus, Rick!”

He heard Rick’s voice clearly now in the background. “You lose.”

“Jesus Christ, are you two fucking?”

“Yes, damn it!” She groaned, low and loud, in a way that couldn’t help but arouse even Carver’s men-only cock. “I’ll call you back in twenty minutes.”

“Half an hour,” Rick insisted in the background.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

"Half an hour," she repeated and hung up the phone. Okay, *there* was an image he could have lived without. Forty-five minutes later, Scotty called back.

"What did I tell you, Carver?"

"Tell me about what?"

"About calling me."

He frowned. "Don't call you before nine."

"Exactly. So this had better be damned important."

"Wait, this is because you have sex before nine, not because you're a minute miser?" Jesus, some people.

"Not every night. But better to be safe than sorry."

"Who the hell has sex before nine?"

"People who have to get up early for work the next day and are lucky if they're not passed out by ten at night."

"Prime time isn't the time for kinky sex games."

"How do you know it's kinky?"

"I could hear the two of you. It was kinky."

Scotty snorted. "You have no idea."

"Okay, stop there. I already have enough to be in therapy for."

"Who knew you were such a prude?"

"Sweetheart, if you knew half the things I did, you wouldn't be saying that."

"Oh, such as?"

She would probably get off on the details, especially if she knew David was involved. "No more sex talk, all right? Can we discuss Yuri Connors, please?"

"Why the big bug up your butt about Connors? I thought

SINS OF ARROGANCE

you hated the guy.”

“I do, but apparently somebody’s setting me up, and I want to know if he said anything to you.”

“Carver, what’s going on?” She sounded genuinely worried now.

“I can’t talk about it right now. Just tell me, when he came in, what did he say?”

“Not much. It was late Wednesday afternoon. He came in around four-thirty and was looking around. For you, actually. Komerski sent him over to me instead. He made a couple of sly innuendos and then ratted you out about the gigolo, hoping to get me all offended, I guess. When I wasn’t, he just told me to tell you he was sorry he missed you, but he’d aim better next time.”

“And after that?”

“I don’t know. It was almost five and Rick was waiting, so I was in kind of a hurry.”

“For your afternoon delight,” he couldn’t resist prodding.

“Hey, mister, just because you have no sex life...”

“My sex life is just fine, thank you very much.”

“Carver, be honest with your partner now. How bad is it?”

He rubbed his eyes. “It’s pretty bad, Brigid.”

“Shit, it must be if you’re calling me by that name. Anything I can do to help?”

“Just keep your ears open. I’m supposed to stay the hell away from it, but if you hear anything...”

“I’ll let you know.”

“Thanks, Scotty. And, um, sorry about interrupting

SINS OF ARROGANCE

earlier.”

“Don’t sweat it. Rick actually likes it when people call during.”

“I am never eating dinner at your place again.”

“Rick’s making lasagna Thursday.”

“Fine, I’m never eating dinner at your place again after Thursday.”

Scotty laughed. “Take care of yourself, Carver. And I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Night, Scotty.”

So Buggy had stopped by specifically to see him that day, had he? It didn’t mean anything, but... Hopefully, David could turn something credible up.

Christ, David.

Carver dialed his phone before he could reconsider. It went straight to voice mail. *Shit.*

“David, it’s Carver. Obviously. I was just calling...” Fuck, why was he calling? “Never mind. I’ll see you in the morning.”

When he didn’t give a shit, he always managed to find his way out of trouble. Now when he did care...

Tomorrow was tomorrow and he’d deal with it all then. Right now, the bottle of vodka in his freezer was calling.

CHAPTER 21

David's coffee had been cold on his desk for an hour, untouched.

He hadn't even reached for it since he'd gotten in. Instead, he poured over every chart, every map, every report in Intel's file looking for some other line of investigation. There had to be something. If only he could find it.

The tap on the door startled him.

It shouldn't have surprised him to find Carver standing there. "Can I come in?"

Recovering, David gestured to the chair across from him. "Of course."

Carver came in and shut the door behind him, but didn't sit

SINS OF ARROGANCE

down, choosing instead to lean against the doorframe. "I'm sorry I was such a jackass last night."

David relaxed a little. "As opposed to..."

Carver cracked a half smile. "I deserved that."

"Apology accepted." David waited, but Carver didn't move. "Was there something else?"

"That the case file?"

"Yes, and that's as close as you're going to get."

Carver held up his hands. "I know how serious this is, David."

"Lieutenant."

"Lieutenant." Carver grimaced. "I'm not going to jeopardize what miniscule chance I have of beating this."

"Good. Now if there's nothing else, you should get out of here."

"Put Scotty back on the case."

"You know I can't—"

"I'll stay out of it, I swear, but she's the only one I trust besides you to figure this out. Let her work on it with whoever you've got on it. Please."

That admission of trust was what David had been waiting months to hear, and yet here he was, completely unable to protect him. "It won't do any good. There's nothing there. I've been over it all and I just— I'm sorry, Carver. I tried. The only thing left is to go to Montgomery and tell him we were together last week. At least that will give you an ironclad alibi for the payout to Healy, which would give reasonable doubt to any case the DA might—"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Don’t.”

David looked at him.

“I’m not worth it. If I go down, I go down. I don’t want to take you with me. Just...give the case back to Scotty, okay? McGuire’s on vacation, so I can partner with Olenik for a few days if you’re worried about contamination.”

“I shouldn’t.”

“I know.”

“You are a stubborn bastard, you know that?”

He was grateful for Carver’s grin.

“Yeah, I hear that from time to time.” Carver opened the door, but hesitated. Looking back, he said, “Thanks,” and disappeared.

David was just settling back in with the file when a knock sounded at his door.

“Enter.”

Scotty poked her head in. “Hey, Lieutenant, Carver said you wanted to see me?”

Of course, Carver couldn’t let David do this on his own schedule. God forbid. “Right. Please have a seat, Detective Scott. And close the door.”

She did, sitting in the seat Carver had rejected earlier.

“Detective Eliot has told you what’s going on?”

She played it cool. “With what, sir?”

“No need to be coy, Detective. I can guess how much he’s told you already. He’s asked me to reassign you to the case.”

“Reassign?” Now she was genuinely surprised. “But, sir, that case was ours in the first place.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yes, yes, I’ve already had my authority called into question by Detective Eliot. Baker and Moody are following a line of questioning I gave them yesterday. I’m sure you, at least, can understand why it would be very bad for Carver to be anywhere near this investigation.”

Her expression was uncharacteristically stony. “Yes, sir.”

“Good.” He closed Intel’s file and handed it to her. “See what you can make of this, and then talk to Baker and Moody.”

“What about Carver?”

“He’ll be working with Olenik until McGuire returns.”

“And after?”

“We’ll deal with after if it comes to that.”

“Understood.” She rose. “Is there anything else, sir?”

He had earned the ill will of Brigid Scott. Carver was one lucky man. “No, that will be all.”

“Yes, sir.”

Damn, did they all use “sir” when they were pissed?

His phone rang. “Logan.”

“My office, please, Lieutenant.”

“Yes, Commander.”

How the hell had Montgomery already found out?

He didn’t knock, just entered. “Commander?”

Montgomery didn’t even invite him to sit. “What is Eliot doing at McGuire’s desk?”

Motivate Carver properly and he wasted no time.

“I’ve reassigned him to working with Olenik while McGuire’s out.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Are there problems between him and Detective Scott?”

“No, sir.” *Quite the opposite.* “I’ve reassigned her to the carjacking.”

“That’s really not a wise move, Lieutenant.”

“I know it isn’t. However, Detective Scott is one of the officers I trust implicitly. Despite the conflict of interest, she’s always proven herself objective and competent when it comes to investigations.”

“And what about your objectivity, Lieutenant?”

“Sir?”

“I know Eliot’s become a project of yours, Logan, but some things, some people, just can’t be changed. I don’t want to see you ruin your career over this.”

“Commander, I appreciate your concern, but it really isn’t necessary. I know Eliot’s clean, at least on this. It just isn’t his MO.”

“How so?”

“This is the man who gets in fights with criminals and has sex with a witness. Those aren’t the acts of a calculating ringleader. If this was a rash of murders, fine. Crimes of passion would be right up his alley, but something like this takes too much consideration. Eliot’s lucky to remember to pay his utility bills once a month. There’s no way he’d be able to set up the laundering operation that a ring like Intel is proposing would require.”

Montgomery actually chuckled at that. “You’re more right than you know.” He sobered. “But we’re still back to needing evidence.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

"I know, sir. That's why I want Detective Scott on this. She's an experienced and talented investigator."

"And she has a personal interest in finding what you're looking for."

"Yes, sir."

Montgomery was quiet for a moment, then nodded. "Report all findings to me, is that clear?"

That rankled, but David replied again with, "Yes, sir."

"And stop with the 'sir,' Lieutenant. I'm not your enemy here."

"I'm sorry, Commander."

"It's never easy to think it might be one of our own." Montgomery turned back to his work. "That's all, Lieutenant."

"Yes...Commander."

As he headed back to his office, he glanced over automatically to Carver's desk and flinched to find it empty before tracking across the squad room to find him leaning casually against Olenik's desk, who was looking befuddled, but seemed to be updating Carver on his case load. As though sensing him, Carver looked up and met his gaze before giving him a slow blink. Thank you.

David nodded. It was all he could do at the moment.

He went back into his office and shut the door. It was the only way to keep himself from harassing Scotty for answers she couldn't possibly have yet.

CHAPTER 22

Carver felt like a fool. He hadn't cooked, seriously cooked, in...way too long. He wanted to make an effort, though, and maybe impress David, even if said effort came out tasting like shit. Although steaks were pretty hard to fuck up, so long as you didn't overcook them.

"Should've just taken him out to dinner," he grumbled, grabbing a wedge of tomato out of the salad and popping it into his mouth. Fresh fruit and vegetables weren't half-bad, as long as he didn't forget about them and leave them to rot in his fridge. It still smelled vaguely of oranges gone bad in there, which only bothered him because it would bother David. "Pathetic."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

There was a knock at his door just as he was reaching for a green pepper. *About damn time.*

He wiped his hands on a dishtowel and threw it on the counter on his way to answering the door. "Maybe I should just give you the key," he said, burying nerves under a layer of cocky when he opened the door to find David there. "Although why you'd want to spend so much time in this hole when you've got that fancy house to go to is beyond me."

David's serious expression didn't change. "What, after all the effort I've put into this place?"

"Hey, I was the one on my knees."

"Yes, I seem to remember that." David looked him up and down. "Were you planning to invite me in?"

"I was."

David waited.

"Oh, fine, come in."

He was getting used to the quick evaluation David did every time he walked into the apartment, but Carver knew the only thing out of place was the dishtowel on the counter. David turned to him at last. "Did you actually iron that shirt?"

"The dry cleaners did. And the slacks, okay? Don't make a thing of it." Grabbing the towel, he used it as a hot mitt to pull the steaks from under the broiler.

"And you cooked."

"Yes, I cooked. I told you that I could." He was starting to feel like an idiot.

"Is this salad? You made a salad?"

"Are you going to make fun of everything I do tonight?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver tried to keep his frustration in check. This wasn't easy for him; couldn't David see that? But he was trying. Fuck if he understood why.

Warm hands settled on his shoulders and David was suddenly a solid presence against his back. "Thank you, Carver."

Damn, that oven made it warm in here. "You're welcome," he replied stiffly. He sucked at this. He really did.

"It smells wonderful." David's lips against the back of his neck made Carver question whether he was talking about the food or him.

"Burnt animal flesh always smells good."

"I feel like I should've brought wine."

"That would make this a date."

"What is it, then?"

Carver turned to face him. "A thank you."

David's brows drew together in confusion. "For what?"

"For today. It... Just, thank you. I get that it's not the right way of handling this, but I feel better about it."

"Scotty was a good call. Even the commander agrees."

"Well, good. That's good. Have a seat, and I'll bring these over."

"Any beer left?"

"Yes, believe it or not."

David wore a small smile. "Oh, I might believe it." He gestured at the dinner. "You wouldn't have had time to shower, change, cook all this and drink two full six-packs in the hour or so since you got off shift."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Don’t forget I also picked up the dry cleaning.”

“How could I?” He pulled two beers out of the fridge, opened them both and set one on the counter. “You know, if I were a cynical man, I’d think you wanted something from me. But since you already bludgeoned your own way out of me this morning...”

Carver had expected the doubt. Really, David had no reason not to doubt him, the last week or so notwithstanding. It still hurt. “You caught me.” He pulled the potatoes out of the oven and switched off all the gas. “I wanted to say I’m sorry, too.”

“For?”

“Bludgeoning my way with you this morning.”

Up went his eyebrows. “You’re apologizing?”

He *would* make this difficult. “Yes, I am. I wouldn’t do it any differently, but it wasn’t fair to put you into that position. And, well...I wanted to show that I do still have my balls.” Carver reached for the beer and stopped. “Can I?”

“You can and you may.” David smirked.

“Grammar Nazi.” The beer was cold and slid down smooth. Bottles were the way to go. “Now, would you please have a seat before dinner gets cold?”

David sat. “It’s good to let the steaks sit. Helps the juice to set up.”

“When you cook, do it your way. But this is my meal, so—
..

“Butt out?”

“To be blunt, yes.” Carver finally smiled.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Dinner was surprisingly quiet. Carver could tell David was thinking, watching him through the whole meal. Carver had done his part. Anything else was up to David. Carver felt relaxed. There was comfort in the anticipation. Plus the food had come out well.

Afterwards, Carver cleared the table. "I don't suppose you're going to let me leave these for morning, are you?"

David leaned back against the arm of the couch. "You'd suppose right. It won't take you five minutes to load the dishwasher and wipe the counters."

Carver sighed. "You're too demanding, you know that?" he asked, even as he started rinsing the plates and putting them in the dishwasher.

"I hear that from time to time." David repeated Carver's words from that morning.

It took three-and-a-half minutes to finish cleaning up. Carver had to admit that this was a lot easier than letting it all build up for a week at a time until it was a chore, but he refused to say so to David. "There. Happy?"

David cocked an eyebrow at him. "Come here."

The words shot straight to Carver's cock. He sauntered over, stopping a foot from David. "Happy?"

"No, but I will be. Kiss me." Carver leaned in eagerly to do just that, but David pulled away at the last second. "Slowly."

One more test, but he could do slowly. He'd show David just how unhurried he could go.

Carver took David's lips in a shallow kiss, no tongue.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Light, just this side of insistent, he explored the texture of David's lips. Smooth. Never chapped. No room for anything less than perfection for David Logan. It was offset by the faintest hint of stubble. Not quite five o'clock...you couldn't see it yet. Carver could feel it, though. A hint of abrasive.

Deepening the kiss a bit, he brought his hands to rest on David's shoulders. One more point of contact.

David tipped his head to the side, opening his mouth slightly to return the lingering caress without ever ratcheting it up, his hands settling on Carver's waist.

Part of Carver screamed out to escalate this, demand more, but he'd demanded enough today, and wasn't that what this was about? Wasn't he trying to make it up to David for being so pushy before? He added his tongue finally, but only to tease along the outline of David's lips.

He was so lost in the call and response of their mouths that he was startled when David spoke. "How far is this going to go, Carver? It's not in you to be this docile."

"As far as you want."

"Do I need to chain you down?"

God. "Only if you want to."

"Are you going to fight me?"

"Only if you want me to."

David pulled him closer, letting both growing erections get pleasure from the soft collide. "I like it when you fight with me."

Carver rolled his hips. "Good thing."

"I like making you submit to me."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“You don’t make me do anything, David. I do it because I want to.”

“Even better.”

He waited, grinding subtly against David. There was something to be said for anticipation.

David leaned in, whispering his lips along Carver’s as he spoke. “I think it’s time I see just how well you take that vibe.”

Carver couldn’t have held back the groan if he’d wanted to. He very nearly came at the thought of fucking himself while David watched. Every time he opened his drawer, he saw the vibe and remembered David’s words from that first evening. And every time he was tempted to pull it out and use it. But he’d waited.

“Carver?” David’s tongue darted out, flicking against Carver’s lips. “Did I break you, Carver?”

It was easier just to be honest. “Just about. Jesus, David, you’re a kinky fuck, you know that?”

“You’re the one with the vibrator in your drawer.” He pushed Carver away. “Go get it. And anything else you need.”

There was no question of challenging him. This was what he wanted after all—this or something like it. He wanted David to push him, to see how much he could take. This he could take. This was going to be fucking amazing.

He yanked the bedside drawer out hard enough to pull the whole thing free, spilling the contents on the floor. Fuck it, David could punish him for it later. God, he was looking forward to it. For now, all he needed was the thick, flesh-

SINS OF ARROGANCE

colored vibrator, a couple of condoms and the lube. The rest he left on the floor, dropping the drawer on the chair on his way out of the room.

David was sitting in the armchair when he got back, a fresh beer already sweating in one hand, his legs casually crossed. "Put them on the table," David instructed. "Neatly."

Carver obeyed, lining everything up for ease of use. David raised an eyebrow at the condoms, but didn't say anything about it. "Now strip."

Taking his time and with great care, Carver unbuttoned his shirt, cuffs first, then the front. He laid it over the arm of the couch, moving on to his pants.

"You'd save considerable wear if you wore an undershirt." David casually sipped his beer.

"And next you'll be wanting me to wear a tie."

"It wouldn't kill you."

Carver unlooped his belt and placed it beside his shirt. Pausing with his hands on the front of his trousers, he said, "I suppose you'll also want me to wear underwear, too." He dropped his pants to the floor, bending over to retrieve them. Being at home, he hadn't bothered with socks or shoes.

David's eyes roved hungrily over him. "Oh, it all depends on the circumstances."

"So tie a must, underwear optional?"

"Yes."

"Maybe just the tie?"

David's mouth curved. "Now who's kinky?"

"You are."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Without warning, David reached out and rubbed the cold glass of his bottle against Carver's testicles. "Oh, right."

Christ. That shouldn't feel good, but it did. Carver drew a shuddering breath. "You going to fuck me with that thing, too?"

"Do you want me to?"

Staying in the game they were playing out, Carver answered truthfully, "I want whatever you want."

He watched David think about that before nodding approvingly. "Let's start with the vibrator. If I like what I see, we'll discuss it."

Oh, he'd like what he saw. Carver would make certain of that.

"How many different settings are there?"

"Seven." Carver smirked. "And, yes, I've used all seven."

"Good. That gives us something to work with."

Even with the intensity of David's scrutiny, Carver was going to need to build up to this properly. He settled on the couch opposite David, the coffee table between them, and let his legs fall open. He was acutely aware of his own nudity in contrast to David, who was still in his suit and tie from work, the knot in his tie not even askew. It was more arousing than it had any right to be, but then Carver was finding that his sense of the erotic was changing the more he got to know David.

Meeting David's gaze, Carver reached down and began fondling himself, taking his time. "You're pretty hardcore for someone your age," he said casually.

David took a sip of his beer. "I've packed in a lot."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“You going to tell me any of it?”

“Maybe.” He took another drink. “Maybe I prefer to show you.”

Carver was getting an erection now, the friction and conversation building his arousal. “Like this?”

“Exactly like this.”

“I can’t complain about the method so far.” He worked himself just a little rougher, a little harder. That extra edge to ratchet things up.

“You’ve been a good student.”

“And this is my reward?”

“No.” David toyed with the beer bottle, looking just the slightest bit smug. “This is my reward for being a good teacher.”

“Prick.” Carver reached for the vibrator, sheathing it and greasing it up before slouching down on the couch to brace his feet on the table. “Is this how you learned?” The thought of a younger David forced to perform for someone like this was enough to make his balls ache.

“Yes.”

Carver started working the lubed shaft in, taking his time, closing his eyes to let the sensations map onto the images building in his mind. “That all you’re going to give me?”

“Yes, but you keep trying. I like that about you, Carver. You’re persistent.”

“Persistent is—” he forced himself to relax, pushing the vibe in a little more. He groaned as it grazed over his prostate. *Fuck, yeah.*

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“You were saying?” David prompted.

Ease out just a bit, then back in a touch farther. Why hadn’t he done this sooner?

“Carver?”

Oh, right. “Middle name,” he finished, searching blindly for the switch.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“Settings.” He arched back at the electric tingle as the vibrator shivered to life. “You wanted to see settings.”

“I’ll tell you what I want, Carver, when I want it.”

Thought was getting more difficult as he fucked himself slowly, waiting for commands. “You want me to turn it off?” he asked, desperate.

“I didn’t say that.”

“You didn’t say anything. Oh, God, this feels good.”

“Which part? Fucking yourself? Or doing it for me?”

“The first. The second just makes it better.”

“Turn it up a notch, Carver.”

He did, moaning aloud as he started thrusting it faster.

“Two more,” David commanded in that cool, unaffected voice. His control made it all the hotter.

Carver very rarely skipped things. For all that he liked hard and fast, he tended to break the vibe out for gradual, drawn out fucks. Because he sure as hell never got it from his partners. Until David. One. Two. God. Damn.

“Talk to me, Carver. How does it feel?”

“Jesus, David.”

“That’s not talking, Carver.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“I can’t...God...” He was lost in the feel of it, senses narrowing in to the thick slide and delicious buzz and the pleasure the combination created.

Suddenly David was crouching over him. “Losing control?”

Carver whimpered.

“Don’t worry. I’m not going to make you stop. Well, I’m not going to make *it* stop anyway.” Brushing Carver’s hand aside, David took control of the vibrator.

Hands now free, Carver clutched at David’s suit, desperate to keep him close, or at the very least prevent him from escaping with Carver’s only source of pleasure.

“Isn’t this what I promised you?” David murmured against his ear, turning the setting down to its lowest, stroking him lightly. “Back when we started, didn’t I promise to make it good for both of us if you just trusted me?” Now he cranked it up to its highest setting, making Carver roar. “And you do trust me now, don’t you, Carver?” He throttled back to a middle range, still fucking him steadily.

Wrapping a hand around David’s neck, Carver pulled him down until their foreheads met. “Yeah. Yeah, I do.”

“Good. Very good.” David turned it up a notch on the in-stroke, then down two on the way out. Now up two, down one. He kept the setting right around the middle, changing it up every few strokes. Enough to keep Carver on the edge, without any consistency to push him over.

David brushed his lips against Carver’s. “I could keep this up all night. You know I could. But you also know you could

SINS OF ARROGANCE

take it.”

Oh, he knew. And he dreaded it every bit as much as he longed for it. To be rendered so helpless by pleasure, wholly dependent on David’s whims...

“Please...” he whimpered.

“Please what, Carver?”

He didn’t even know. “Please,” he said again, and David turned the vibrator up all the way and kept it there. “Fuck...God...David...”

David’s mouth was against his ear again. “That’s what you really want, isn’t it? Enough with the cheap substitute, you want me to pull out my cock and fuck you with that instead.”

“Yes!” Carver growled through grinding teeth.

“You’re going to need one of those condoms.”

Between one stroke and the next, Carver surged forward to snatch the rubber off the table, already tearing it open as he fell back against the sofa cushions, his other hand clutching at David’s pants.

“Just the fly, Carver. No more than that.”

He obeyed, easing David’s own hard-on out of his boxers and fly, the zipper just framing it enough to give a hint at his balls and the dark hair that surrounded them. David never stopped working the vibrator, even as Carver rolled the condom down onto him.

When he was ready, David let go of the toy, bracing both hands on the back of the couch behind Carver’s head. “Pull it out,” he commanded.

Carver didn’t even bother with a comeback. He did as

SINS OF ARROGANCE

ordered, savoring the cling of rubber as it came out, promising even better as soon as it was gone. Once it was free, he tossed it in the chair and grabbed David's hips to pull him in.

"I should make you put that away properly," David said, resisting Carver's urging.

"And you will. After." That couldn't have come out sounding any more needy. "Please."

David leaned forward, keeping his cock just away from where Carver so desperately wanted it. "Say it again."

"Please."

"Mm, I do like the sound of that."

"Please, David. Please, fuck me. Please, do anything you want to me. Please."

David slipped his cock into place, eyes closed. "Again," he whispered.

"Please, David." This time it came out more prayer than demand.

David buried himself in Carver.

"Thank you," Carver murmured.

David's lips curled into a soft smile as his eyes opened, heavy-lidded, to focus on Carver. He withdrew and thrust forward again, the force reverberating through Carver.

"Thank you."

David began to fuck him in a leisurely fashion, earning a thank you every time he was fully seated inside Carver. The words were every bit as hypnotic as the motion, growing meaningless and becoming something more as sensation overwhelmed him.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David's breath teased across Carver's face and he reached for it, catching it behind quick, open-mouthed kisses that didn't require Carver's grip on David's tie and neck. Carver held on anyway.

"David..."

But it was David who came first, a half growl, half whimper all the warning either of them had before he thrust hard and froze, uncontrollable spasms jerking him within Carver. It was enough to send Carver over as well, his grip on David's tie all that saved it from the same wet fate that met his shirt.

The kisses continued afterwards, slower now, more lingering, easing the separation until David pulled out and sat on the coffee table, tossing the spent condom in the trash by the end table. "I think I like the way you apologize."

Carver shoved his sweaty hair out of his face with a laugh, legs still splayed in limp contentment. "Are you kidding? I fucking love the way I apologize. Who knew it could feel so good?"

"Don't get any ideas. Not everyone is as forgiving as I am."

"Forgiving. Right. Is that what they call it now?"

David grinned wickedly, inspiring hope in Carver.

"Are you staying the night?"

Plucking at his shirt, David shook his head. "Unless you had a shirt of mine in that dry cleaning run."

Carver wished he had thought of it. "Can you at least stay for a while?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“You’re insatiable, you know that?”

“Oh, I know.” He reached across the table to grab up the vibrator, suppressing the groan his stiff muscles encouraged. “But I really want to know how well you take this.”

David’s face became inscrutable. “You might be surprised.”

“Yeah? Prove it.”

“I thought tonight was about giving me what I wanted, Carver.”

Smirking, Carver replied, “It is. Can you honestly tell me you don’t want to give this a try?”

“Dinner was good. I suppose you deserve some sort of reward for it.” Rising, David walked over to retrieve his beer bottle, then headed for the bedroom. “Coming?”

“Eventually.” His smirk became a grin as he hauled himself to his feet. He could get used to this.

CHAPTER 23

Leaving Carver's bed in the pre-dawn darkness was one of the harder things David had ever done in his life. However, the excuse he'd given was genuine. He didn't dare turn up for work in the same shirt he'd been in the day before, even if they hadn't ruined it with their activities.

The drive home had been chilly, the car windows coated with condensation that in another six weeks would be frost. David cranked up the heat in the seats, turned on the news station and made his way to his own, silent house.

He didn't bother going back to bed once he got there. Instead, he took a long, hot shower, shaved carefully and tried to decide if he was due for a haircut again. *It's getting a little*

SINS OF ARROGANCE

long over the ears, but Carver doesn't seem to mind...

David stopped himself. That was dangerous thinking. He was the one in charge, so it needed to be his opinions that mattered, not Carver's. Anything else spelled disaster for their tenuous dynamic.

After a lot of coffee and a little breakfast, David got back into the car and headed to the station, right on schedule.

Much to his surprise, Carver was already there, seated at McGuire's desk and...working. Carver caught him staring and threw a smug smirk in his direction before returning to what he was doing.

Well, stranger things had happened.

The person he expected to see was missing, which was even more surprising. He headed over to Baker's desk. "Where's Detective Scott this morning?"

He looked startled to be addressed and still only half awake. "Don't know, sir."

"Why not? You're supposed to be working with her, if I remember correctly."

Baker looked uncertainly at his usual partner. Moody was as stone faced. "We thought so, too, sir," he said at Baker's nod. "She read over our research, asked us a couple of questions and we haven't seen her since."

That wasn't like Scotty at all.

"When she does show up, please have her report to my office," he informed them.

"I'm sure she has a valid reason," Baker replied.

"Be that as it may, I still want to see her."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Yes, Lieutenant.”

By the time David poured himself a cup of coffee and reached his office, the department was already taking on the busy hum of the day. Focusing on the day-to-day minutiae of his job wasn't as easy as it usually was. He was grateful when, around ten-thirty, Carver and Olenik went out on a call. It was easier to concentrate when he wasn't constantly tempted to look up and see what Carver was doing. David realized he was becoming obsessed with the man. If he were smart, he'd take a break. With the ground rules they had laid, he was well within his boundaries to insist on it, even though he knew Carver would be furious. They needed it, the both of them. Things were getting too intense, too muddy, as last night had proven.

Even without Carver's presence, David was still distracted. The mystery of Scotty's absence troubled him. He knew she was fiercely loyal, once you earned her trust. For her to vanish when her partner's career was on the line wasn't like her. He was tempted to call her cell phone, but resisted. If she were undercover, he would break her story. If she were dodging him...well, she'd have to come in to work again sooner or later. He'd find out then.

Lunch rolled around, and David took a break to run out for a sandwich. Returning, he found Carver had as well, but still no Scotty. Concerned, he headed up front to Komerski.

“Any word from Detective Scott today?” he inquired.

“Yeah, she was in and out pretty early this morning.”

“On duty?”

Komerski consulted the log. “Yup. You know

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Scotty...even if she's sick, she still crawls in. Doesn't like to lose any of her personal time."

Seeing as her only active case at the moment was the carjacking... David was liking her absence less and less as time wore on.

"Thanks, Komerski."

He glanced automatically at Carver when he sat back down at his desk. Carver was at the computer, focused on whatever research he was working on. It was disconcerting to see him so focused until he glanced up and winked at David. He'd known he was being watched the whole time.

David shook his head and went back to work.

Around mid-afternoon, he stood up and discreetly stretched before heading to the men's room.

Carver was waiting for him when he came out of the stall.

"The shirt was a good choice, though I'm not so sure about the tie."

A quick glance around the room showed they were alone, but David still played it casual. "Since when are you an expert on ties?"

"Since I started encountering them on a more personal basis." Carver stalked across the small distance separating them. When he spoke, his voice was low, husky, and just this side of inaudible. "And I've been hard as a fucking rock since you first walked through the door this morning in your neatly pressed suit."

David's own cock twitched in response, but he replied evenly, "This is neither the time nor the place, Detective."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Give me some credit. I do realize that.” His smile was all teeth and only ratcheted up David’s arousal. “I just thought you should know.” Eyes dropping pointedly to David’s crotch, the smile grew more feral. “Have a good afternoon, Lieutenant.” With that, the bastard turned to walk away.

He should let him go. David knew that. But he couldn’t. “Carver.”

Carver looked smug when he turned around. “Lieutenant?”

“Come here.”

“Time and place, Lieutenant.”

God, he knew he’d won already. Now he was just toying with David.

“Now, Carver.”

He did, slowly and with that arrogant swagger in his hips. “Are we off duty now, Lieutenant? Because as far as I know, I’m still on the clock.”

When he was close enough, David reached up to toy with the uneven hair on the back of Carver’s neck. “Consider this your fifteen-minute break.”

“Fifteen minutes, huh? Might not be enough.” Carver pressed even closer, backing David up against the far wall.

“It had better be, because it’s all you’re going to get.” As soon as Carver’s body pressed into him, David lost all sense of restraint, pulling Carver’s head down into a searing kiss that brought both of them to full erection.

“God damn, David.” Carver’s hands coursed up his chest over the fine cotton of David’s shirt. “I never thought a suit would be so damn sexy, but after last night, all I can think

SINS OF ARROGANCE

about is you all dressed up and fucking me.”

“But aren’t you glad you know better now?” David ran his teeth lightly up the column of Carver’s neck.

“Very glad.” His fingers tightened, trying to gain purchase in David’s shirt.

“Wrinkle it and there’s going to be hell to pay, Carver,” David warned.

“I think I’m in the mood for a bit of hell.” Carver gripped David’s shirt with more intent.

“Not here.” That didn’t stop David from teasing his lips over Carver’s, pulling back when Carver pressed in for more. “Tonight I’ll give you all the hell you can take.”

“Promise?”

David ground into him, reminding him of the insistence of David’s erection. “Oh, I guarantee it.”

“What the—shit!”

The men’s room door slammed shut before David could get a look at the intruder. It was already too late, though, the damage done. They both froze, and he could see Carver’s face twisting to laugh out loud.

David didn’t find it funny at all.

He shoved Carver away, making the man stumble into the sinks, as he fought to get control of himself. It was his nightmare become reality, him giving into temptation, ignoring everything he had been taught and destroying everything. Trying to fight down the image of Robin’s disappointment, he turned and slammed his fist into the wall with a curse.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“David?”

Carver took a step closer, but David stopped him. “You need to leave. Now, Carver.”

Carver almost did, turning half a step away. But as willing as he’d become in the past few weeks to take David’s direction, Carver still couldn’t back down from a fight. “No.”

“Get the hell out of here, Carver!” David whirled on him, and Carver took a step backwards defensively. “I can’t think straight around you! If I had had better control, we wouldn’t have gotten caught. But instead I gave in, I let you get to me, and now we’re both fucked.”

“You know what?” Furious, Carver shoved David back against the wall again. “There are a lot more important things in this world than control, Logan. I thought we were getting to that point, but I guess I was wrong. You want me to go? Fine, I’m gone. Keep your fucking games to yourself.”

It was what he had wanted, but, even now, David couldn’t commit to letting Carver walk away. “Carver, wait—”

He didn’t stop.

A moment of weakness and David had managed to destroy more than six years worth of work. All because he couldn’t keep his dick under control when it came to Carver Eliot.

The irony of this situation wasn’t lost on him.

CHAPTER 24

At least the shit didn't hit the fan until the day's end. For that much, Carver was grateful. He was walking a fine line after the recent brutality charge. Add in the carjacking suspicions and the reason for his transfer in the first place... He was fucked. Throw in fraternization and he was royally fucked. Unfortunately, it wasn't just his ass on the line this time.

Just after five, Montgomery called Carver into his office. David was already there, face a predictably blank mask.

"Close the door and sit down, Eliot." Montgomery waited until he'd complied. "I'm sure you know why you're here."

That wasn't leading or anything, like being pulled over for

SINS OF ARROGANCE

speeding and getting asked if you knew how fast you were going. You were pretty much screwed either way, but if you answered, you didn't have a prayer.

Seeing as that was exactly what he didn't have, Carver answered, "May I speak freely, sir?"

The commander frowned but nodded. "Proceed."

"Whatever you've been told, it's wrong, sir."

"Is it?"

Carver could feel David's eyes boring into him, but at least he kept his mouth shut. That was the only thing that was going to save him.

"Yes, sir."

"What did happen, Eliot?"

"It was all me. I made the pass at Lieutenant Logan, sir. He did not reciprocate."

"The witness claims otherwise."

"Having done more than witness the event, sir, I can assure you it was not otherwise."

"Sir, if I might interrupt," David tried.

Carver could tell David had finally twigged on what he intended to do.

"You'll wait your turn, Lieutenant."

It was obvious David wanted to argue, but David had lived his controlled life too long to do anything but obey. Carver didn't envy him.

"I'm sure the lieutenant is going to try to do the right thing. That's the sort of man he is. But the situation was entirely of my making. The lieutenant has been trying to help me with my

SINS OF ARROGANCE

anger management issues, for all the good it's done," he said grimly. "But I misjudged the intent behind his actions and thought I saw something more than professional in his motivation. I finally decided I'd had enough pussy footing around and confronted the lieutenant, making the inappropriate advance brought to your attention. Had it gone unwitnessed, that would've been the end of it, as Lieutenant Logan made his feelings on the situation very clear."

"I see."

Even David had limits to his obedience. "But, sir, that's not the way—"

"Nobility is inappropriate in this situation, Lieutenant." Montgomery shut him down cold. Turning his attention back to Carver, he said, "Detective Carver, I commend you on your willingness to take responsibility, but I'm sure you understand that this means your badge. Sexual harassment in the workplace is something we take very seriously in this department."

Not to mention the fact he'd run out of second chances. "Yes, sir." He pulled out his badge and placed it in the commander's waiting hand, followed immediately by his gun. Surprisingly, he felt much lighter with them gone.

Montgomery seemed surprised by his cooperation, but finally nodded. "Clean out your desk. I want you out of the building in half an hour."

"Yes, sir." Without looking at David, he walked out of the office.

He could hear David and Montgomery shouting at each

SINS OF ARROGANCE

other behind him, but he ignored it.

There wasn't much to pack. He hadn't had time in just a few months to accumulate much in the way of clutter. Everything else was department property. Just like David.

He wasn't surprised to find David waiting for him out in the lobby. "You shouldn't have done that."

"Don't be an idiot, David. The only thing the department frowns on more than sexual harassment is fraternization. You're my superior officer, and whatever we've got going on hardly falls under the domestic partners guidelines, now does it? How long do you think we could've gotten away with it?"

"The responsibility is as much mine as it was yours."

"It's like you said—who are they going to believe? It's a lot easier to believe the problem child can't keep his hands to himself than that their golden boy might possibly step out of line. Your perfect reputation is working in my favor for a change."

"I'm going to fix this."

"Oh, give it a rest, David. Montgomery knows exactly what was going on. I told him what he wanted to hear and solved all his problems in one fell swoop. Go back to work." He shifted the box under his arm. "It's what's important to you, anyway."

"Carver—"

Carver didn't stick around to hear the rest of his arguments.

Once he was in the car, the enormity of what he'd done overwhelmed him. There went his paycheck, his pension, his

SINS OF ARROGANCE

insurance, all of it in one ridiculous, noble gesture that left him with absolutely nothing to show for it.

He started the car and pulled out in a squeal of tires that turned heads all along the street.

CHAPTER 25

David felt ill. The feeling didn't subside when he left the station for the day, or when he returned the following morning. It probably was nothing more than his own paranoia, but he could swear everyone was watching him, and from those who'd been friendly with Carver, those looks were more angry than curious.

Especially from Scotty.

He couldn't say it wasn't his fault. Because it was. He was the reason they'd gotten caught, that they'd gotten together in the first place. If... Hell, he didn't know anymore. So David kept his head up, face impassive, and did his job.

Scotty hadn't spoken to him in three days. She made her

SINS OF ARROGANCE

reports with brisk, cold efficiency and then went back to work, no chatting, no banter. When she had finally made an appearance Friday morning, she had given David a look that would have stripped the Sistine Chapel bare and refused to acknowledge him except in the line of business thereafter. There weren't many opportunities. She had done some quick research at her desk, ignoring the empty one across from her, before heading down to Records to talk to Devina about something. Then she had disappeared again, ignoring David's requests for information left on her cell phone voice mail.

When she marched into his office Monday morning without so much as a, "Good morning," David was frankly relieved.

"I found the information you were looking for." She sounded just as cold and unforgiving as her earlier looks had been.

"Which information is that, Detective?"

"Don't be coy, Lieutenant." She slapped a file down on his desk. "I dug into the info you handed Baker and Moody last week. The bank account on Healy's check was a dummy, same name as the shop used by Detective Eliot, but with a different owner. So I started tracking it back."

"And?"

"And I'm not saying another word until we're in front of Commander Montgomery."

He wasn't sure which hurt more, her anger or her distrust. "Brigid, I'm not the bad guy here."

Her demeanor didn't soften. "Begging your pardon, sir, but

SINS OF ARROGANCE

there's more going on here than you know. I'm not taking any chances with procedure on this one."

"So what do I tell him?"

"You can tell him, sir, that I need to discuss an Internal Affairs matter with him."

"Internal— Jesus, Scotty, what did you find? I can't go to him with that, not without knowing if Carver—"

Obviously, it was the opening she'd been waiting for. "Not that you care about Detective Eliot, sir," she snarled at him, "but now he's no longer part of this department, it would hardly be a matter for Internal Affairs, would it?"

"Scotty, I care about what happens to Carver."

"You've got a damn funny way of showing it. Sir."

Before he could defend himself, a tap on the glass wall of his office interrupted them. Commander Montgomery stood there, his face stern. He crooked a finger at both of them and turned back toward his office.

David opened the door for Scotty. "Looks like you're getting your wish, Detective."

She didn't answer.

He followed her to Montgomery's office, closing the door behind them.

"Are you sure that's going to do any good?" Montgomery wore a small smirk. "You two were loud enough for the whole office to hear."

"I'm sorry, sir," Scotty apologized automatically.

He waved it off. "Sit. Both of you. And what's this about Internal Affairs?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Scotty sat down across from him and set her case file down on the desk. "Sir, Lieutenant Logan asked me to work with Detectives Baker and Moody on a line of inquiry in the carjacking matters."

"Yes, I was aware of that."

"Well, sir, it didn't take much to figure out something wasn't right. The repair shop that paid off the Healy kid was a front. The bank account isn't even connected to the business. The shop is legit and has been doing business through three generations. The company name's on the bank account, but the signatory is a Martin Burlson. Someone at the bank wasn't looking too closely there. Burlson's a small-time operator who's done time for some petty larceny, check fraud, nothing major. But all of a sudden Burlson's living very comfortably. He just bought a new Lexus and he and his girlfriend are planning a trip to Rio once her surgery heals."

"Surgery?"

She held her hands out in front of her own generous chest for emphasis.

"Ah."

"Yeah. But Burlson hasn't got the brains or the balls for something on this level, so I kept digging. Burlson got busted three years ago out of Lawrenceville for possession with intent. Two days later, the charges got dropped. Care to guess who the arresting officer was?"

Montgomery didn't flinch. "Carver Eliot."

"Yes, sir. And his partner, Yuri Connors." She pulled out some documentation. "Connors is a midgrade officer, no

SINS OF ARROGANCE

demerits, no real commendations. He hit detective pretty much by good fortune. But, despite his lackluster career, he's living in a nice house in Shadyside, drives a Beemer and loses pretty heavily on the horses."

"Maybe the money comes from a wife?" David suggested. "Or an inheritance?"

Lost in her story, she didn't glare at him. "No, sir. He doesn't even have a girlfriend, although there are certain suspicions along those lines, and his nearest relative is an aunt in public housing in Philly. There's no money there."

"Okay." Montgomery nodded, following. "So far, though, this is all pretty circumstantial."

"Connors was here the day after Healy's arrest. He made some crude comments about Detective Eliot to me and then left, but not before he made a stop in Evidence to ask about procedures. I talked to Ambrose, who was on duty down there that day, and he admits stepping out to go to the john while Connors was there. The next day when the DA comes by to build the case against Healy, the gun he pointed at me was gone."

"He's the officer the girlfriend said 'took care of things' for Healy," David realized.

"Yes, sir. As soon as I made the connection, I went around to Healy's apartment to talk to the girlfriend. She recognized Connors right away from his photograph."

"Okay, but where does Eliot come in?"

"Connors *hated* Eliot. He complained to his CO three times to get a new partner, a straight partner, but was denied

SINS OF ARROGANCE

and sent to sensitivity training. And he was the one who caught Carver *in flagrante delicto* with the prostitute. He knew if anyone started looking into this car theft ring, they'd twig onto the cop angle, so it was an easy jump for him to decide to frame Carver for it."

"That's a mighty long reach, Detective."

"Yes, sir, and I can't go any farther on my own. There are too many touchy questions to ask, and a lowly detective from Zone Six can't ask them without raising a lot of suspicions and maybe tipping Connors off."

Montgomery looked genuinely impressed. David sure as hell was.

Scotty still wasn't finished. "I want your assurance, sir, that this matter will not be dropped. Even on the very remote chance I'm wrong about Connors, Carver deserves to have his name cleared." She gave David a very pointed and unmistakable look.

"Your loyalty is commendable, Detective Scott," Montgomery said. "And I'll bring your findings to the proper channels. However, you do understand that Eliot has left the force by his own choice."

Her lips thinned into a fine line. "Be that as it may, he does deserve to have his name cleared of this particular charge."

Montgomery nodded. "I'll keep you apprised, Detective."

"Thank you, sir. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to see to a backlog of paperwork for two people."

A moment after she left, Montgomery said, "You need to talk to Detective Scott about what went down with Eliot."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Whatever you say. Sir.”

Montgomery looked to the ceiling. “I think I’m going to forbid the use of ‘sir’ in this department as rarely as it’s ever used when one of my officers isn’t pissed at me.” Focusing back on David, he said, “The stoic act might get you by with the other officers, but Scotty was Eliot’s partner and, as we both can see, very loyal to him. I won’t have bad blood in my department. Is that understood?”

“Perfectly.” David bit off the “sir.”

“And you don’t want it, either.” He leaned on the desk. “I know you, David. I know you aren’t comfortable connecting with other people, but the connections you do make are important to you. Scotty is one of those connections. I’m not going to have you isolating yourself just because one relationship went sour.”

“Frankly, Commander—”

“It’s none of my business. But that’s where you’re wrong, Logan.” He stood up. “Though Scott’s giving you a run for your money, you’re the best damned officer here. I’m not about to have you make yourself so damn miserable you transfer out of here. And that’ll make what Eliot did meaningless.”

Overstepping the boundaries or not, Montgomery had a point.

“You will straighten things out with Detective Scott.”

“Will that be all, Commander?”

“I’ve decided I don’t care for ‘commander’ either. When you’re pissed, don’t call me anything. Dismissed.”

SINS OF ARROGANCE

David went back to his office feeling more than a little put upon. He hadn't done anything to earn Scotty's wrath or Montgomery's disappointment. On the contrary, he had tried to do the right thing by Carver and had been pushed aside. Why he was suddenly the bad guy was beyond him.

At ten minutes to five, Scotty marched into his office and threw a pair of boxing gloves on his desk. "Ten minutes. Sir."
"Scotty—"

She didn't stick around to hear his protest.

Fine. If she wanted it that way, he could oblige. He had enough pent up frustration of his own to work out. Not bothering to shut down his computer for the evening, he grabbed the gloves and went to the locker room to change.

Scotty was already warming up by the time he entered the training room.

"Montgomery put you up to this?" he asked.

She landed a hard one-two on the bag and sent it flying. "No, sir. Rick did."

Rick? Who was... Oh, right. Big guy and completely devoted to Scotty. They'd met briefly at the office holiday function.

"And just so you know, if you hold back because I'm a woman, you'll only piss me off more. Sir."

He was beginning to see Montgomery's point on the "sir" thing. "I wouldn't dream of it, Brigid."

She snapped her head around to glare at him, her curls springing back in the tight ponytail she'd caught them in. Her diminutive height was only accentuated by the department-

SINS OF ARROGANCE

issue sweats and T-shirt she wore. She looked like a kid in her pajamas. "I hate that name."

"Really?" He slid his hands into the pair of gloves she had assaulted his desk with. "I didn't know that."

"The hell you didn't." She gave up the bag to step out in the middle of the mat to face him. David noticed Moody and Olenik standing in the doorway, watching and whispering between themselves. Moody grabbed Baker passing by, whose eyes got huge when he saw who was on the mat.

"You ready?" Scotty asked, recapturing his attention.

"I never strike a lady. First."

"Your mistake."

David was stumbling backwards before he even registered her punch. He barely dodged the right hook she threw as her follow-up. The left jab and uppercut drove him back a couple more steps.

"Come on, Lieutenant, the punching bag fights better than you do!"

She drove him back another two steps before he was finally able to strike back, missing, but it earned him a second to breathe. One-two, right cross, and he regained two of the steps he'd lost. Scotty got in another well-placed hit before he landed a left to her jaw that sent her to the ground.

"Shit!" He had his gloves halfway off when she lunged, sending them both back to the ground. For as small as she was, Scotty landing on top of him still hurt like hell.

"So fucking predictable," she growled. "Girl acts like she's hurt, and you boys fall for it every goddamned time."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

He shoved her aside. "I expected you to fight fair, Scotty." He scrambled to his feet, but she was already up and waiting for him.

"I could say the same about you."

She was a ferocious in-fighter, and suddenly David was really glad she was a cop. Hell, she'd be a good prizefighter, judging by the force behind her counterpunches. Each strike was a little harder, a little faster than the last, actually forcing David back across the mat.

She and Carver would be a good match. Honestly, he couldn't say which one of them would win, especially if Carver stayed focused.

Scotty landed another really hard hit.

Speaking of focus...

"I know you're pissed about what happened to Carver. So am I." Christ, he couldn't even attempt an offensive against her. It was all defense or end up on his ass again. "I'm probably more to blame than he is for what happened."

"Yet you let him take the fall. Lucky you." Her punch snapped his head back. "Must be nice to keep that record of yours so fucking pristine, Lieutenant."

Screw fighting fair. Scotty wasn't, so why should he?

Catching her behind the right ankle with his foot, he tripped her onto her ass.

"You know as well as I do, Brigid, that no one lets Carver do anything." Sure, he might play the game for a while, but in the end, Carver's true nature won out. He did whatever the hell he wanted and damn the consequences.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Fed up, David threw down his gloves. “If I could do it differently, I would. But I can’t. And if beating the shit out of me makes you feel better, by all means”—he spread out his arms—“have at it.”

She stood up, slowly, deliberately, not looking at him, her chest rising and falling in time to her heavy breathing. Behind him, he could feel the tension in the crowd watching, waiting to see what happened.

What happened was a roundhouse punch he couldn’t have stopped even if he were ready for it, sending him stumbling back into the arms of Commander Montgomery.

“Stand down, Detective,” he ordered.

Still woozy from Scotty’s punch, David could nevertheless make out the disappointed look on Montgomery’s face as he set David back on his feet. “When I said work it out, this wasn’t what I had in mind.”

“So, Commander,” Moody asked hesitantly, “since you interrupted, would you say Scotty took this one?”

“Fight’s over, gentlemen. Go home.”

Grudgingly, they did, Olenik mumbling, “Definitely Scotty. Think we can convince her to fight in the intra-department match? God damn.”

If he’d known about Scotty sooner, David might have had her fight with Carver and then...well, then.

At a loss, he said, “I don’t know what I can do, Scotty. Obviously, beating the shit out of me isn’t helping.”

She looked pointedly at Montgomery. “You could take responsibility for your actions. Is your career so goddamned

SINS OF ARROGANCE

all important that you don't care what happens to other people?"

"Is that the line Carver's been feeding you? That I care more about my fucking job than—" He stopped. Too late. What he'd said was already damning enough. "Fuck you both."

"Carver hasn't been feeding me a damn thing. And fuck *you* both!"

"Okay, I think that's enough fucking for one department," Montgomery intervened. "In case you've forgotten, that's what got us into this situation in the first place. Now, if you two are done here"—his tone implied he expected nothing less—"I suggest you go out and have a drink and talk about this like civilized human beings. Understood?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Good night."

David walked over to the glove rack. When Scotty joined him, he asked quietly, "What did you mean about Carver?"

She sighed and dropped her gloves haphazardly on the rack. "Just what I said. He isn't talking to me. Won't answer his phone, doesn't answer the door when I knock. Nothing. I came back from stakeout to find out he'd quit and nothing but a bunch of rumors about why. All of them related to you."

"And most of them true." Scrubbing his face, he leaned against the wall. "You haven't heard from Carver? At all?"

"That's what I said, isn't it?"

He nodded.

Scotty took up position beside him on the wall. "I've been

SINS OF ARROGANCE

driving Rick crazy this last week, between staking out Buggy Connors and Carver getting axed. You doing your very best Ramrod routine hasn't helped matters, either."

"Don't hold back or anything," he snorted.

"Cute, Lieutenant, real cute."

"David."

"Can't. On duty or off, you're still my superior. And asshole or not, that entitles you to a modicum of respect."

"Logan?"

"Maybe," she said, the grudge still clear in her tone.

"Just don't 'sir' me, all right?"

Now she snorted. "Only when you don't piss me off."

"Then I'll do my damndest to prevent that in the future."

They lapsed into comfortable silence.

David decided to break it. "About that drink..."

"Can't tonight. Rick's making lasagna." She grew thoughtful for a moment. "Though you're more than welcome to come over. He's been making more since Carver started stopping by, but... The offer's out there if you're interested."

Carver had been a regular at their house? Interesting.

Keeping his tone light, David said, "So this is just you trying to avoid leftovers."

"God, no. I could live off lasagna leftovers all week. Rick won't let me. Says I need variety in my diet." She blew out a puff of air. "Survived twenty-odd years without variety before I met him, but some people are stubborn."

That they were.

"You in or out, Logan?"

SINS OF ARROGANCE

It wasn't often he ate a meal prepared by someone else, save going out. Carver had been the last one to cook for him...
"Yeah, count me in."

CHAPTER 26

Carver sat in his armchair, ignoring the bottle of beer in his hand, ignoring the game on TV, ignoring the dish and glass in the sink. He had picked up the habit of cleanliness quick enough; he could get over it just as easily.

It would take a while longer for the rest of the apartment to return to its former level of comfortable clutter.

His cell phone rang again. Checking it, he saw that for a change it wasn't Scotty, calling for an explanation. He didn't recognize the number, so he answered it. "This is Eliot."

"About time you answered the phone."

The caller surprised him. "Rick?"

"Yeah, it's Rick. Do you know what you've put my girl

SINS OF ARROGANCE

through the past few days?”

“Yeah, look, I’m sorry about that, but—”

“Would it have killed you to pick up the damn phone?”

“Probably not, but—”

Rick wasn’t taking it. “You owe Brig an explanation, Carver. She’s waited long enough.”

Carver rubbed his hand over his eyes. “Yeah, you’re right. I’m sorry. I’ll call her just as soon as I get off the phone with you.”

“The hell you will. You can do it in person like a man. Get your ass over here. Dinner’s in an hour.” He didn’t even say goodbye, just hung up.

There was no option of not going. Carver wouldn’t put it past Rick to come over and haul his ass over there. If Scotty was unhappy, Rick would do everything in his power to remedy that fact.

And it *was* lasagna night. It was hard to say no to Rick’s lasagna.

After freshening up, he headed over, making a quick stop at the nearby deli to pick up two six-packs of Scotty’s favorite. Extra points couldn’t hurt at the moment. He should have taken her calls, but he was still in the denial phase of this whole thing. Goodbye, job. Goodbye, pension. Goodbye, D— Yeah, whatever.

Scotty’s car wasn’t in the lot. Which meant just him and Rick until she got home.

“Please don’t give me the third degree,” he mumbled as he walked up the sidewalk.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Rick answered the door halfway through the doorbell ring. His eyes dropped to the six-packs. "If you were really sorry, you'd have gotten her tequila."

"I don't want to be that sorry."

Lips twitching, Rick let him inside.

Their apartment was cozy, a description that drove Scotty crazy, but that Rick was very happy with. They had a semi-basement, three-bedroom in a middle-class townhouse development, but they had changed out the rental grade carpets and bland walls for hardwood flooring covered in a profusion of colorful throw rugs and walls in pumpkin and rust and red with occasional shots of cobalt blue for emphasis. Carver always suspected Rick was the decorator of the family, but he never asked. He wasn't sure which one of them he'd offend if he did.

"You want a cold one?" Rick called from the kitchen.

"Yeah, thanks."

He joined Rick, enjoying the wonderful smell of baking pasta and cheeses coming from the oven. "How are things?"

"Okay when Brig isn't taking her frustrations out on me."

"About that, Rick—"

Rick shook his head and handed over a beer. "I'm not the one you owe the explanation to."

"I know, but...well, it's just been mess lately. That's all. I feel bad you had to bear the brunt of it." Carver meant it.

"That's all right. I got fed up with it and told Brig to take it out on Lieutenant Logan instead."

Carver nearly choked on his beer.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Rick grinned and went back to ripping up lettuce. "Oh, don't worry. I don't think she'll break him."

"Forget about him; it's her I'm worried about."

"How long have you been her partner? You ought to know better by now."

"Hell, I don't think I know anyone anymore." He took a long pull on his beer. "She got a new partner yet?"

Rick glanced over at him. "Jealous?"

Carver shrugged. "Maybe."

"Well, don't be. Doesn't matter if she's got a new partner and he's the second coming of Joe Friday. You're her friend and her project now. She's not going to let you get away."

He was more touched than he cared to admit. Rather than think too much on it, he offered, "Anything I can help with?"

Rick looked at him.

"What?"

"Say that again."

"Is there anything I can help with?" Carver slowly enunciated each word.

That started Rick off on a laughing fit.

"What is so damn funny?"

"Did you hit your head?"

"Sorry?"

Rick finally settled down, though his shoulders still shook. "Not once in all the times we've had you over have you ever offered to help. Which is fine, you're company. But still..." He almost went off again.

Baffled, Carver said, "I take it back then."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Oh, no, you can’t take it back. You offered. You get to help.”

“I thought I was company.”

“You used to be company; now you’re family. So pony up to the counter and take over this salad.” Rick narrowed his eyes. “If you think you can handle it, that is.”

“Why are people always assuming that I can’t cook?”

“You don’t strike me as the domestic type, Carver.”

“Doesn’t mean I can’t feed myself. Geez, you guys must think I live on take-out or something.” He started slicing up the cucumber Rick handed him.

“Hey, I’ve heard about your ramen stash.” Rick pulled out a bowl and whisk, and started on the salad dressing.

“Ramen’s good food. There are a lot of things you can do with ramen.”

Rick just raised an eyebrow at him.

“Honey, I’m home!” Scotty’s familiar voice sang out from the front of the apartment.

Now it was Carver’s turn to chuckle. “Honey. Gotta love that.”

“Shall I show you my arsenal again?”

“Careful, Rick, I might take that as a proposition.”

They grinned at each other.

“Damn, it smells good. Hope you made enough, Rick, because I’ve got—” Scotty stopped dead in the center of the kitchen, gaping at Carver.

“Scotty, do you mind if I use your washroom?” David froze in the kitchen doorway.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Rick shook his head and turned back to what he was doing. “Good thing I made extra. Thanks for the warning, Brig.”

“Well, how was I supposed to know— What the hell are you doing here, Carver?”

“Peeling cucumbers.” He held up the vegetable. It wasn’t until he caught David’s slightly raised eyebrow that he realized how phallic it looked. Blushing, he put it down. “Rick threatened my balls if I didn’t come over and talk to you.”

She folded her arms. “So talk.”

He glanced behind her. This would be a whole lot more comfortable without David standing right there. “I did what I had to, Scotty. It was either me or...”

She rolled her eyes. “You two act like the whole damn station didn’t know what you were doing. Just admit you sacrificed yourself for your boyfriend and get the hell over it!”

“He’s not my boyfriend,” both Carver and David protested simultaneously.

She looked from one of them to the other. “You’re both hopeless. How long until dinner, Rick?”

“Another ten minutes, give or take.” Tomatoes had apparently never been so fascinating.

“Good. Carver, show David where the washroom is.”

He looked to Rick for help, but Rick kept his attention on the food. *Bastard*. And he knew Scotty wasn’t going to take no for an answer. “Right.” He wiped his hands on a dishcloth. “Follow me.”

Not looking back to confirm David was following him, Carver led him down the hall off the living room, past the

SINS OF ARROGANCE

guest room, past the closed and locked door to the arsenal and to the open door of the guest bathroom. "Here."

David had followed him. "I think she actually meant for us to talk."

"Do you feel much like talking?"

"No, not really."

"Me neither. Wash up for dinner." Then he noticed David's jaw for the first time. "What's that on your... Is that a bruise?"

Sheepishly David reached up to rub the darkening spot. "Yeah. Scotty's got a hell of a roundhouse."

"You actually fought her? Jesus, and here I thought you were a gentleman."

"It's not like she gave me much of a choice. I'm going to be the laughing stock of the station for weeks, getting beaten up by a little girl."

"Don't let her hear you say that." Carver couldn't help but chuckle. "She'll kick your ass again."

"No, thank you. Once was enough."

They fell into an awkward silence.

David broke it. "How...how are you, Carver?"

"Honestly?"

He nodded.

"Bored out of my fucking mind."

Up went David's eyebrows.

Carver had to laugh. "My bills are paid up for the month, so the sheer terror of unemployment is on hold for a few weeks. And, God help me, but I've almost been driven to

SINS OF ARROGANCE

cleaning. There's fuck-all on daytime television."

"Things must be dire."

"Yeah, well."

"You should know we've got a lead on that carjacking ring. If it plays out the way we expect it to, you should be clear."

"Really? Who've you got?"

David shook his head. "You know I can't tell you that. You can, however, thank your partner for digging it out. She's a hell of an investigator."

He wasn't saying anything Carver didn't already know. "She deserves a promotion to Major Crimes. She's too good for Zone Six."

"You trying to cost me another good officer, Eliot? Bad enough I lost you."

There seemed to be a deeper meaning there, betrayed by a brief shadow that darkened David's normally clear gray eyes. Carver was about to reach out for him when Scotty's call from the kitchen interrupted. "Dinner, guys."

The moment was broken, and David brushed past him to wash his hands. With a regretful glance back, Carver returned to the kitchen.

* * *

Dinner was surprisingly enjoyable, especially with Scotty's play by play of taking David down. She had no problem bragging.

Rick took pity on him. "Yes, dear, you've firmly

SINS OF ARROGANCE

established you're the man, but will you please let the man enjoy his meal?"

"Moody wants me to enter the intra-departmental."

"You are not boxing, Brig."

"Come on, with Carver out, someone's got to defend department pride."

"Those challenges are meant to foster camaraderie," David pointed out.

"Meaning what, Logan?"

His smile was devastating. "Most guys aren't so forgiving about having their asses handed to them by a woman half their size."

"Please, I'm at least two-thirds." She grinned.

"Besides," Carver came to her defense, "they'd make her fight in the women's division."

Rick snorted. "Yeah, because women are so much more forgiving."

Scotty threw a cucumber at him.

"Throw all the food you want at me." He remained adamant. "You aren't boxing."

"And what if I say I am?"

He took her hand and looked into her eyes. "I just don't want anything to happen to you. You take enough chances being a cop. It would kill me if something happened to you doing something stupid like fighting."

Carver looked at David, who looked just as uncomfortable as Carver felt being present during such an intimate moment.

The two of them seemed to communicate in that silent way

SINS OF ARROGANCE

long-time couples were able to do before Scotty dropped his hand with an exaggerated sigh. “All right, fine. But Moody’s going to be really disappointed.”

“Fuck Moody.”

She got a glint in her eye. “You mean it?”

“Okay!” Carver cut them off before they could get any further. “What did I tell you two about all that sexual stuff around me? Come on, I didn’t come all this way to go home without dessert. Dish it up, house husband.”

Rick gathered the plates and went to get dessert. Returning with cheesecake and dessert plates, he said, “She’s all talk anyway. As adventurous as she got before me was—”

“Richard Alan, don’t you dare finish that sentence.” Scotty’s voice dropped to a growl.

“Sure, now you stop him, after I get all interested,” Carver grumbled.

Rick winked as he dished out the cheesecake. “I’ll tell you later.”

Scotty’s look was pure venom. “You do that, and I’ll tell your mother about—”

David jumped in. “So, I guess I’d better brush up on my dart skills then?”

“Probably a good idea.” Carver grinned at him. “I still think you got lucky that night. No one is that good.”

“It’s all about focus, Carver. But I wouldn’t say no to a rematch.”

“At least I’ll get my twenty back,” Scotty said.

Carver felt flattered, until she added, “And just so you

SINS OF ARROGANCE

know, Carver, since you're not my partner anymore, I'm betting on the sure thing."

"Man, that's cold, Scotty. That's really cold. Rick, how do you live with such a cold woman?"

"She warms up in the bedroom."

"*And* again with the TMI. Don't you two ever let up?"

Rick looked to Scotty, who shook her head. "No, not really."

It didn't matter. The banter was playful and relaxing, and it felt good to be in David's orbit again, if only briefly. One last contact before they both drifted off to their own lives again.

After dessert, things wound down and, unfortunately, it came time for Carver to take his leave. He didn't have to work, but everyone else did.

"Thanks again for dinner. Always amazing, Rick."

Rick pulled him into a hug. "Tuna casserole next Wednesday."

"Trying to get variety into my life?"

He looked at David. "Someone needs to."

Scotty grabbed Carver by the shirtfront. "If you don't answer my calls again, I *will* come over and kick your ass. Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

She shoved him out the door with a grin.

As he walked away, he heard her tell David, "You sure I can't lend you some concealer for that mark?"

"Battle scars. The men will have more sympathy for me if I wear them proudly."

SINS OF ARROGANCE

Carver didn't wait to hear the rest of it.

He had just put the key in his door lock when he heard David behind him. "Where are you going?"

"Home."

"Don't you think we ought to talk about this?"

He sighed and turned around. "I'm not sure what there's left to talk about."

"You shouldn't have done that." David kept his car between them almost as a buffer.

"Don't be an idiot, David. The only thing the department frowns on more than sexual harassment is fraternization. You're my superior officer. How long do you think we could've gotten away with it?"

"The responsibility was as much mine as it was yours."

"It's like you said—who are they going to believe? It was my word against yours, and no one's going to believe that their perfect Lieutenant Logan would ever stoop so low as to break the rules."

"Carver, you have to let me set this right."

"Don't you dare." He circled the car to get in David's face without actually touching him. "You're a good cop and a fine officer, and they need that. Guys like me are a dime a dozen, but someone like you... Well, you shouldn't waste yourself on me."

"And what if I don't consider it a waste?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means that the minute you walked into Montgomery's office, I wanted you. But being the good cop I am, I couldn't

SINS OF ARROGANCE

just ask you out like a normal person. Instead, I took advantage of you. And now you're doing this for me. It's just not right."

"Sure it is. Because you did help me." He wanted to reach out and comfort the younger man, but he didn't dare. "You think I have a selfless bone in my body? Hell, no. I did this because of you. All that control you keep going on and on about? Well, I finally took some. And it's a relief. God, I can't even tell you."

"So what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. Shouldn't be hard to get a PI license. Maybe I'll set myself up in private practice. At least it's something I know."

"No, Carver. What are you doing right *now*?"

He was confused. "I told you. I'm going home."

"No, you're not." He pulled open the passenger's door on his own car. "Get in."

"You aren't my boss anymore."

"No? Are you saying you don't want me anymore?" There was a hint of vulnerability under the steel.

"I didn't say that."

"Then the only thing that's changed is we no longer work together. I can think of a lot of ways that makes things easier, can't you?"

Yeah, it did. But Carver being Carver said, "Takes away a lot of the fun, too."

Up went an eyebrow. Damn, it should be more irritating than sexy.

SINS OF ARROGANCE

“Fun?”

Carver walked over to stand in front of him. “Yes, fun. Making you squirm in your too-pressed suit with just a look across the room or bumping into you at the coffee machine or showers after sparring...”

“Which got us into this mess in the first place.” David’s hand curled around the back of Carver’s neck, pulling him within a hairsbreadth of kissing him. “Just because we no longer work together doesn’t mean there won’t be opportunities. We still have a long way to go in your training. I’m not done with you yet, Carver Eliot.”

Which meant a spic and span bathroom, immaculate bedroom, no piles of dishes... He smiled.

David ghosted his lips against Carver’s. “Get in the car. Don’t make me tell you again.” Then he was walking around to the driver’s side.

Carver got in without hesitation. If nothing else, David had taught him to pick his battles. Giving now meant he’d get a whole lot more later. And Carver liked that idea.

A lot.

INDIA HARPER

India Harper is the combined persona of Philippa Grey-Gerou and Emery Sanborne. Emery and Grey have been writing solo for five years and together for even longer, resulting in a dozen works in the hetero and ménage genres. As they already share a brain, they figured it was high time to share a name as well. Their stories under the name India Harper have a slightly harder edge as they explore predominately male/male relationships in the rich environments of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Emery lives in Philadelphia with her cat, while Grey lives in the Philadelphia suburbs with a less well-behaved zoo.

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

THE GOLD STANDARD IN PUBLISHING

QUALITY BOOKS
IN BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC FORMATS

ACTION/ADVENTURE

SUSPENSE/THRILLER

SCIENCE FICTION

DARK FANTASY

MAINSTREAM

ROMANCE

HORROR

EROTICA

FANTASY

GLBT

WESTERN

MYSTERY

PARANORMAL

HISTORICAL

BUY DIRECT AND SAVE
www.AmberQuill.com
www.AmberHeat.com
www.AmberAllure.com